



Substance Use Policy

Sapientia et Virtute With Wisdom and Courage

Substance Use Policy

This Policy/Statement of Strategy was ratified by the Board of Directors	Date
This Policy will be reviewed in:	
This policy was reviewed by:	



Substance Use Policy

Introduction

This policy applies to all students and all staff of Regina Mundi College and to all persons using the premises during the operation of the school including break times and all involved with and participating in school related activities including school trips, including going to and coming from school or when wearing school uniform. By substances the school means alcohol, cigarettes, legal drugs/medication, illegal drugs and solvents.

Relationship to school ethos

The ethos of Regina Mundi College aspires to promote excellence be it moral, academic, sporting, practical or creative. Students are expected to have a strong sense of social responsibility and personal excellence rooted in strong moral conviction.

To facilitate the realisation of this ethos and to enable students to make positive life choices Regina Mundi College has structures in place which support the needs and the welfare of students and staff.

Rationale

This policy has been formulated to protect all students and staff of Regina Mundi College. Many issues outside our school have an impact on our school community. The school, in arriving at a policy to deal with the possession of, distribution of and use of substances, is conscious that each situation is unique and thus, a flexible response is required.

When referring to substances the Board of Directors of Regina Mundi College defines them as follows:

All substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, the misuse of solvents, the use and misuse of matches, lighters and fireworks, bangers all alcohol and tobacco used contrary to the law of the land. Regina Mundi College also reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned substance. The school policy aims to cooperate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for school in DES circular 18/02. The Education Act 1998 provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

Policy Objectives

- Maintain a safe environment for students and staff both in school and on school activities
- Education concerning substance use
- Management of alcohol, cigarettes and drug related instances

- Provision for training and staff development
- Provision for informing parent(s)/guardian(s)

Education concerning substance use for students

Education about the use of alcohol, cigarettes incl e-cigarettes and drugs and the consequences of the misuse of substances is provided as part of the SPHE programme. This education is provided in the Junior Cycle through specific modules as part of the existing school subjects SPHE, RE and Home Economics. In the Senior Cycle it is provided through Pastoral Care, RE and special seminars and workshops.

This education is provided as far as possible by teachers with appropriate training and using student centred methodologies in an honest and age appropriate manner.

Visiting speakers will complement the school's educational programme. In accordance with Child Protection Policy, a teacher is always present in the room when a visiting speaker is addressing students.

This education programme focuses on equipping students to make healthy, informed choices through the development of awareness, self-esteem and personal skills and the provision of information.

Management of Alcohol, Cigarettes incl E-Cigarettes and Drug Related Incidents

Staff cannot administer prescribed or unprescribed medication, however the school would like parent(s)/guardian(s) to inform their daughter's Year Head if their daughter is on medication.

Under the Health & Safety Policy of this school all dangerous substances, solvents and cleaning agents are held in a secure location.

The management of the school responds to substance related incidents with discretion and consideration of the particular situation and in the interest of the welfare of the individual and the general school community.

Recording Procedures

All staff need to be aware of the signs of substance use and be alert for changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour must not be taken as evidence of drug use.

The Board of Directors of Regina Mundi College requires all staff to report immediately to the Principal any incidents where students, employees or visitors

- Encounter the unsanctioned use or suspected use of alcohol, cigarettes incl e-cigarettes, drugs on the school premises or during a school related activity (e.g. outing, tour)

- Exhibit symptoms or behaviour that may suggest the use of alcohol, cigarettes incl e-cigarettes, drugs
- Are involved in the distribution, purchase or use of alcohol, cigarettes incl e-cigarettes, drugs
- Discover suspect substances, paraphernalia
- An incident report form must be completed as soon as possible
- School personnel will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances or paraphernalia associated with the abuse incident, and carefully record such items. They will retain them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies
- In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, and concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident. They will record this statement as part of the investigation
- The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident including referred to in the above steps, records of communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with matters of the investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for those decisions. The school will also keep a record of any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation
- Regina Mundi College reserve the right to search school property including lockers and toilets at any time

The Principal will seek to establish the facts and to be clear about the nature of the incident before deciding on the course of action. There will be no assumption of guilt.

The teacher is entitled to request the surrender of a suspicious substance. This will be done with minimal fuss. The teacher will not seek to search the student or her possessions. Where there is refusal to co-operate the student will be brought to the Principal or Deputy Principal whose responsibility it is to proceed with the matter.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will recognise that the health and safety and the well being of the student/students is paramount. They will contact parent(s)/guardian(s) immediately and will seek medical aid if deemed necessary. The student will be provided with the appropriate Pastoral Care, Guidance and support they need.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

In the case of an incident, it is school policy to inform parent(s)/guardian(s). This will be handled sensitively and wherever possible support offered to them. In the first instance this will be provided by the Guidance Counsellor.

Pastoral Care

The pastoral care system is our first response to a substance use incident. The pastoral care team includes Class Teacher, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor, SPHE teachers, RE teachers and subject teachers.

Where necessary, legal advice may be sought. If illegal drugs or paraphernalia is found on the school premises the school will contact An Garda Síochána about its safe disposal.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and Deputy Principal to summon such persons as may be helpful to the issue. Teachers in their pastoral role may encounter changes in a student's behaviour and attitude and on occasion or over a period of time. This may be for a variety of reasons and may not necessarily be indicative of substance misuse.

Confidentiality

As per Regina Mundi Confidentiality policy.

The school encourages any student who finds herself in difficulty with substance abuse, or any student aware of another in difficulty, to seek advice from any member of the school staff, such as their class teacher, the school guidance counsellor or any other staff member. Information received by the school from a student in these circumstances will be treated sensitively and will only be disclosed to others on a 'need to know' basis in accordance with law and current best practice guidelines.

The school cannot offer an absolute guarantee of confidentiality to students.

Parents/Guardians are encouraged also to keep the school informed of any substance abuse issue arising for their daughter. The students are in the care of the school five days a week, the school is in loco parentis and the school needs this information to fulfil its duty of care. Parents/guardians are encouraged to contact the Principal or Deputy Principal and to seek the school's help in supporting their daughter.

Any enquiry from a third party whether a journalist or otherwise, in relation to any incident involving substance abuse, should be referred immediately without comment to the Principal, or the Deputy Principal. No acknowledgement should be made to any third party that an incident has taken place, no comment whatsoever should be made unless otherwise decided by the Principal/Deputy Principal. In the case of a serious incident the school will follow the procedures outlined in the Critical Incident Policy.

An Garda Síochána

It is agreed that the Principal or a designated person will contact Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer in the event of a confirmed drug incident. Any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by An Garda Síochána.

Disciplinary Procedures

Regina Mundi College reserves the right to suspend, permanently exclude or remove temporarily, any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete

investigation of the incident. This applies particularly where there is a threat to Health and Safety of students of the school community.

Substance use incidents are complex and in situations where school rules are broken the sanction and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the offence. (See RMC Code of Behaviour).

The Principal may decide in particular circumstances to opt for a counselling solution or he/she may involve the Board of Directors of suspension (short term/ long term) or exclusion. Return to school may depend on participation in an appropriate counselling programme. Parental/ guardian involvement and guarantees may be required. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of all students are afforded the right to appeal in all instances of suspension or exclusion as are students aged 18yrs or older. The Principal will deal with any queries from the media and will liaise with relevant outside agencies.

Provision for training and staff development

The Board of Directors of Regina Mundi College is committed to training and staff development in the area of substance use. A programme of in-service training is ongoing with the SPHE support service and the HSE. A panel of teachers has already been trained in this and will be maintained. The school will endeavour to provide information regarding substance use for parents/guardians through the Parents' Council.

Review of the policy

The policy will be reviewed periodically or in the event of an incident or in the light of changing information in consultation with the wider school community. Teachers, parents/guardians, students, Board of Directors and other relevant groups will be involved in the review of this policy and any changes incorporated into the amended policy.

Dissemination of policy

Copies of this policy will be disseminated to all the school community. It will also be made available on the website.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

