

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

DATE OF REVIEW OF POLICY:
November 2018

DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:
September 2019



AMBERFIELD
COLLEGE

Review members:

- Ms L van Vuuren – Academic director
- Ms K Panayotakis – Executive Principal
- Ms Bronwen Derbyshire – Principal
- Mr Nico Liebenberg – Discipline Manager
- Ms S Bulwan - Discipline Manager

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 13th 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 behaviour, including dishonesty, theft, violence and “gangsterism”
- Purely punitive approaches to drug abuse can only produce part of the solution; and
- Drug abuse is detrimental to individuals on social, physical, emotional and psychological levels

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
- To outline the 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 endeavour to adhere to the following principles:

- The possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs, and the inappropriate possession, use or distribution of 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, human dignity and celebrates innocence
- Intervention should primarily be aimed at providing support, restoring health, addressing underlying psychological issues and preventing relapse
- All information relating to drug use, misuse or dependency by a learner, should be treated sensitively and in accordance with the schools 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 experiencing problems as a result 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 reintegration back into the school community. However, in cases where the learner does not wish to make use of such help offered to him, the school will have no choice but to take the necessary action, which may include suspension or

expulsion, as determined by relevant legislation

- The school's amnesty programme

- The school will support any individual who voluntarily comes forward, is honest about his 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 substance use or abuse problem will not be subjected to any disciplinary action. The matter will be treated as confidential, provided that the learner agrees to seek help

5. 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 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 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
- Where a drug screen is considered necessary, it should form part of a structured intervention or relapse prevention programme, and should be carried out according to the following procedure:
 - An educator who has reason to believe that a learner is using drugs, should discuss this, in confidence, with the principal
 - The principal may elect to discuss the matter with one of the school's psychologists before intervening
 - The principal will be responsible for making contact with the learner, collecting relevant information and making an assessment of the situation
 - If further action is required, the principal will 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 toilet, 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 results of the drug screen should be made known to the principal, the learner and parent(s)
 - The drug test must be clearly labelled with the following:
 - 1) Name of learner
 - 2) Time and date of sample taken
 - 3) Name of person who searched or took the sample
 - 4) Name of witness
 - 5) The drug test must be recorded on the Principal Plus
- In the case of a positive result on a drug screening test the principal, learner and his/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 follow up drug screening test
- The learner should be cautioned that if he/she tests positive on a follow-up drug screening test, the principal will have no option but to expel the learner
- The use of codeine (for example cough mixtures) is considered to be included as the use of drugs for purposes of this policy. Any learner who is using medication of prescribed medicine must carry a letter from a registered doctor indicating that this has been prescribed. The letter must include the dates during which the medicine should be used
- Should a learner be tested positive, the parent will be requested to supply the school with four drug screening tests to be used on an ad hoc basis by the school

6. FIRST OFFENCE

- Learner should be referred for complete psychological assessment
- Suspension of the learner from school for a period of up to 1 (one) month. The learner will be allowed to write tests and exams
- Follow-up drug screening tests as part of a structured intervention to prevent continued use of substances
- Learner will be given a demerit

7. SECOND OFFENCE

- In the case of a second violation of this policy, the learner could face expulsion from school

8. 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 their 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, in order for them to adopt and maintain life skills and behaviour 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

9. 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