

**Our Lady of Mercy College**

**Beaumont,**

**Dublin 9**

**Substance Use Policy**

# Substance Use Policy

## **Mission Statement**

The core value of Our Lady of Mercy College Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential, academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

## **Introductory Statement:**

Our Lady of Mercy College is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school community in relation to substance use. This school provides a comprehensive drug education programme which is incorporated into the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE) which is currently running in the school.

## **Relationship to Mission Statement:**

The underlying philosophy of this policy is one of concern and support for all members of the school community. Our mission statement states that the core value of Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont is respect for all and the nurturing of individual potential academically, spiritually and culturally as a member of the school community and in the spirit of the Mercy Ethos.

## **Scope:**

This policy applies to Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Students, Board of Management, other school personnel and all those who enter the school premises at any time or those on school related activities.

## **Rationale:**

Our Lady of Mercy College, Beaumont adopts a pastoral approach in order to promote a healthy, caring and supportive environment. The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 sets out a detailed programme to combat the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. The central objective of this schools substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person and other members of the school community in line with the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, Tobacco (Health Promotion, Protection) Act 1988, Misuse of Drugs Act 1988, Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989.

## **Objectives:**

These are to:

- ❖ Inform the school community and any others who use the school about the school policy and procedures regarding substance use and the misuse thereof.
- ❖ Provide clear procedures for dealing with substance related instances.
- ❖ Offer support to students and other members of the school community who require assistance.
- ❖ Provide training and educational opportunities to support and implement this policy.

## Policy Content

This school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use of or supply of banned or prohibited substances and/or drug paraphernalia, cigarettes and e-cigarettes in the school, during any school related activities or on school trips and outings. Except where stated this policy applies to all members of the school community and is in force at all times, on the school premises, during the school day and during school related activities. Smoking is prohibited. It is illegal to smoke on school grounds. Students should not smoke while in school uniform or while representing the school.

Exceptions:

1. The correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum related materials/ingredients as specified by the staff member involved.
2. Legitimate medicinal use; where a student is in possession of medication for legitimate medicinal use the Year Head must be informed in writing. Prescription and non prescription drugs cannot be supplied or administered by school staff or other students except in exceptional circumstances where parent/guardian have given permission in writing to the Principal

### Procedures for dealing with substance related instances:

**(i) Reporting:** Any alcohol or illicit drug incident or suspected incident will be reported to the Principal who will inform the Year Head and other staff as appropriate. Students are encouraged to inform a teacher if an incident occurs. During school trips the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

**(ii) Medical assistance:** The situation is assessed by the Principal/Deputy Principal/staff member. If medical assistance is needed this will be sought and if possible the staff member should stay with the student until assistance arrives. Contact will be made with a parent/guardian to inform them that medical assistance has been sought.

**(iii) Recording of Instances:** If the offence relates to alcohol or an illicit drug incident a report will be written, recorded and referred to at the Principal's discretion. Smoking/alcohol substance use incidents will be recorded as set out in the Code of Behaviour.

**(iv) Confiscation of Illegal Drugs/Alcohol/Prohibited Substances:** If an illegal drug/prohibited substance or suspected illegal drug is found on school property or during school activity, it should be brought to the attention of the Principal or person in charge. The school will exercise its discretion in the manner in which it deals with these substances.

**(v) Search:** If the school believes that a student may have hidden in school property, on their person or in a school or other bag banned substances or property the school reserves the right to require the student to turn out her pockets and/or the contents of any such bag and to search any property. Students must agree to co-operate fully with this or any other request if the school believes a substance in breach

of this policy is being stored. A breach of this clause will be treated as a major offence (see Code of Behaviour incl. Suspension and Expulsion Policy).

**(vi) Confidentiality:** Although students sometimes request confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed. The teacher must attempt to retain the respect and confidence of the student, while ensuring that the information is acted on. Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, the parents/guardians of those involved or an appropriate external agency. Appropriate discretion will be observed.

**(vii) Informing/Involving Parents/Guardians:** It is standard practice to inform parents/guardian if their daughter has been involved in an alcohol or illicit drug incident in breach of this policy. Parents may ask the school Principal or Counsellor to put them in contact with an appropriate external agency if they seek further support. Parents with concerns about the actual or possible misuse of alcohol or illicit drugs by their daughter are invited to discuss these with the Principal/Deputy Principal/Staff member. Support and information will be offered.

**(viii) Informing/Involving Gardaí:** Garda advice may be sought in incidents involving illegal drugs, the decision to seek this advice will rest with the Principal and other key staff. The school has a positive working relationship with local Gardaí who like the school have the welfare of the student(s), other students and the wider school community to consider.

**(ix) Sanctions/Disciplinary Issues** The Code of Behaviour & Expulsion Policy outline a graded system of firm and consistent sanctions which will apply to students involved in alcohol or illicit substance incidents. The Tobacco (Health Promotion, Protection) Act 1988 also applies.

**(x) Media:** The Principal or in her absence the Deputy Principal or nominated spokesperson will handle all media queries. The school will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.

### **Support for those involved**

Students directly involved in substance misuse incidents will be referred to external agencies as necessary/requested by parents/guardians. Students or other members of the school community who wish to get help for their own misuse of alcohol or drugs or that of another for whom they are concerned may seek the advice of the Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Counsellor. Support and information about external services will be offered. Where such student disclosures are voluntary they will be seen as a desire for help and will therefore not be subject to disciplinary consequences but will be subject to the confidentiality outlined above.

### **Related Policies**

Child Protection Policy  
Health & Safety Policy  
Code of Behaviour  
Expulsion Policy

Anti Bullying Policy  
Pastoral Care Policy  
Guidance & Counselling Policy  
Critical Incident Policy  
SPHE Policy

### **Staff Training & Support**

Staff will receive training to implement the policy in relation to substance abuse. The Parents Association, will where appropriate, organise information evenings for parents on drug or other substance related issues.

### **Monitoring and Implementation**

This policy will be supported and implemented by students and staff. Staff will be alert for signs of harmful substance abuse among the students. The Principal/Deputy Principal/designated staff member will act as Substance Use co-ordinator and will monitor the use of the policy.

### **Communication of Policy**

Parents will be informed about this policy prior to the entry of their daughter. New staff members will be provided with a copy of the policy. Copies of the policy are available from the school office.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

This school believes that from time to time a range of people will be involved in the care and management of students involved in substance use incidents. Such personnel will include:

Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Head/Class Tutor  
Counselling personnel, internal & external  
Parents & Guardians  
Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLO) and the Gardaí  
Care team  
Board of Management.

### **Review Procedures**

This policy will be reviewed every three years. However practices and procedures will be continually considered to ensure legal compliance and best practice.

Ratified December 11<sup>th</sup> 2014

**Signed:** .....  
**(for and on behalf of the Board of Management)**