



JOHN SCOTTUS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Substance Use Policy

John Scottus Secondary School

John Scottus School offers a vision of education which gives young people the self mastery, strength of character and compassion to contribute meaningfully to the world around them whilst at the same time fulfilling their own unique set of talents and qualities.

It is an education based on the belief that each child can come to discover their innate gifts, that each child can come to contribute something exceptional and that each child has at their heart a limitless potential.

Central to the ethos of the school is the development of character. Character building is described as the development of good habits such as the ability to be still and self-aware, to attend to the present moment, to participate in the spirit of enquiry and to unite with others around. These habits of attention, enquiry, stillness and unity will provide the foundations for academic excellence, a life of meaningful purpose and a life journey of Self-Discovery.

Mindfulness along with philosophy and meditation are considered the three key aspects in the journey of character building and the development of these habits. The mindful motto of the school is "Delight in the present" and the belief is that when a child comes to know their true Self it is possible to delight in the present every moment of every day.

1. Introduction:

- This policy applies to the entire school community - staff, students, parent(s)/guardian(s) and users of the school building.
- The school asserts its right to protect and promote its characteristic spirit by requiring defined standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.
- This policy is informed by the strategic plan adopted by the Government under the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 and made mandatory for schools in Circular 18/02, the Education Act (1998) and the Education Welfare Act (2000). It takes account of our Code of Behaviour, Child Protection Policy and the Health and Safety statement.

2. Policy

1. The school prohibits the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances* and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school building, grounds, on school trips and outings, or during any school related activity. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found in the circumstances set out above is a banned substance. Drug paraphernalia includes all items associated with the use of illicit substances and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances. The School also is opposed to the

use of the above substances outside school hours if the student is under the influence of any of these substances while s/he is in School. It also prohibits the use/dealing in/of these substances outside school hours if, by associating him/herself with the use of, or dealing in, these substances outside school hours, it is adversely affecting their behaviour or work within school hours.

2. Validly prescribed medical drugs may be taken in school only on receipt of notification in writing from parent(s)/guardian(s).

* A banned or prohibited substance includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol, and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land.

3. Education

The school is and will continue to be proactive in relation to education in substance abuse prevention. Programmes offered will be aligned to school ethos and values. The school provides and will continue to provide formal programmes through SPHE that are both developmental in nature and age appropriate. Education is also provided through the school developed short course in Wellbeing. The school shall provide staff with opportunities to attend training in the delivery of Health Education Programmes.

Our Educational programmes regarding substance abuse have the following aims:

- To enable students to make healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge, challenging attitudes and developing and practising skills particularly in relation to self esteem.
- To provide information about substance abuse.
- To increase understanding about the implications and consequences of substance abuse.
- To encourage an understanding of the personal situation of those experiencing or likely to experience substance abuse.
- To enable students to identify sources of appropriate personal support and information.

4. Parents' role

The school acknowledges the central role of parent(s)/guardian(s) in the implementation of this policy. Parent(s)/guardian(s) are asked:

- To acknowledge the importance of the educational programmes,
- To recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse.
- To assist and co-operate fully with the school if and when incidents concerning substance abuse arise.

The school will assist parent(s)/guardian(s) in their role by providing them with information on the SPHE programmes and by providing opportunities for parents to attend information sessions on substance abuse. A booklet on substance abuse by school-aged students is also made available to parents on the subject.

5. Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Drug Related or other Substance Abuse Incidents

1. All suspected incidents shall be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal by any member of the school community.
2. In the event of an abuse incident, the school will balance the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community.
3. The school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student suspected to be, or to have been, involved in a substance abuse incident, while the incident is investigated. Furthermore, the school's Code of Behaviour applies and, on the completion of the investigation, it shall be a matter for the Board of Management to consider if permanent exclusion is appropriate.
4. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) shall be informed of the incident immediately and in writing by the Principal or Deputy Principal.
5. The Principal shall inform the Gardaí if any incident involves suspected illegal conduct. The school cannot guarantee confidentiality under the law.
6. The Principal shall investigate, or cause to be investigated, any suspected substance abuse incident.
7. The School recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating a suspected substance abuse incident. The School shall involve only those directly concerned with the student. In addition to the Principal, these may include the Deputy Principal, the Class Teacher and the Guidance Counsellor and specific staff directly involved with the incident.
8. The Principal, in the presence of a reliable witness, shall take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drugs paraphernalia associated with a suspected substance abuse incident recording all such items. Any item may be handed to the Gardaí as appropriate.
9. The Principal, or a person nominated by the Principal, shall seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the suspected substance abuse incident and shall record these statements. Such persons shall be advised that these statements may be forwarded to the Gardaí.
10. The Principal may, in his/her absolute discretion, liaise with any appropriate outside authority and may seek advice or assistance in relation to the investigation of the incident. The Principal shall maintain a record of all communications with outside agencies.

11. On completion of the preliminary investigation and in the event that he/she concludes that further investigation is warranted, the Principal shall afford the student or students alleged to have been involved in the suspected incident of substance abuse, the opportunity to respond to the allegations. He/she shall put the full particulars of the incident to the student or students concerned and their parents/guardians and make copies of all records deemed relevant to the allegation against the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations, available to the (each) student and his/her parent(s)/guardian(s). Each student against whom an allegation is made shall have the right to reply and to make any representations that she may wish to make or have made on his/ her behalf, within 10 days.
12. The school will consider any response and representation made and any other relevant considerations, including but not limited to mitigating and aggravating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
13. The Principal shall inform each student and his/her parents/guardians of the school's findings by letter. In the event that the investigation concludes that the student is in breach of the Substance Use policy, the Principal shall inform the student and his/her parents/guardians of the sanctions imposed.
14. The Principal may decide to refer any finding of a breach of this Substance Use policy to the Board of Management for further consideration. In such an event the student and his/her parents/guardians shall be given an opportunity to make a reply to the matters at issue. The decision of the Board shall be conveyed by registered letter, outlining, where necessary, procedures for appeal.
15. The school shall ensure that pastoral supports are offered to those affected by an incident of substance abuse.
16. In the event of an inquiry from the media, the school shall not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in process. The school may outline its policy and procedures for managing allegations of substance abuse. It may, in the interests of the reputation of the school, indicate the nature of any final determination of any investigation.

6. Role and Responsibilities

THE INVOLVEMENT AND ROLES OF VARIOUS PARTIES IN AN INCIDENT INVESTIGATION.

The Principal or Principal's nominated person, the Deputy Principal or nominated staff member is the person responsible for all matters in this area.

The Principal/or nominated person will have the following duties and responsibilities:

1 The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school.

2 All reports of abuse or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.

3 The Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of an incident: communication with, liaison with and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.

4 The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation documents.

5 The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.

6 The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.

7 The Principal may seek the assistance of the deputy principal, class teacher, and or school guidance counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

8 Communication with the student and parents will be as per the procedures laid down in the previous section.

9 The Principal will decide on the appropriate sanction, suspension, or referral to the Board of Management for a longer suspension or expulsion.

DUTY OF STAFF

The Board of Management requires all staff to report immediately, via the incident report form, any incidents where pupils/employees/visitors:

- Encounter the use /suspected use of alcohol drugs on the school premises in the school grounds or during a school related activity
- Exhibit symptoms/behaviour that may suggest the use of alcohol/drugs
- Are involved or suspected of being involved in the distribution, purchase or use of alcohol/drugs.
- Discover suspect substances /paraphernalia in the school.

The school personnel will seek to establish the facts and to be clear about the nature of the incident before deciding on a course of action. There will be no assumption of guilt at this stage

The student should not be confronted openly before his/her peers. There should be no assumption of guilt regarding substance misuse/ abuse, as there are a variety of conditions,

which might mimic the suspected misuse of substances .The possession of tablets might be for medicinal use.

The teacher is entitled to request the surrender of a suspicious substance or paraphernalia.

This should be handed over without fuss. The teacher should not seek to search the pupil or his/her possessions. Where there is a refusal to co-operate the pupil should be brought to the Deputy principal/Principal whose responsibility it is to proceed with the matter.

On Health and Safety grounds the Principal / Deputy Principal can request the student in question to surrender the suspicious substance and to cooperate in revealing the contents of bags clothing and personal possessions if necessary

In the case of lack of cooperation from the student, the parents should be informed of the situation and that the Gardai may also have to be notified. The student's bags, and personal property should isolated until the parents/Gardai arrive.

John Scottus School reserves the right to search school property including lockers and toilets at any time.

The Principal /Deputy Principal will recognise that the Health and Safety and the wellbeing of the student/students are paramount and will seek medical aid if deemed necessary. The student will be provided with the appropriate guidance and support they need.

A student may be asked to provide a medical certificate to indicate they are drugs free and are not a threat to Health and Safety before they return to school.

Approved: May 2022

Appendix 1:

GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Signs and Symptoms

Warning signs in an Individual

Changes in attendance
Being unwilling to take part in College Activities
Unusual outbreaks of temper
Marked mood swings
Restlessness, irritability
Reports from parents - more time spent away from home
Excessive tiredness
Sores or rashes around the mouth
Loss of appetite
Heavy use of scents
Using sun glasses at inappropriate times

Warning signs in Groups

Regular absences on certain days
Keeping away from other pupils
Rumours of drug taking
Talking to strangers near College
Stealing in teams
Using drug takers' slang
Exchanging money or goods in unusual circumstances
Associating with much older people

Objects associated with substance abuse

Foil containers or cup shapes made from foil - possibly discoloured by heat
Spoons discoloured by heat
Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrapper
Small plastic/glass bottles Straw Syringe
Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse)
Cardboard or other tubes (heroin)
Stamps, stickers or other similar items
Twist of paper
Sugar lumps
Cigarette papers and lighter