

# Scoil Bhríde

## Substance Use Policy



### **Mission Statement**

St. Brigid's Secondary School is a voluntary Catholic School Which values and maintains a Christian ethos of mercy, justice and equality for all. Its aim is the pursuit of excellence In a centre of holistic learning. We actively nurture a caring environment in which respect for all is the hallmark.

### **Rationale for Substance Use Policy:**

1. In the present climate of social change and rising use and misuse of both legal and illegal substances, the school has a significant role to play.
2. This role focuses on both creating an awareness and in educating the student and the wider community in the dangers involved in both the use and misuse of substances and their effect on the individual and the community.
3. This is in order to create a safer environment for all who are served by the school.
4. In the event of a substance use incident, it is important that there are clear and consistent guidelines and procedures for all members of the school community.
5. The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy
6. The Education Act ('98) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health and education for them.

**Scope of Policy:**

This policy applies to all teaching and Non-Teaching staff (including contract and occasional workers). Students, Parents/ Guardians and all other users of the school campus, during any school related activity and situations which reflect on the school community.

**Relationship to Mission Statement**

The school asserts its right to protect and promote its particular ethos by requiring certain standard of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices, as outlined in the Mission Statement.

**Statement of Policy:**

This school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substance and/or paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school-related activity.

An exception to this is made for the use of properly prescribed drugs and insist that parents of students taking prescribed medication inform the school in writing of that fact.

**Substance Use Education:**

This school, within –the- limited resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all its students.

This programme of education will be age-appropriate and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes already being taught in the school SPHE, RE SCIENCE, PE, CSPE, etc.

**Role of Parents**

Parents are asked/expected to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes
- Recognize that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse
- Assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise...

**Information for Parents:**

To assist the parents in their role the school will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes (ex. SPHE etc.) ...
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation

**Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Drug related or Substance Abuse Incidents:** This school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

Head or school guidance Counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

### **Parents/guardians**

- It would be normal practice to notify Parents/Guardians at the earliest
- Opportunity if their daughter is involved in substance misuse, as parent/guardian
- Involvement is and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these
- Difficulties. The parents/guardians will be required to attend the school to discuss what has happened and the course of action to be taken. The students will be informed and their parents/guardians are being notified
- As this can be distressing time for the students, parents/guardians and other family members, every effort will be made to deal with the matter as discreetly and sensitively as possible within the terms of the school Substance Use Policy

**Confidentiality:**

- The school recognizes the importance in limiting, as far as its practicable,
- The number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident and that is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident.
- Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members where upon
- The discretion within these limits will be observed.

**External Agencies:**

This school may be required, in a given situation, to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Garda, HSE, Tusla, or Officers of the courts. The school has a positive working relationship with local Garda and together they have the local welfare of the individual student, other students and the wider school community to consider.

Garda advice may be sought about incidents that are illegal and constitute a breach of this policy. The final decision will with senior management and other key staff members.

The school also asserts their fight to inform the garda of any alcohol or illicit substance activity affecting the welfare of the school community where the gardai contact the school.

The school will endeavour to cooperate fully.

**Media inquiries:**

The school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents.

In the interests of the school's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

### **Procedure for Disposal:**

If an illegal substance (or suspected illegal substance) is found on school property or during school activity, it should be brought to the attention of Senior Management. It should be stored securely in the presence of at least two staff members while the Gardai are informed and until they come to collect it. The substance should be handled as little as possible in the interim and no attempt should be made to analyze it.

### **Search**

Under the 1977 Misuse of Drugs Act---- section 19, the school is legally obliged to keep its school and property drug free. This includes school lockers. The students will be given the option to hand over the substance voluntarily prior to search. Two staff members must be present during any form of search. If they refuse, parents/guardians will be notified and the gardai may be called (in the case of suspected illegal substance).

### **Health and Safety**

In accordance with the Health and Safety Policy of the school, all materials of a dangerous nature will be stored securely in a safe area where they will be unobtainable by anyone other than those who use them in the course of their work duties. These include cleaning agents and solvents.

### **Provision for Training and Development**

The school will provide training for staff, Board of Management, parents, and student, within the limited resources it has.

### **Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating**

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

## **Definitions:**

### **The School.**

The school includes school buildings, grounds, play areas, public areas where students congregate coming to and from school, and any other specific area that might apply.

### **Banned or Prohibited Substances**

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. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

### **Drug Paraphernalia**

Any band or prohibited substance as defined above any items that may be deemed to be used in taking of illicit substances, and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

### **An abuse incident**

During school functions or outings or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned or to other students, or reputation of the school, the school reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the policy.

### **Parents**

This includes natural parents foster step parents, or guardian of the student concerned as applicable or any person acting in loco parentis either on a temporary or permanent basis on the date of an abuse incident.

### **Principal**

The principal as appointed by the school and defined in the education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the deputy principal where the principal either unavailable or has delegated to the deputy principal.

## **Detailed Steps**

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the school involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident
2. The completion of an abuse incident report form.
3. The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
4. The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
5. In the event of an incident the school will seek statements from all persons involved in concerned with or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident including records referred to in the above stages communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation the investigation outcome, decision taken and the rationale for these decisions any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
7. The school at its own discretion will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
8. A statement if the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, giving full particulars of the incident will be given to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
  - (a) copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and her parents at the discretion, of the school, in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that she would wish to make or have made on her behalf
  - (b) The school will allow the student concerned and her parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue the school will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous

considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.

(c) The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and her parents of the school's finding and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances

9. In relation to a verified and investigated incident the board of but not limited to an oral warning, a written warning a suspension of three days duration a suspension of more than three days duration other sanctions short of exclusion and expulsion.

10. The school can at its sole discretion postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.

11. The school should also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the student/students and parents affected by an incident of substance abuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a tutor counsellor chaplain etc would demonstrate the school's Christian commitment at a time of personal crisis.

### **The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation**

#### **Principal:**

The principal or his delegate is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area. He or she may nominate the deputy principal or year head or other nominated staff to act on his or her behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident. The duties and responsibilities of the principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the principal or his/her nominee) in this regard include the following:

1. The principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school
2. All reports of abuse incidents 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 for keeping relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation.

4. The principal is responsible for keeping relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments
5. The principal is reasonable 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 would be done with same upon appropriate advice.
7. The principal may seek the assistance of the deputy principal Year Head.