

## **Policy on Positive and Healthy Living.** (focusing on drugs misuse).

### **SECTION ONE; INTRODUCTION**

This policy on substance use has been agreed by the whole school community and applies to that community, including all staff, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building.

The policy is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. This Healthy Living Policy is one among many that serve to promote and support the school's ethos. Mount Sion Secondary School asserts its right to protect and promote its ethos by requiring standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

### **SECTION TWO; SCHOOL POLICY**

The school does **not** accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia by any person in the school, on school trips or outings, or during school related activity. (Students will be permitted to take prescribed medications during the school day if the Principal is notified **in writing**, by parents where the need arises).

#### **The Role of Parents;+**

With regard to the programme made available in the school, parents are expected to;

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

To assist parents in their role the school will;

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes.
- 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.

## **RATIONALE**

The school community, in its concern to promote a positive attitude to healthy living, wishes to ensure the protection, support and safety of all those who form part of that community.

Mindful of the problems resulting from the misuse of legal and illegal substances in areas of health, social relationships and financial stability, Mount Sion Secondary School promotes a drugs free environment as an integral part of a policy of healthy living.

This policy contains **THREE** key elements.

**1) Drug Education;**

A student will be provided with education on alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on an ongoing basis and within the resources available, while attending Mount Sion C.B.S.

Education provision for the rest of the school community will be provided by agreement.

**2) Management of alcohol, tobacco and other drug related incidents;**

The school's Code of Behaviour is based on concern for their common good. While the school may be able to respond to drug-related incidents within this code, more serious incidents may require a graded response ranging from referral and rehabilitation to suspension and/or permanent exclusion. The school will always strive to strike a balance between a pastoral and disciplinary response. In the case of permanent exclusion the usual Right of Appeal will apply. (CF. Appendix for detailed procedures to be followed in the event of an 'abuse incident').

Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drugs use might include (this list is not exhaustive);-

- Use or suspected use of alcohol or other drugs on the school premises or during school related activity.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour.
- Disclosure about use.
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia.
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school related activity.

**3) Provision of Training and Staff Development**

In the development of a healthy living policy all staff of the school will be provided with initial information and instruction from the South Eastern Health Board. The school authorities will always consider the necessity of further training where appropriate.

## **Reporting procedures;**

Mount Sion Secondary School is a 'telling school' and welcomes and encourages reporting of all incidents affecting the positive well being of any member of its community.

While individual cases will be handled with discretion and on a 'need to know' basis, due to possible criminal liability 'absolute confidentiality' cannot be guaranteed, if such confidentiality threatens the welfare of anyone within the school.

It is the policy of the school that any illegal drugs found on the premises will be passed on, through the Principal, to the Gardai for destruction.

Our duty of care to the school community precludes any public disclosure of any drug-related incidents within that community.

## **Review & Evaluation**

Responsibility for the successful implementation of the Policy lies with every member of the School Community, acting with the authority of the Board of Management.

This policy will be subject to annual review and evaluation during the first term of each school year.

This review will be carried out by representatives of the school community.

This policy will be made available to all members of the school community.

## **Appendix 1 Relevant Legislation**

The policy is underpinned by the following pieces of legislation, all of which are available for inspection at the school office.:-

Education Act (1998)

The Misuse of Drugs Act (1977-1984).

Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Regulations (1993)

Non Fatal Offences Against the Persons Act (1997)

Education Welfare Act (2000).

## **Appendix 2 Definition**

Definition of a drug within the terms of the policy;-

‘Any substance including alcohol, tobacco, volatile substance, illegal use of prescribed medication and all substances covered under the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977-1984) that changes the way the body feels, acts and thinks.

Drugs ‘paraphernalia’ shall be any items that may be deemed to be used for taking of any illicit substances including hash pipes, bongs, lungs and other written or printed materials promoting the use of any illicit substances or any banned or prohibited substances.

The ‘**school**’ includes school buildings, grounds, play areas (when in use) or immediate environs of the school.

For the purpose of the policy, **Parents**, includes natural parents, foster parents, step parents or guardians 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.

The Principal refers to the principal for the time being appointed by the Board of Management and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the deputy principal where the principal is either unavailable or authority has been delegated to the deputy principal.

## **Appendix 3 Procedures.**

Procedures for Managing Alcohol (Tobacco) Drug related, or substance abuse incidents.

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the school will suspend or remove temporarily from the school any

- student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
2. An Abuse Incident Report Form will be completed.
  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.
  6. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions 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. If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident 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 to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his parents – at the discretion of the school – in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
    - (b) The school will allow the student concerned and his parents/guardians 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 his parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of an 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 Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to; An oral warning, a suspension for three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, 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.