



St Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar. Substance Use Policy

Mercy philosophy of Education

Inspired by the vision of Catherine McAuley, Mercy Education is committed to holistic development and to the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those who are disadvantaged or marginalised. It is a process informed and influenced by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ and is conducted in an atmosphere of care, respect and joy. Mercy Education is committed to ongoing whole school development in collaboration and partnership with the Board of Management, Staff, Parents/Guardians and the wider community.

CEIST Core Values

The Core Values of CEIST are:

- Promoting Spiritual & Human Development
- Achieving Quality in Teaching and Learning
- Showing Respect for Every Person
- Being Just and Responsible

Mission Statement

St. Joseph's Secondary School Castlebar, Co.Mayo is a voluntary Catholic Secondary School for girls under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust). We aim to provide a holistic Christian Education in co-operation with staff, students, parents/guardians, Board of Management and the Community. We work to create equality for all in an atmosphere of mutual respect. We strive to excellence in learning and endeavour to help each student to reach her full potential in a positive, caring and happy environment.

School Ethos

The characteristic spirit of St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar is based on the Mercy Philosophy of Education which espouses the core values of respect, justice, care and joy. The School's Ethos is holistic and person centred. The school encourages students to use and share their talents to their full potential, to recognise God's presence in their lives, to celebrate their Christian faith and to show respect to all persons in all areas of life and work. Students are encouraged by school staff to strive for excellence in learning and to participate to the best of their ability in all aspects of school life.

Relationship to the Mission Statement

Our Policy on Substance Use has been developed in accordance with our Mission Statement, which states that we aim to provide a holistic, Christian Education in co-



operation with School Staff, Students, Parents/Guardians, Board of Management and the wider Community.

Objectives of the Policy

The central objective of our school's Substance Use Policy is the welfare, care and protection of every student. We endeavour to promote a safe and healthy environment for all of our students.

Our aims are:

- To increase self esteem and confidence of each of our students.
- To equip our students with the personal and social skills in order to help them manage aspects of their own behaviour and to resist negative peer pressure.
- To enable students to make informed, healthy and responsible decisions in relation to their own health and safety.
- To provide clear and age appropriate information on substance use.
- To offer supportive interventions to students and to their parents/guardians when and where necessary in relation to substance use.
- To provide information on out of school support services and how to access such services (e.g. the NYP, the Edge Project) in relation to substance use.

Substance Use Education

- St. Joseph's Secondary School believes that the School Staff, Parents/Guardians and the Board of Management must work together in relation to substance use prevention and to the development and delivery of Substance Use Education Programmes.
- We believe that education about substance use is best delivered within the overall context of the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme. All students in the junior cycle classes are timetabled for one class period per week for SPHE.
- Teachers who facilitate the SPHE Programme will have completed relevant training as offered by the Department of Education and Science or by another recognized body (e.g. the HSE).
- Outside speakers may be invited to address students on matters relating to substance use where it is appropriate in order to reinforce material covered in class.
- Education workshops may be organized for students in Transition Year in relation to substance use (e.g. First Aid, Aids West).
- Substance Use Education may also be provided through cross-curricular links with Science, Religious Education, Physical Education and CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education).



- Parents/Guardians concerned about substance use in relation to their daughter are invited to contact the school and may be referred to out of school support services as appropriate and if necessary.
- The Parent's Council will be consulted re: the organisation of Substance Use Education meetings for the parents/guardians of students.

Ongoing Training and Staff Development

Staff members will be given the opportunity:

- To attend relevant in-service training within school and/or outside of school as organised by the school, the SPHE Support Service in conjunction with the DES and/or the HSE.
- To avail of information re: substance use on an ongoing basis.
- To participate in First Aid Training.
- To organise workshops, talks, seminars re: substance use as and when appropriate.

Substance Use Incidents

In the event of a substance use incident arising in the school building or on school grounds during the school day, or during school tours and outings or on school related activities the following incidents may be defined as examples of substance use incidents:

- Emergencies where a student may be unconscious as a result of substance use.
- Student(s) under the influence of an intoxicant.
- Where a staff member encounters behaviour in a student considered to be out of character with the student.
- Where a staff member encounters a student displaying the physical symptoms associated with substance use.
- Suspicion or rumour of substance use, possession or dealing in relation to a student or students.
- Disclosure by a student(s) of another student or students who may be involved in substance use, possession or dealing.
- Possession, consumption, sale, purchase, distribution of substances in the school building, about the school grounds, on school outings and tours and/or on school related activities (Refer to Code of Behaviour).
- Individual student or group of students seeking help from a member of Staff in relation to her own substance use or that of another student(s).
- School grounds being used for substance use activity.
- Paraphernalia regarding substance use being found on school property.



Assessing and Managing a Substance Use Incident

- We acknowledge that in all situations involving substance use there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community, the reputation of the school and legal considerations.
- In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the individual(s) it is important to take time to listen and assess the situation before responding.
- To separate fact from rumour.
- All staff needs to be aware of the signs and symptoms of substance use and to be alert for changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a time of great change for teenagers and therefore rumour alone must not be taken as evidence for substance use.
- It is important in all suspected or confirmed substance use incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. School personnel will be informed on a need to know basis.

Procedures

- Ensure that the student(s) are not in any danger.
- Seek medical help if required and assistance from another member of staff.
- If possible remove the student to an area where they can be kept under supervision until such time as medical help is found if needed and/or their parents/guardians have arrived in the school.
- All cases of suspected or confirmed substance use incidents (possession, consumption, sale, purchase, distribution) must be reported to the Principal, Deputy Principal or person nominated to act on their behalf.
- A substance use incident form must be completed and signed by the person(s) making the report.
- The Principal, Deputy Principal or person nominated to act on their behalf will record and file all details regarding the incident.
- All documentation will be treated as confidential and will be retained by the school.
- Information regarding the substance use incident will be shared at first with relevant personnel in the school and may include the School Guidance Counsellor, relevant Year Head, SPHE teacher, RE teacher, School Chaplain.
- Student(s) will be informed that their parents/guardians will be informed about the incident.
- The Principal, Deputy Principal or person nominated to act on their behalf will inform Parents/guardians about the incident, in a sensitive and supportive manner
- Parents/guardians will be requested to attend the school to immediately following the incident if it is considered to be a serious incident or at a later time to discuss the incident.



- Parents/guardians may be asked to remove their daughter from the school until such time as an investigation into the incident is completed.
- It is understood and agreed as per the School Code of Behavior that the Gardai will be informed about the incident.
- The School and/or the Gardai will investigate the incident.
- In response to all reported incidents of substance use, pastoral care support within the school will be offered to students as required.
- If it is considered that the individual student(s) involved in the substance use incident has/have a serious problem and is of concern regarding the health and safety of others in the school community referral to the appropriate out of school services will be made for remediation and support.

Sanctions

- Where regulations regarding substance use are breached sanctions will apply.
- In accordance with our school's Code of Behaviour firm and consistent sanctions up to and including expulsion from St. Joseph's Secondary School, Castlebar will apply to any students(s) involved in substance use incidents.

Confidentiality

- While every effort will be made to respect the confidentiality of the student(s) and their family/families, school staff cannot offer total confidentiality to an individual(s) in relation to a substance use incident or to an individual(s) who may make a disclosure regarding her own use or that of another student(s).
- Information will be shared with parents/guardians, designated staff members, Gardai and out of school support services.
- Details regarding the incident will remain confidential and only shared on a need to know basis.
- The limits of disclosure will be explained to the individual(s) prior to disclosure if possible.

Searches

- St. Joseph's Secondary, Castlebar, retains the right to search any part of the school premises and grounds of there is reasonable cause to believe that a substance (s) in breach of this policy may be contained therein.
- At least two members of staff must be present during any form of a search
- Students will be given the opportunity to hand over any banned substances prior to a search.
- Students may be requested to remove items from their person or bags, lockers or journals.
- If a student(s) refuses to co-operate her/their parents/guardians will be notified and asked to come to the school and/or a member of the gardai may be asked to come to the school in order to conduct a search of a student's property (e.g. locker, school bag, books, coat pockets etc.)



- A member of staff may not carry out a physical body search.

Disposal

- If a substance(s) is/are found in the school building or on school property they will be locked in a secure location by two members of staff and the gardai will be contacted to dispose of them.
- In the case of substances being found on school tours or outings or on any related school activity the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of this policy and the Principal or Deputy Principal will be informed as soon as possible (Refer to Code of Behaviour).

Related Policies

1. Code of Behaviour
2. Anti-Bullying Policy
3. SPHE Policy
4. RSE Policy
5. Health & Safety Statement
6. Child Protection Guidelines

Consultation

All partners in the school community i.e. Staff, Students, Parents Council, Board of Management have been consulted in drafting this policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy was Reviewed and Ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on: _____

This policy is operational from: _____

Mr. John Caulfield
Chairperson of Board of Management

Ms. Marie Mac Cabe
Principal