



Substance Abuse Policy

OVERVIEW

Purpose	The purpose of this policy is to outline the School's position and rules relating to substance abuse. Provisions related to in-person activity are applicable to students at the Boutique Campus as well as any in-person school-based activities.
Custodian	St Stithians Online School Head & Registrar of Valentre Institute
Approval Authority	Rector of St Stithians College
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1. Preamble

This policy on the management of substance abuse by students is based on the National “Policy Framework For The Management Of Drug Abuse By Students 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 adolescents.

2. Definitions

The **“School”** is taken to mean St Stithians Online School.

“Drug” is taken to mean a chemical substance that produces a psychoactive effect. For the purpose of this policy it excludes alcohol and tobacco, which are dealt with in separate policies, but includes herbal cigarettes, cannabis, inhalants, pharmaceutical drugs, illicit drugs as well as image and performance enhancing substances.

“Substance” is taken to have the same meaning as “drug” outlined above.

“Staff” is taken to mean all individuals employed by the school as academic or teaching personnel.

3. The School recognises that:

- 3.1. 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;
- 3.2. available evidence indicates that school communities are particularly vulnerable and drug use by students is on the increase in schools;



- 3.3. there is a high correlation between drug abuse and other anti-social and high-risk behaviour, including dishonesty, theft, violence and gangsterism;
- 3.4. purely punitive approaches to drug abuse can only produce part of the solution; and
- 3.5. drug abuse is detrimental to individuals on social, physical, emotional and psychological levels.

4. Objectives of the Policy

- 4.1. To reduce the possibility of students using drugs
- 4.2. To help and support not only those students who abuse drugs, but also the majority of students and staff who do not use drugs but who may be affected by the usage of drugs by others.
- 4.3. Not to condemn students who use drugs, but to ensure that appropriate support is provided to students who require help for drug related problems.
- 4.4. To outline the effective prevention, management and treatment plans for drug use, misuse and dependency.
- 4.5. To ensure a supportive environment, ever mindful of the rights of students with drug use, abuse or dependency problems, as well as other students, teachers and members of the school community.

5. 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:

- 5.1. The possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs, and the inappropriate possession, use or distribution of legal drugs, is not acceptable at the



school and this message should be clearly and consistently communicated to the school community.

- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. Intervention should primarily be aimed at providing support, restoring health, addressing underlying psychological issues and preventing relapse.
- 5.4. All information relating to drug use, misuse or dependency by a pupil, should be treated sensitively.
- 5.5. In cases of drug use and/or abuse parents/guardians should be informed and involved at the earliest possible opportunity in any attempts to assist the pupil.

6. Drug Screening/Testing

- 6.1. Drug screening will not necessarily 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 students and rehabilitate students who are using and abusing substances.
- 6.2. 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.
- 6.3. If a drug screen is considered necessary by the school, it should form part of a structured intervention or relapse prevention programme, and should be carried out according to the following procedure:
 - 6.3.1. A teacher, who has reason to believe that a pupil is using drugs, should discuss this, in confidence, with the Campus Manager or Head.



- 6.3.2. The Campus Manager will be responsible for making contact with the pupil, collecting relevant information and making an assessment of the situation.
- 6.3.3. If further action is required this should be discussed with the Head. If appropriate in consultation with the students' parents and with their consent, the Campus Manager will ask the pupil to consent to a drug screening test. The pupil must give his written consent for the drug screening test.
- 6.3.4. The urine specimen for the drug screen should be collected by the School Counsellor in such a way that the pupil's dignity is maintained and the integrity of the sample is not compromised.
- 6.3.5. In these instances the sample will be sent to a Pathologist for laboratory testing.
- 6.3.6. The drug screen should be conducted in such a way that the pupil's privacy is protected.
- 6.3.7. The results of the drug screen should be made known to the Campus Manager, the pupil and his parents.
- 6.3.8. In the case of a positive result on a drug screen the Campus Manager, pupil and their parents should discuss and agree on an appropriate management plan to ensure that the pupil is rehabilitated. This plan should include follow up drug screens and a referral.
- 6.3.9. The pupil should be cautioned that if tested positive on a follow-up drug screen, Campus Manager will have no option but to report the incident to the Head, who may decide to have a disciplinary hearing.



6. Drug Searches

Routine random searches of students at the school are prohibited.

In instances where a member of staff has reason to suspect that a pupil has in his possession an illegal or controlled substance, he/she should approach the pupil's Campus Manager and discuss the situation with them. If the Campus Manager believes that there is reasonable suspicion that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited substance they may carry out a search, but only in accordance with the procedure outlined below:

- 6.1.1.1. The searches must be carried out by a person of the same gender.
- 6.1.1.2. The search should take place in the presence of the pupil concerned, a person of their choice to support them and a second adult witness of the same gender.

In the case of a Campus Manager finding a pupil is in possession of a prohibited substance, they should inform the pupil's parents and the Head, who may decide to conduct a disciplinary hearing.

7. The Random Drug Screening Programme

All students will automatically be part of the School's Random Drug Screening Programme (The RDS Programme).

The school's RDS Programme is aimed at creating a drug-free culture within the school and empowering students to say "no" to drugs.

The drug screens will be conducted in accordance with the following protocol:

- 7.1. The Learning Facilitator will provide a list of names of boys to be tested to the Campus Manager on request. These names are to be generated randomly and no additional names may be added to the list. The Campus



- Manager will prepare bottles to collect urine samples with students' names on the side.
- 7.2. Samples will be taken under supervision of the Campus Manager.
 - 7.3. Samples will be tested using commercially produced tests.
 - 7.4. In the event of a positive result test, the sample will be sent to a laboratory for a confirmation test. The results of this will be returned to the Campus Manager.
 - 7.5. On confirmation of a positive test result, the Campus Manager will contact the student's parents, inform them of the result, and ask them to make an appointment to see a Psychologist. Both the Head and School Counsellor will be informed.
 - 7.6. The Psychologist, in consultation with the pupil and his parents will decide how to proceed. Measures will be put in place to support the pupil so that he does not continue to use substances. Follow-up drug screens will be part of this intervention, and the pupil will be cautioned that if he tests positive on a follow-up drug screen, the Psychologist will have no option but to report the incident to the Campus Manager who may decide to have a disciplinary hearing.
 - 7.7. Should the student already have a record of substance use whilst at the school then the Campus Manager will convene a meeting with the School Counsellor and the Head to decide how to proceed.

8. Disciplinary Intervention

On occasion, it may be necessary for the Head to request that a Disciplinary Hearing be conducted to investigate instances of substance abuse in the school. In such cases, the Disciplinary Hearing will be conducted in accordance with the School's policy on Disciplinary Hearings and may result in some punitive sanction. In deciding on the sanctions, the Faculty Board will consider each case on its individual merits taking into account:

- 8.1. The nature of the incident



- 8.2. The pupil's school and family history
- 8.3. Cultural background
- 8.4. Mental health and intellectual development
- 8.5. Any other relevant information

The following sanctions will serve as guidelines for the Operations & Governance Committee when deciding on how best to deal with incidents of substance abuse:

1st Offence:

- Referral for complete Psychological assessment and/or
- Suspension from School for a period of up to 1 term and/or
- Follow-up drug screens as part of a structured intervention to prevent continued use of substances and/or
- A final warning for substance abuse.

2nd Offence:

Expulsion.

Students 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 pupil 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.



9. 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 pupil who approaches a Psychologist and asks for assistance with a substance use or abuse problem, will not be subjected to any disciplinary action. The matter will be treated as confidential, provided the pupil agrees to the management plan outlined by the Psychologist. This management plan will include:

- A contract to discontinue substance use.
- Counselling to address underlying issues.
- Consent to follow-up drug screens.

In cases where the pupil does not comply with the management plan, the Psychologist will have no option but to bring the matter to the attention of the student's parents and the School Head, who may decide to conduct a disciplinary hearing.

The trafficking, supplying and selling of substances on campus

The trafficking of substances onto the campus, supplying substances to other students (without the expectation of payment), offering substances to other students and the sale of substances to other students are serious offences because of the threat they provide to the safety of other students in the school. As such these offences will always lead to a disciplinary hearing and may result in suspension or expulsion from the school.

When a pupil is found to be guilty of selling substances, the school reserves the right to report this to the relevant state authorities.



10. Education and Prevention Measures

Education of Students:

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 also to encourage those who are experiencing problems to get the help they need.

Drug education should ensure that students 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 students, as well as students themselves, upon first registration at the school and whenever necessary thereafter.

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.

The School should ensure that all staff are aware of the contents of this policy.