

METHODIST COLLEGE BELFAST

Substance Misuse Policy (Pupils)

The College is committed to safeguarding the health and safety of our pupils and staff and takes action to ensure the wellbeing of everyone.

The College is a health-promoting school which encourages pupils to develop the ability to make informed choices. It fosters self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline, positive attitudes and an understanding of right from wrong through a drugs education programme and the curriculum. The College acknowledges it has a vital preventative role to play in combating the misuse of drugs. The College also acknowledges the importance of Pastoral Care in the welfare of our pupils and seeks to encourage a pupil who need support to seek help.

The College also recognises that school is only one of a number of groups which must play a part in preventing drug misuse and it works with parents and external agencies to this end.

Ethos

This policy has been developed to give a clear, consistent message that drug misuse is not acceptable and does not condone their misuse in any circumstances. It will not accept the misuse of drugs on its premises or at any activity associated with the school and/or while pupils are travelling to and from school or in school uniform.

Pupils who arrive at the College, attend a College event or are wearing school uniform and are under the influence of substances due to previous misuse of drugs outside school time also contravene this policy.

Aims

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To define what the College regards as a drug and drug misuse;
- To clarify the jurisdiction to which this policy applies;
- To explain the procedures to be followed by the College if suspected or actual drug abuse has taken place;
- To explain the follow-up when drug abuse has taken place.

Definition of Drugs

For the purpose of this document and in line with the guidance issued to all schools by the Department of Education (Circular 2004/9) drugs will include any substance which, when taken, has the effect of altering the way the body works or the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.

Some substances which are not illegal may have an intoxicating and/or hallucinating effect. The use of animal, mineral or vegetable products which have such an effect is against College rules and pupils using such substances may be dealt with in a similar

fashion to those who use illegal substances. The use of so-called “recreational” drugs and “legal highs” can lead to health problems and a dangerous acceptance of illegal and harmful drug misuse as part of everyday life.

Drugs include:

- alcohol;
- tobacco;
- “over-the-counter” medicines, such as paracetamol;
- prescribed drugs, such as antibiotics, tranquillisers, inhalers and Ritalin;
- volatile substances, such as correcting fluids/thinners, gas lighter fuel, aerosols, glues and petrol;
- controlled drugs, such as cannabis, LSD, Ecstasy, amphetamine sulphate (speed), magic mushrooms (processed), heroin and cocaine;
- other substances such as amyl/butyl nitrite (‘poppers’), unprocessed magic mushrooms, so-called “recreational” drugs and “legal highs”.

Definition of Drug Misuse

Misuse includes involvement in the purchase, the use, possession, supply or intent to supply drugs, involvement in facilitating the supply of drugs, and giving support to or encouragement of drug-related activity.

A pupil who is found under the College’s jurisdiction in possession of a drug or any illegal substance for abusive purposes is in breach of College rules, even if the pupil is not planning to consume the drug while under the College’s jurisdiction. A pupil does not have to make a monetary or any other gain from passing on a drug to be guilty of involvement in supply.

Please note the above list is not exhaustive. The above examples demonstrate the type of conduct which would be in breach of College rules and in some cases the criminal law also. Each individual case of involvement in the misuse of drugs is assessed independently.

Drugs Education

The College recognises that the misuse of drugs is a significant problem in society today but that, equally, the majority of young people decide not to misuse drugs. It is important not to underestimate the importance of education in this area and there are, therefore, a number of initiatives in place. Pupils in the College are intelligent young people who will eventually make their own decisions as to how they live their lives but they need information and proper guidance in order to make educated and informed decisions.

Drugs education provides opportunities for pupils to:

- acquire knowledge and understanding in relation to drug use/misuse;
- identify values and attitudes in relation to drug use/misuse;
- develop skills to enable them to consider the effects of drugs on themselves and others;
- make informed and responsible choices within the context of a healthy lifestyle.

Some subjects, such as Biology, English and Religious Education, have a direct part to play in this. In addition, the Personal Development Programme, workshops and Assemblies cover important aspects of drugs education.

The College appreciates the support of parents and also maintains contact with a number of outside agencies which provide advice and support as required.

Training and Information

Staff are provided with training to support the full implementation of this policy including the delivery of the Drug Education Programme, key signs of drug abuse and how to deal with a drug-related incident.

Information awareness sessions are offered to parents/guardians by the Personal Development Co-ordinator, in consultation with the Designated Teacher for Drugs (Vice Principal Pastoral) and Head of Pastoral Care.

The Designated Teacher

The Designated Teacher for any matter connected with drug abuse is the Vice Principal Pastoral. If a member of staff has any concerns regarding a pupil's possible involvement with drugs or alcohol, he/she should consult the Designated Teacher who will decide, in consultation with the Principal on an appropriate course of action.

In the event of the Designated Teacher for Drugs (Vice Principal Pastoral) being unavailable, another member of the School's Senior Leadership Team is to be contacted.

The Role of the School Nurse

Any prescribed medicines to be taken in school by pupils must be left with and taken at the Sanitorium, except for inhalers and epipens which should be carried by the pupil. Other prescribed medicines may only be carried by pupils with the permission of the School Nurse following consultation with the parent/guardian of the pupil and the Principal.

Procedures for Incidents Involving Drug, the Suspected Involvement of Drug or a Drugs Related Issue

Should an incident occur where drugs (other than tobacco and alcohol) have been abused or thought to have been abused, the procedures below should be followed. It may be that some of the steps will be taken in a different order. The professional judgment of staff will be used in each case. The over-riding principle that should be adhered to is that the pupil's welfare is paramount.

- a) If the pupil is clearly ill or unconscious, the member of staff should:
 - * assess the situation;
 - * ensure the safety of the pupil and others;

- * give emergency aid if possible and seek medical help by ensuring that the Sanatorium is contacted or call an ambulance;
 - * promote a calm atmosphere;
 - * send for extra staff help;
 - * ensure that the Principal (or the person deputising for him/her) and the Designated Teacher for Drugs (Vice Principal Pastoral) are advised of the situation;
 - * try to discover what drug and the quantity he/she has taken, and whether other pupils are involved;
 - * keep any substances or material for possible analysis;
 - * avoid directly handling substances or equipment;
 - * ensure a responsible adult is with the pupil at all times;
 - * not contact the parents or any outside agency; this will be done by the Principal or his deputy.
- b) If the pupil does not seem to be ill or distressed, the following steps should be taken. The member of staff should:
- * assess the situation and, if necessary, send for extra staff help but remain with the pupil;
 - * keep any substances or material for possible analysis;
 - * avoid directly handling substances or equipment;
 - * accompany the pupil to the Sanatorium, if necessary;
 - * ensure that the Principal (or the person deputising for him/her) and the Designated Teacher for Drugs (Vice Principal Pastoral) are advised of the situation;
 - * try to ascertain if any other pupils have taken the suspected substance;
 - * try to discover what drug and the quantity he/she has taken;
 - * not contact the parents or any outside agency; this will be done by the Principal or his/her deputy.
- c) During an investigation into a drug related incident or suspected drug related incident, the College reserves the right to insist that a pupil empties his/her pockets or other belonging (e.g. school bags, locker, etc) if that pupil is suspected of possessing drugs. This will only be done in the presence of at least two members of staff, one of whom will be a senior member of staff. On College trips, educational visits and other events the authority of the senior member of staff is delegated to the teacher in charge of the activity. If the pupil is unwilling to comply, he/she should accompany the member of staff to the Designated Teacher for Drugs (Vice Principal Pastoral) or to another Vice Principal/Assistant Principal Teacher who will give further advice and may decide that it is necessary to involve the Principal.

Written records, signed and dated, are kept.

Procedures for Incidents Involving Alcohol

Pupils are not permitted to bring alcohol onto College premises, to consume it on the College premises or to be under its influence when on College premises. Pupils breaking this rule are reported to the Head of Section who will advise the Headmaster of the matter and also inform the Head of Form. The pupil will be dealt with according to the College's disciplinary procedures.

Pupils participating in College trips are required to conform to the rules and standards as they would were they on College premises and thus the consumption of alcohol is not permitted in any circumstances.

At external social events involving exclusively Sixth Form students, at the discretion of the Principal, and in accordance with the terms of the law and the licence of the venue, pupils may be permitted to drink in moderation. At no time is the consumption of spirits permitted.

Procedures for Incidents Involving Tobacco

Pupils are not permitted to bring cigarettes into school. It is regarded as an offence to smoke on College premises, on the way to or from the College, when in uniform or when involved in any College activity. If a member of staff finds a pupil either smoking or in possession of cigarettes, the name of the pupil is noted and the matter reported as soon as possible to the Head of Form who will deal with the pupil according to the College's disciplinary procedures.

Confidentiality

The legal requirements of drug legislation and The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 have implications. Where a pupil discloses to a member of staff that he/she (or another pupil) is taking or has taken drugs, the member of staff makes it clear that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. The pupil is advised of other sources of support and, if appropriate, is encouraged to talk to his/her parents/ guardians. Information about disclosures is recorded in written format.

If it is suspected or confirmed that a 'controlled drug' is involved the matter is immediately reported to the PSNI. In such instances the College reserves the right to restrict the movements of the pupil until the PSNI have had an opportunity to speak with the pupil. In such an instance the College makes every effort to inform the parent/guardian of this action, if appropriate.

Follow-up to a Drug-Related Incident

In the follow-up to such an incident, written records are produced by all staff dealing with it, and are submitted to the Principal. If necessary, the College's disciplinary policy is implemented, including fixed term and/or permanent exclusion, if appropriate. Advice and support are offered to pupils and staff who have been involved in the incident.

Enquiries from the press are referred to the Principal. The latter is also responsible for contacting other relevant people if this is deemed necessary, including the Designated Officer in BELB.

Relevant College Policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Code of Conduct for Pupils;
- Medical Welfare of Pupils Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Pastoral Care Policy;
- Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Regulations for Pupils Participating in School Trips

Review

The College has a Personal Development Co-ordinator responsible for co-ordinating the provision of drugs education and for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing regularly this provision. The Vice-Principal (Pastoral), the Personal Development Co-ordinator and the Head of Pastoral Care (Designated Teacher) work closely together when considering such matters.

The Head of Pastoral Care (Designated Teacher) and Vice-Principal (Pastoral) review this policy every three years or more regularly if legal or other circumstances warrant it. Pupils, parents and staff are consulted and due regard is paid to the Department of Education (DENI) Drugs Guidance for schools in N. Ireland 2004/9 and DENI 1996/16

Questions about the policy and programme are initially referred to the Designated Teacher for Drugs (Vice Principal Pastoral)

Chair of Board of Governors Date