



St Mary's School
Waverley
Founded 1888

PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Agreement to abide by the spirit and terms of this policy as part of the St Mary's Code of Conduct, is a fundamental condition for acceptance into the school, for continued attendance, and for participation in all the school's programmes and activities.

1. Introduction

Key issues in this policy revolve around prevention, confidentiality and consequences. The policy has the objective of incorporating St Mary's Christian values into the principles and procedures of the document and aims to help the pupils strive for excellence in all spheres. St Mary's hopes to prepare the pupils for success and to help protect and safeguard them. This policy is proactive in encouraging healthy choices for adolescents and ensuring that the school is a drug-free zone.

2. Substance abuse

The word "substance" refers to any substance which has the potential of being abused. Ecstasy, heroin, cocaine and marijuana are examples of illegal drugs but this list is not exhaustive. Alcohol and tobacco products are also "substances".

Alcohol is considered a frequent entry point for further substance abuse. It is illegal for tobacco products to be sold to anyone under the age of sixteen years and it is illegal for alcohol to be sold or served to anyone under the age of eighteen.

3. Approach

The policy regarding substance abuse applies within the context of St Mary's, that is: St Mary's premises, tours, camps, any occasion where pupils represent St Mary's. The approach to difficulties such as those of alcohol and substance abuse must be measured against the standard of the Code of Conduct at St Mary's. In addition the following principles have specific relevance to the requirements of pastoral care, education and discipline, in respect of the problems of abuse and dependency.

3.1 Every child is unique and special

The ethos of St Mary's is that each pupil and setting will be treated with sensitivity. While every pupil most certainly is unique and special and each case regarded on its merits, the St Mary's community has to act for the good of the whole community and all action will be taken with this view in mind.

3.2 Prevention

The concept of development of the whole person within the context of the community is inherent in the educational ethos of St Mary's and is crucial in preventing the abuse of drugs and alcohol. Educational programmes which help to raise awareness of the problems of abuse and dependency involve staff, parents and pupils on an ongoing basis. In turn, this awareness builds an informed, alert and caring community.

3.3 Compassion and specialised support

Education at St Mary's School is as much concerned with the pastoral needs of its pupils, as it is with their academic progress. Pupils need to be given help and support to deal effectively with their perceived difficulties, no matter what these might be. Pupils with difficulties of abuse and dependency may require specialised help, over and above that offered to the general body of pupils in terms of education.

The school, in association with and by referral to accredited and appropriate professionals and organisations, will assist pupils with abuse and dependency problems in establishing a programme of self-help and rehabilitation. All assistance will be provided in a manner which is consistent with accepted professional ethics and codes of conduct, which honours the dignity and rights of the pupil, recognises parental responsibility and serves the best interests of the school as a whole. The costs of such professionals and counselling will be borne by parents.

3.4 Disciplinary action must be just and fair

Disciplinary measures can be consistent with holistic education only if they are administered with justice and fairness. This applies as much to the procedures for investigation as they do for the implementation of punishment. The St Mary's School community will adhere strictly to the requirements of the South African Constitution, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child and the Gauteng Schools' Act in the implementation of all disciplinary procedures regarding substance abuse and dependence.

3.5 Confidentiality

The issue of confidentiality in building trust between different parties is essential in order for support to be effective. The confidentiality of the pupil and the family concerned will be considered throughout any procedures contemplated in this policy so long as it serves the best interests of the school as a whole. The issue of confidentiality will be affected by how flagrant the situation of substance abuse is.

4. Education

The aim of the educational programme is to encourage girls to take care of themselves in whatever situations they may find themselves and to be able to make informed and courageous choices.

In keeping with the Code of Conduct and the ethos of the school, and the principle of being pro-active in dealing with life situations, the school will organise a range of educational events and programmes dealing with the difficulties of substance abuse and dependency. Pupils and parents should be aware of what drugs are available, their effects and should appreciate the consequences of any substance abuse. Parental involvement, which enhances the success of these programmes, is encouraged by the school.

It is important to understand the consequences of substance abuse within the family unit and that substance abuse does not affect only the pupil herself. Should parents need to be involved in a programme of supporting their daughter, the school will assist by referring the family to appropriate experts.