



# DOMINICAN COLLEGE

## SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Dominican College is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to alcohol, tobacco and drug use. The school guarantees, in so far as possible, a safe environment for all and emphasises that in the discharge of their duties, teachers act in loco parentis and are conscious of their duty of care.

1.2 A drug is defined as 'any substance which changes the way the body functions, be it mentally, physically or emotionally'.

1.3 Dominican College recognises that drugs, both legal and illegal may be available in the local community and that the school being part of this community may have drug incidences which need to be handled in a consistent and sensitive way.

1.4 This policy is formulated in the context of:

- a) The Education Act 1998 which requires schools to promote the social and personal development of students and to provide health education for them,
- b) The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 'Building on Experience'.
- c) Report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (November 2001).
- d) The 1999 Schools Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report.
- e) CL 18/02 and Guidelines for Developing a School Substance Use Policy (DES 2002).
- f) Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and 1984
- g) Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 to 2015
- h) Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act 2016

- i) The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- j) Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999.
- k) The Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002

## **2. SCOPE**

2.1 This Policy applies to the entire school community, including pupils, staff, parents/guardians, users of the school building and all visitors to the school.

2.2 It applies at all times to the school building and grounds, all school related activities and trips, and at all times when students are identifiable with the school (i.e. when the student is in school; going to and from school; on school buses; on school tours/trips; in school uniform or at locations associated with the school.)

## **3. SCHOOL ETHOS**

3.1 Dominican College is committed to educating the whole person to her full potential in a caring, supportive and happy environment. In accordance with the Vision and Mission Statements of the school, each student is directed and helped to become the best person she is capable of becoming. This Policy seeks to support the Mission of Dominican College in encouraging the healthy growth and development of each individual in our school community.

## **4. RATIONALE**

4.1 The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being.

4.2 Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. We in Dominican College seek to educate and protect our students by creating a safe community environment in which each student can develop towards her full potential.

- This policy is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by this school to ensure a caring community and a learning environment.
- The school asserts its rights to protect and promote its school ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.
- The Education Act 1998 states that schools should promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them in consultation with their parents and bearing in mind the characteristic spirit of the school.
- The National Drugs Strategy 'Building on Experience' is government policy and requires that all schools have a substance use policy.

## **5. AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

5.1 The central objective of our Policy is the welfare, care and protection of each member of our school community.

5.2 This policy aims:

- To provide a comprehensive programme of substance misuse.
- To equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.
- To manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner.

## **6. POLICY CONTENT**

6.1 This policy is focused on four key areas:

- Education concerning substance use.
- Management of tobacco, alcohol and drug related incidents.
- Provision for training and staff development.
- Monitoring, evaluating and review.

## **7. EDUCATION**

7.1 In so far as is possible our educational aims in relation to substance use are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of our students.
- To help our students develop the personal and social skills needed to make informed, healthy and responsible decisions.
- To help students appreciate ways in which they can control aspects of their own behaviour and resist negative peer pressure.
- To provide clear and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To increase students' understanding of situations in which substances may be offered, both legally and illegally and to develop skills for remaining in control in such situations.
- To make students aware of the law relating to the misuse of drugs/alcohol and tobacco.
- To provide knowledge about how to access agencies external to the school e.g. counselling services, clinics, hospitals etc.

7.2 These aims will be achieved by:

- Staff are offered relevant in-service training.
- Outside speakers from HSE, Gardaí and other agencies being used where appropriate to speak to students/teachers/parents to increase awareness.
- Student education through the SPHE, RSE, Science, Home Economics and Religion programmes.

## **8. MANAGEMENT OF TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND DRUG RELATED INCIDENTS**

8.1 The school will respond to incidents involving tobacco, alcohol and drug use in a planned and considered manner. In certain cases, it may be necessary to seek legal advice.

8.2 Smoking by students is prohibited in schools under The Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 and breaches of this may have serious implications for students. Students are not permitted to smoke in the school building, on the school grounds, while on school based/related/organised activities or while identifiable with the school.

8.3 Pupils found smoking on the school premises or in any other place during school related activities will be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal (Appendix 1) and the parents will be informed.

8.4 Infringement of this smoking ban may result in detention or suspension at the discretion of the Principal/Deputy Principal.

8.5 Dominican College deems it a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour if alcohol or drugs are used, sold or held in possession whilst on the school grounds, involved in a school related activity or while identifiable with the school.

8.6 If a member of staff is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance, he/she will immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and consult on what action should be taken.

8.7 Parents and guardians will be informed immediately and asked to come and take the student home. It may also be necessary to contact medical services if the situation warrants it. The incident will subsequently be dealt with in accordance with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour.

8.8 Pupils, staff, parents and visitors to the school are prohibited from being in possession of or using illicit drugs or misusing solvents on the school premises, on school related activities or while identifiable with the school.

8.9 In the case of actual possession of illegal drugs on the school premises, on school related activities or while identifiable with the school, the following parties will be informed immediately:

- Principal/Deputy Principal
- Chairperson of the Board of Management
- Gardaí
- Parents/Guardians will be contacted and requested to present themselves at the school or the location of the school related activity where they will be informed of the incident.

8.10 Procedures in dealing with tobacco, alcohol and drug related incidents may include some or all of the following:

- Assess the situation-the primary focus being on the safety of the child who may be under the influence of the above named substances.
- Inform Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Contact Parents/Guardians.
- Seek medical help/advice.
- Record incident (Appendix 1).
- Referral to outside agencies for support.
- Contact Gardaí.
- Sanctions up to and including expulsion as per the Code of Positive Behaviour.
- Report to Tusla (Child Protection guidelines).

8.11 We acknowledge that in all situations involving alcohol or drugs 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.

8.12 In dealing with tobacco, alcohol and drug related incidents a balance will be struck between a pastoral and a disciplinary approach as in accordance with our Code of Positive Behaviour.

8.13 It is school procedure not to respond or comment to the media in relation to a drug related incident unless the BOM has requested or sanctioned it. The Principal shall be the designated person for liaising with the media.

8.14 A limited number of people are involved in dealing with all suspected or confirmed alcohol/drug incidents. People will be only informed on a “need to know basis”. All written records will be held confidentially by the Principal or Deputy Principal. Parents/Guardians will be informed sensitively and support will be offered to them. In the case of illegal drugs, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact Gardaí and any drugs will be dealt with by Gardaí. In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered. The school will consider each substance incident individually and recognises that a variety of responses will be necessary to deal with incidents. The school will consider very carefully the implications of any action it may take.

## **9. TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT**

9.1 The school will facilitate training for staff involved in the SPHE Programme.

9.2 Staff members will be supplied with information on warning signs of drug or solvent misuse.  
(Appendix 2)

9.3 Parents will be encouraged to attend information evenings and any talks organised by the school or by the Parents Association.

9.4 The school will offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE classes.

9.5 Students will be encouraged to engage in sports and other activities which promote healthy lifestyles.

## **10. MONITORING EVALUATING & REVIEW**

10.1 The Policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure that it is still relevant and practical and that it complies with legislation.

**This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of Dominican College on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018.**

### APPENDIX 1

## REPORT FORM FOR RECORDING INCIDENTS INVOLVING TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of staff member \_\_\_\_\_

**Explain what happened. State facts only-what was seen? what was said? who was involved? what procedures were followed?**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **APPENDIX 2**

### **DRUG OR SOLVENT MISUSE: RECOGNISE THE SIGNS**

The signs listed in Tables 1 and 2 may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing drugs. Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of drug or solvent misuse: many of them are a normal part of adolescence, but the presence of several signs together may point the need for greater vigilance. Table 3 lists equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

#### **Table 1: Warning Signs in Individuals**

- Changes in attendance, and being unwilling to take part in school activities.
- Decline in performance in school work.
- Unusual outbreaks of temper, marked swings of mood, restlessness or irritability.
- Reports from parents that more time is being spent away from home, possibly with new friends or with friends in older age groups.
- Excessive spending or borrowing of money.
- Stealing money or goods.
- Excessive tiredness without obvious cause.
- No interest in physical appearance.
- Sores or rashes especially on the mouth or nose.
- Lack of appetite.
- Heavy use of scents, colognes etc. to disguise the smell of drugs.
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils).
- Unusual odours stains or marks on body or clothes.

#### **Table 2: Warning Signs in Groups**

- Regular absence on certain days (either day young people receive state benefit).

- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground or sports field).
- Being the subject of rumours about drug taking.
- Talking to strangers on or near the premises.
- Stealing which appears to be the work of several individuals rather than one person (e.g. perhaps to shoplift solvents).
- Use of drug takers' slang.
- Exchanging money or other objects in unusual circumstances.
- Associating briefly with one person who is much older and not normally part of the peer group.

**Table 3: Objects that may indicate Drug Misuse**

- Foil containers or cup shapes made from silver foil, perhaps discoloured by heat.
- Metal containers/boxes.
- Spoons discoloured by heat.
- Pill boxes.
- Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrappers.
- Small plastic or glass phials or bottles.
- Twists of paper.
- Straws.
- Sugar lumps.
- Syringes and needles (rare)
- Cigarette papers and lighters.
- Spent matches.
- Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse).
- Cardboard or other tubes (Heroin – rare).
- Stamps, stickers, transfer or similar items.
- Shredded cigarettes, home-rolled cigarettes and pipes (cannabis).
- Paper (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (Heroin – rare).