

Policy On The Management Of Drug Use and Abuse By Pupils at Bishops

2003-09-11

“The Bishops Policy On The Management of Drug Use and Abuse By Pupils” 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 boys.

1. Definitions

“Bishops” is taken to include the Pre-preparatory School, Preparatory School and the College of the Diocesan College,

“The School” is taken to mean Bishops.

“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.

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 pupils is on the increase 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.

The policy aims:

- to help and support not only those pupils who abuse drugs, but also the majority of pupils and staff who do not use drugs but who may be affected by the usage of drugs by others.
- not to condemn pupils who use drugs, but to ensure that appropriate support is provided to pupils 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 pupils with drug use, abuse or dependency problems, as well as other pupils, teachers 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:

1. The possession, use or distribution of illegal drugs, and the inappropriate possession, use or distribution of legal drugs, is not acceptable at Bishops and this message should be clearly and consistently communicated to the school community.
2. Any action taken should be consistent with the school's desire to developing a safe and supportive Christian environment that values forgiveness, human dignity and celebrates innocence.
3. Intervention should primarily be aimed at providing support, restoring health, addressing underlying psychological issues and preventing relapse.
4. All information relating to drug use, misuse or dependency by a pupil, should be treated sensitively and in accordance with the Schools Guidelines on Confidentiality.
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.

5. Drug Screening/Testing

The routine and random drug testing of pupils will not take place at Bishops.

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 pupils and rehabilitate pupils 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.

All parents on admission of their sons to the College, should be asked to give written consent to drug screening in accordance with this policy.

If 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:

- A teacher, who has reason to believe that a pupil is using drugs, should discuss this, in confidence, with a School Counsellor.
- The School Counsellor will be responsible for making contact with the pupil, collecting relevant information and making an assessment of the situation.
- If the School Counsellor feels that it is appropriate, he will ask the pupil to consent to a drug screening test. The pupil must give his written consent for the drug screening test.
- The School Counsellor should ensure that the pupil's parents have given written consent for drug screening tests to be conducted. If there is no such consent the Counsellor should make contact with the parents in order to obtain their consent.
- The urine specimen for the drug screen should be collected by the School Doctor, the School Nurse or the School Counsellor in such a way that the pupil'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 pupil's privacy is protected.
- The results of the drug screen should be made known to the School Counsellor, the pupil and his parents.
- In the case of a positive result on a drug screen the Counsellor, pupil and his 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.
- The pupil should be cautioned that if he tests positive on a follow-up drug screen, the Counsellor will have no option but to report the incident to the Headmaster, who may decide to have a disciplinary hearing.

6. Drug Searches

Routine random searches of pupils at Bishops 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 Housemaster and discuss the situation with him. If the Housemaster believes that there is reasonable suspicion that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited substance he may carry out a search, but only in accordance with the procedure outlined below:

- The searches must be carried out by a person of the same gender.
- 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.

On admission of their son's to the College, parents should be asked to give their written consent to their son being searched, in accordance with this policy.

In the case of a Housemaster finding a pupil is in possession of a prohibited substance, he should inform the pupil's parents and the Headmaster, who may decide to conduct a disciplinary hearing.

7. Education and Prevention Measures

Education of Pupils:

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 pupils 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 pupils, as well as pupils themselves, upon first registration at Bishops 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.

8. The Schools' Voluntary Drug Screening Programme

All pupils in the school will be given the opportunity to be part of the School's Voluntary Drug Screening Programme (The VDS Programme) but no pupil will be pressurised or forced to be part of the programme.

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

Pupils who wish to be part of the programme will sign a pledge in which they commit themselves to saying “no” to drugs, and in which they agree to drug screening during the course of the year. Parents will be required to co-sign this document thus giving their support to the process.

On a weekly basis a sample of pupils who are part of the programme will undergo drug screening. All pupils in the programme will be screened at least once during the year.

If a pupil tests positive on a drug screen:

- his parents will be informed;
- together with the School Counsellor, he and his parents will discuss an intervention that aims to address the reasons why he is using substances, this process may involve a referral for a complete psychological assessment;
- measures will be put in place to support him 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 Counsellor will have no option but to report the incident to the Headmaster, who may decide to have a disciplinary hearing.

9. Disciplinary Intervention

On occasions, it may be necessary for the Headmaster 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 Disciplinary Committee will consider each case on its individual merits taking into account:

- The nature of the incident
- The pupil’s school and family history
- Cultural background
- Mental health and intellectual development
- Any other relevant information

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

1st Offence:

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

2nd Offence:

Expulsion.

Pupils 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.

10. 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 the School Counsellor 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 Counsellor. 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 Counsellor will have no option but to bring the matter to the attention of the pupil's parents and the Headmaster, who may decide to conduct a disciplinary hearing.

11. The trafficking, supplying and selling of substances on campus

The trafficking of substances on to the campus, supplying substances to other pupils (without the expectation of payment), offering substances to other pupils and the sale of substances to other pupils are serious offences because of the threat they provide to the safety of other pupils 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 will report this to the relevant state authorities.