



SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY FOR LEARNERS

Date of review of policy:

September 2024

Date of next review:

September 2026

Review members:

- Mrs. C Bezuidenhout – Head of Human Resources
- Mr. M.T Fielding – Executive Discipline Manager
- Mrs. T. Venter – Head of Academics
- Mrs. D. Dipholo – Academic Co-ordinator
- Quality Assurance Team (Ms. D. Venter, Mr. K. Mantso, Mrs. C.S Makonjwa)

1. POLICY STATEMENT

The policy on the management of substance abuse by learners is based on the National “Policy Framework for the Management of Drug Abuse by Pupils in Schools and in Public Further Education and Training Institutions”, which was published as a General Notice in the Government Gazette dated 13 December 2002. The policy has been written in keeping with the current medical and psychological understanding of substance use and abuse by adolescent learners.

2. INTRODUCTION

The School recognises that:

- A safe and disciplined learning environment is one of the critical elements to the successful delivery of quality education and acknowledges the role played by drugs in undermining this.
- Available evidence indicates that school communities are particularly vulnerable and drug use by learners is on the rise in schools.
- There is a high correlation between drug abuse and other anti-social and high-risk behavior, including dishonesty, theft, violence and gangsterism.
- Purely punitive approaches to drug abuse can only produce part of the solution.
- Drug abuse is detrimental to individuals on social, physical, emotional and psychological levels.
- The possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs, and the inappropriate possession, use or distribution of legal drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, are prohibited in South African Schools.
- The school has a zero-tolerance policy towards drug possession and usage.

3. AIMS OF THE POLICY

- To help and support not only those learners who abuse drugs, but also the majority of learners and staff who do not use drugs, but who may be affected by the usage of drugs by others.
- Not to condemn learners who use drugs, but to ensure that appropriate support is provided to learners who require help for drug-related problems when they confide in the school.
- To outline effective prevention, management and treatment plans for drug use, misuse and dependency.
- To ensure a supportive environment, ever mindful of the rights of learners with drug use, abuse or dependency problems, as well as other learners, educators and members of the school community.

4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY

In dealing with all incidents involving the use and/or abuse of substances, the school shall endeavor to adhere to the following principles:

- The inappropriate possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs is not acceptable, and this message should be clearly and consistently communicated to the school community.
- Any action taken should be consistent with the school's desire to develop a safe and supportive environment that values forgiveness and human dignity and celebrates innocence.
- Intervention should primarily be aimed at providing support, restoring health, addressing underlying psychological issues and preventing relapses.
- All information relating to drug use, misuse or dependency by a learner should be treated sensitively and in accordance with the school's guidelines on confidentiality.
- In case of drug use and/or abuse, parents/guardians should be informed and involved at the earliest possible opportunity in any attempts to assist the learner.
- Learners who have experienced, or are currently experiencing problems because of drug use, misuse or dependency will be entitled to appropriate assistance and will not be denied the opportunity to receive an education or the right to reintegrate back into the school community.
- In cases where the learner does not wish to, or is unable to, make use of such help offered to him/her, the school will have no choice but to take the necessary action, which may include

suspension or expulsion, as determined by relevant legislation and the disciplinary code of the school.

- The school's amnesty program determines that:
 - The school will support any individual who voluntarily comes forward, is honest about his/her substance use, and shows a willingness to receive help with a substance abuse problem.
 - A learner who approaches a staff member and asks for assistance with a substance use or abuse problem, will not be subjected to any disciplinary action and the matter will be treated as confidential, provided that the learner agrees to seek help and to rehabilitate.

5. SIGNS OF POSSIBLE DRUG USE

Check for warning signs of drug use. These might include:

- Changes in the level of activity, including periods of tiredness or periods of hyperactivity, lack of coordination, staggering or slow movements, clumsiness and falling.
- Inaudible or confused speech, forgetfulness, and illogical conversations.
- Changes in physical appearance, such as drastic changes in style of clothing, being less concerned about appearance, which may become careless and untidy.
- Sudden aggressive and violent behavior, inexplicable outbursts of anger, restlessness, irritability and destructive behavior, such as punching walls, swearing, and fighting.
- Lack of motivation, sudden loss of interest in things that one previously enjoyed, such as hobbies or sports, or lack of concern about life in general.
- Severe mood alterations or mood swings, sudden excitement alternated by sudden feelings of depression, despondency and hopelessness.
- Alternation in thought patterns, such as strange and weird thinking, hallucinations, fear, abnormal suspiciousness, or depressive and suicidal thoughts.

6. DRUG SCREENING, TESTING AND RANDOM SEARCH AND SEIZURE

- Specific drug searches and seizures: where there is a clear link between an illegal activity and a learner, that learner will be searched and any drug found in his/her possession will be seized in terms of the Regulations Relating to Safety Measures at Independent Schools, published in the Government Gazette GN of 20 August 2004.

- Drug screening will not be the first point of intervention in dealing with issues of substance abuse, but may form part of a structured intervention that aims to educate all learners and to rehabilitate learners who are using and abusing substances.
- Drug screening may be considered if it is in the "child's best interest" and implemented in an environment that is committed to safeguarding personal rights relating to privacy, dignity and bodily integrity.
- Reasonable suspicion may be established in different ways:
 - An educator who has reason to believe that a learner is using drugs, should discuss this, in confidence, with the principal and/or Discipline Manager.
 - By other students informing the principal and/or Discipline Manager of the presence of drugs on school premises.
 - The scent of drugs, such as dagga.
 - Reports from parents.
 - Traces of drugs found on premises.
 - Any other reasonable indication.
- Where a drug screen is considered necessary, it should be carried out according to the following procedure:
 - The principal and/or Discipline Manager is responsible for contacting the learner and collecting relevant information regarding the situation.
 - If further action is required, the principal and/or Discipline Manager may ask the learner to take a drug-screening test.
 - The urine specimen for the drug screen should be collected by a same-sex educator in the staff bathrooms, in such a way that the learner's dignity is maintained and the integrity of the sample is not compromised.
 - The drug screen should be conducted in such a way that the learner's privacy is protected.
 - The testing kit must be opened in the presence of both the learner who is about to be tested and the witness.
 - The drug test and accompanying drug test template must be clearly labelled with the following:
 - Name of the learner.
 - Time and date of sample taken.
 - Name of the person who searched or took the sample.
 - Name of witness.

- The result of the drug test must be recorded on d6 Plus.
- The Principal, Discipline Manager or delegate must then test the urine using the testing device, according to the appropriate method.
- The testing of the urine specimen may be recorded/photographed as evidence.
- The results of the drug screen should be made known to the principal, the learner and the parent(s).
- In the case of a positive result on a drug screening test, the principal, the learner and his or her parent(s) should discuss the matter and agree on an appropriate management plan to ensure that the learner is rehabilitated.
- This plan should include a follow-up drug screening test.
- The learner should be cautioned that if he or she tests positive on a follow-up drug screening test after 1 calendar month, a disciplinary hearing will be held, which could lead to the expulsion of the learner.
- The use of codeine (for example cough mixtures) is considered as the use of drugs for purposes of this policy.
- Any learner who is using medication/prescribed medicine, must carry a letter from a registered health practitioner, indicating that this has been prescribed, or such letter should be kept on the learner's file (the letter must include the dates during which the medicine should be used as well as the frequency and quantity).
- Should a learner be tested positive, the parent will be requested to supply the school with three drug screening tests to be used on an ad hoc basis by the school.

7. FIRST OFFENCE

- If a learner tests positive for the first time, it should form part of a structured intervention or relapse prevention program.
- The principal and/or Discipline Manager must discuss the matter with the parent(s) and learner before intervening.
- If consent is given by the parent(s) and/or learner, then the learner should be referred for counselling, and if possible, a complete psychological assessment.
- Information and advice should be made available which could guide the parents to assist with the treatment of the learner.
- Follow-up drug screening tests will occur within a calendar month and are used as part of a structured intervention to prevent continued use of substances.

- The learner will receive a violation on their Conduct Report.
- If a learner is found in possession of illegal drugs, the learner will be suspended until a disciplinary hearing has been conducted (the disciplinary hearing may result in expulsion from school).

8. SECOND OFFENCE

In the case of a second violation where a learner tests positive for illegal drugs, the learner will be suspended until a disciplinary hearing has been conducted. The disciplinary hearing may result in expulsion from school.

9. EDUCATION AND PREVENTION MEASURES

● Education of learners

- The objective of preventive education is to reduce or delay the likelihood of experimentation with drugs, by providing information about the dangers of its use and misuse, as well as to reduce the stigma attached to alcohol and drug use, misuse and dependency. It is to encourage those who are experiencing problems to get the help they need.
- Drug education should ensure that learners acquire age- and context-appropriate knowledge and skills, for them to adopt and maintain life skills and behavior that will protect them from drug use, misuse and dependency.

● Education of parents/guardians

- Education and information on drug use, misuse and dependency as well as the school's policy on drug abuse should be made available to all parents/guardians of learners whenever considered necessary.

● Education of staff

- Training should be provided for all staff on drug use, misuse and dependency management, and support.
- Staff should also be trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of drug use.

10. AMENDMENTS TO POLICY

The School reserves its right to deviate from this policy if it deems it necessary or appropriate and to amend this policy from time to time in accordance with any changed policy considerations of the school or legal developments.