



---

## *Substance Abuse Policy*

---

### **Rationale**

It is the aim of Strawberry Fields High School to ensure that students are safe. We recognise that young people are faced with many challenges that affect their health and well being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. We need to recognize our responsibility and take the necessary steps to equip our students with the required knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for them to make informed choices. The Educators and school staff are in a position to help with prevention and deal effectively with students involved and thus must have the necessary information. Clear procedures ensure a rational response, planned in advance and are more likely to have a good outcome rather than actions decided only when confronted with a drug use or possession incident.

### **Aim**

We believe that as a community, each of our well-being is interdependent and therefore the personal and social development of each member of the school community is important. Good relationships are fostered and encouraged, each member is made to feel valued and respected in an inclusive environment with compassion and empathy for those who are in difficulty. A collaborative partnership with the family and the community ensures a supportive atmosphere that fosters and nurtures personal and academic growth.

As a school that has student well being, safety, child protection as a priority, we intend to empower students to take ownership and responsibility for their own health by improving student knowledge and skills to encourage the development of defensible values.

The well being of students is enhanced by:

- Creating a school environment with a sense of community where students feel they are treated fairly
- Providing a safe, well maintained and aesthetic school campus space
- Providing a safe and healthy environment
- Promoting positive attitude towards health

- Increasing knowledge about health
- Actively promoting self esteem and self-awareness
- Working in partnership with the parents/guardians, pupils and the larger community

## **Purpose**

The policy sets out to provide –

1. Strategies for the prevention of substance use problems.
2. Managing drug related incidents in a planned manner.
3. Guidelines and information for teachers / school staff / school senior leadership / parent community to improve their response to substance use.

This document should read in conjunction with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy of the school.

What is a Drug?

SFHS defines a drug as a substance, which, when consumed and taken into the body, changes the way we feel, the way we perceive things, and the way our body works. This definition includes illegal substances and also legal substances such as alcohol, tobacco, solvents and medicines-  
Note- (Since the students are under the legal age specified for the consumption of alcohol in accordance with local laws, that is also treated as illegal)

What is a drug related incident in school?

- ✓ A student who is suspected of being under the influence of a drug / substance
- ✓ Finding drugs / substances, or related paraphernalia on school premises
- ✓ Possession of drugs / substances by an individual on school premises
- ✓ Use of drugs /substances by an individual on school premises
- ✓ Supply of drugs/substances on school premises
- ✓ Buying of drugs/substances on school premises
- ✓ Individuals disclosing information about their drug/substance use
- ✓ Rumours of drug/substance possession supply or drug/substance use
- ✓ Reports of drug/substance possession supply or drug/substance use

Which substances are strictly prohibited on the school campus?

- Medicines - The school has a policy/procedure for the administration of medicines that must be followed for everyone's safety. All medicines without prescription and not in the knowledge of the responsible adults are not allowed. (Refer to School Protocols Document)
- Alcohol - students are not allowed to bring alcohol onto the school site. Parents and visitors under the effects of alcohol will be asked to leave the premises for the safety of

the whole school.

- Tobacco -the school is a 'Tobacco Free Area' and 'No smoking Site' - indoors and outdoors, including school vehicles - at all times. Students are not permitted to bring to school, smoking materials, including matches and lighters and e-cigarettes. In the interests of health and safety. Should a student be found in possession of any of these on school premises, they will be confiscated. Follow up consequences will be issued in line with the school's Discipline and Behaviour Policy.
- Solvents - the school will ensure that potentially hazardous substances are stored safely, and students will be supervised if it is necessary that they come into contact with them in the course of their work. Students are not permitted to be in possession of solvent-based products.
- Illegal drugs- no illegal drugs are permitted to be brought on to, or used, shared or supplied on school premises.

What to do in the event of finding a drug or suspected illegal substance?

- ✓ Take possession of the drug/substance ideally with an adult witness present and inform the designated Coordinator and Principal. Staff is permitted to take temporary possession of what may be an illegal drug/substance for the purpose of preventing an offence being committed or continued in relation to that drug.
- ✓ Establish the health status of the concerned student/s and refer to the infirmary for first aid or call ambulance or doctor in consultation with the Coordinator and Principal.
- ✓ In the presence of an adult witness, the article should be packed securely and labelled with the date, time, quantity and place of discovery.
- ✓ The package should be signed by the person who discovered it and the witness and stored in a secure place in the Coordinator's Office, such as a safe or other lockable container with access limited to senior members of staff.
- ✓ If the drug / substance was not discovered on a person or in their possessions, assess the area where the drug/substance was found, to establish if any students have passed through the area and may have picked up/ taken the substance. Speak to relevant staff/ support staff, perhaps make students aware and parents if necessary, only through the Coordinator or the Principal. Watch for any unusual behaviour in the students.
- ✓ The package should be handed over to the Principal/Director who will then follow up in line with the national and local laws and guidance. Staff should not attempt to analyse or taste any found substance, or dispose it off on their own. If the police are informed they will collect it and then store or dispose of it in line with locally agreed protocols.
- ✓ Parents of concerned student will be informed by the Principal or Director.
- ✓ The Coordinator is required to record the complete details of the incident by filling up the Incident Report Form, also have the concerned student, if identified, to fill up the Reflection sheet (if student health and emotional state permits) and keep the substance found carefully to be submitted with the documents.

- ✓ Identify any safeguarding concerns and develop a support and disciplinary response. A school's response to a drug incident should be consistent with the ethos of the school and a range of supporting policies, in particular, the Discipline and Behaviour policy and Health and Safety Policy. Responses to any drug incident should be proportionate, balancing the needs of the individual with those of the wider school community. The aim should be to provide students with opportunities to learn from their mistakes, develop as individuals and re-engage with the learning process to fulfill their potential.
- ✓ The Coordinator in collaboration with the Principal with directions from the Head of School must make a referral with the consent of the parent by filling up the Referral Form to send the student for the required help from the appropriate health and counseling services of the parent's choice or provide them in school from the School Counselor.

In case of Alcohol and Smoking?

#### Smoking – School protocol

- Visitors, staff and parents will comply with the local non smoking laws
- Pupils found in possession of tobacco products on school premises will be reported to the Coordinator who will then report the matter to the Principal / Director and thereafter the parents will be informed. (Refer to the flow chart in the Discipline and Behaviour Policy and keep record accordingly).
- Adults who have tobacco products in their possession for their own use, must keep them in their possession at all times and out of sight and reach of children.

#### Alcohol – School Protocol

- Alcohol is strictly prohibited in school and pupils are forbidden from consuming alcohol on the school premises or during any school activities and on excursions and trips. The students are below the specified age and therefore, not allowed to consume alcohol outside the school as well.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, she must immediately inform the Coordinator, who should then promptly investigate the incident, establish the truth and secure the concerned student from any danger and inform the Principal. The Head of School to be notified and the Parents to be informed.
- Further intervention to be planned and executed in consultation with the parent and in accordance with the response chart.
- If a staff member appears to be under the influence of alcohol, it will be reported to the Coordinator and Principal who will act in consultation with the Head of School.
- If an adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol when coming to collect a child, it must be reported to the Principal. The child's safety is paramount and other adults /guardians of the child will be called to take the child.

## Procedures / Elements of dealing with incidents

- ✓ Medical emergencies  
If an individual is unconscious, is having trouble breathing, is seriously confused or disorientated, has taken a harmful toxic substance or is otherwise at risk of immediate harm, medical help will be sought and first aid given if required. Action will be taken in accordance with the emergency medical protocol of the school. The priority will be the student's safety.
- ✓ Support for students  
Following actions to take care of immediate safety, the health and emotional needs of students will be looked into. Support must be given with consultation of parents through our pastoral system to ensure a caring and empathetic response to students in distress. Interventions will be considered if the school feels a student is showing signs, which indicate particular risks of, or from, involvement with drugs. Such intervention will include referral to appropriate health personnel in consultation with the parent and in accordance with local guidelines.
- ✓ Recording  
All incidents will be recorded in the decided school formats and by the designated authority. Information will be stored securely in the student's file.
- ✓ Confidentiality  
Complete secrecy can never be promised to a student, though information given in confidence will only be disclosed to anyone else in the interests of Child Protection. If a student discloses that they are using a drug without medical authorisation, action will be taken to ensure that the student comes to no serious harm if this is considered a significant risk. Staff has a commitment to inform the student in advance of any disclosure of information to others and if possible enable the student to be involved in the process. Staff are committed to protect a young person's anonymity where their disclosure may implicate others. Regarding disclosures, staff needs to carefully define and communicate the boundaries of confidentiality offered.

What does Drug Education mean in SFHS?

### Context / Ethos

*School is not about repairing all social evils. It is about repairing one: the evil of ignorance. We all have responsibilities as adults for these evils. But as teachers, we don't need to be ashamed if we can't fix homelessness or stamp out violence, or prevent AIDS, or end drug abuse.*

*Individual teachers will care as human beings when students use drugs, or contract sexually*

*transmitted diseases, or adopt poor nutritional practices. But it is not the fault of schools, and schools ought not to set targets to change such behaviours. Schools can, of course, influence such behaviour. The way they do it is through the development of knowledge and skills and the cultivation of values in their students.*

*The fact is that schools do not have it in their power to stop smoking, drinking, sex or poor eating patterns. They do have it in their power to improve student knowledge and skills and to encourage the development of defensible values. Equally, they should not be blamed when students engage in health behavior that is less than desirable. They should be blamed, or at least held accountable, if students do not gain essential knowledge and skills regarding health, and cannot articulate a value position.*

Wilson, 1998.

Taken from  
'Guiding Principles for school based education for drug abuse prevention' – Schools – school based education for drug abuse prevention - United Nations Publications- Office on Drugs and Crime

In line with the above statement, the school intends to provide students with effective drug education as a part of our school curriculum and calendar. Drug education at SFHS aims to enable students to make healthy, informed choices by enhancing their knowledge, increasing their awareness and exploring a range of attitudes towards drug use and developing and practicing decision making skills. The programme we follow will be based on national and local guidelines for good practice and be appropriate to the age and experience of our students. (Note: the school will refer to 'Guiding Principles for school based education for drug abuse prevention' – Schools – school based education for drug abuse prevention - United Nations Publications- Office on Drugs and Crime)

### **Content and delivery**

Teaching will be in accordance with the Curriculum framework of the school, which states that a variety of approaches should be used in order to meet the different needs and learning styles of students. It is recognized that active or participatory learning styles can be particularly helpful in developing skills, knowledge and values. A number of resources and methods such as documentaries, multimedia, case studies, small group discussions that allow for peer to peer communication and maximum participation will be used to impact student learning.

### **Use of visitors, experts and outside speakers**

We will use appropriate visitors/experts in the field to interact with students in order to support our programme and to train staff from time to time, in line with national and local guidelines.

## **Events and activities at school and involving the wider community**

Both student and teacher led events and awareness campaigns regarding the same will be held regularly through the school calendar to build information base and to motivate students to make good choices. The school will engage the wider community and participate in national health events, community service activities, open days, student homework activities, forums, information evenings etc.

## **Update regularly**

The school will regularly update and add elements to the drug education programme in line with the national and local guidelines, ensuring that students and parent are informed and updated accordingly.

## **Educate and engage parent community**

Parents are the most significant aspect in the lives of the students and they will be actively engaged by the school and invited for awareness sessions. We are interconnected as a community and parents will be required to provide adequate supervision outside the school campus on occasions such social gatherings and birthday parties etc. to ensure the safety and well being of all students / minors in their care.

## **Guidelines for Educators**

What are the early signs for students at risk?

*Young people may from time to time exhibit some of the signs listed below as they meet normal everyday challenges. A combination of factors should be present before drug use is suspected, but even when all those factors are present, drug use is still only one possibility among all the things that can affect young people. Marked personality change A placid, softly spoken student suddenly becomes noisy and abusive. The change may be gradual and apparent only on reflection. Sometimes the reverse may also happen.*

### *Mood swings*

*Moods may swing from high to low and back again, seemingly without reason, with outbursts sparked by simple events.*

### *Changes in physical appearance or well-being*

*Changes in weight, sleep patterns and general health may be sudden or gradual. They may include slurred speech, staggering, sluggishness, pinpoint or dilated pupils, talkativeness, euphoria, nausea and vomiting.*

### *Change in school performance*

*A significant deterioration in performance, especially when a student has been diligent, may be an indicator of difficulties. A rapid change from poor performance to diligence may be equally important.*

### *Increased secretive communication with others*

*A student may suddenly seem to be in secretive communication with others; this is often manifested as cryptic telephone calls. It should be remembered that some of this may only be typical adolescent behaviour.*

### *Intuition*

*An adult's intuition may provide a warning sign of something being wrong with a student, based on the adult's knowledge of that person. It may not be possible to be specific or clearly verbalize the feeling of something being wrong, but the adult will know that something is wrong.*

### *Increased need for or supply of money*

*Buying drugs costs money and the more drug-dependent a person is, the greater is their need for money. Money, however, is not the only transferable commodity among young people; baseball caps, sports shoes and sexual favours may also be traded for drugs.*

### *Judgements should not be too hasty*

*Adults should not be too hasty in concluding that a student has a drug problem. There may be a number of other reasons for the behaviours described above, which must be considered in the context of the person's whole life situation.*

## **Guidelines for Administrators for counselling (Coordinator / School counsellor / Principal / Head of School)**

### *1. Confidentiality should be assured*

*Confidentiality contributes to openness and trust which are essential to any helping relationship. If total confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, school personnel must make students aware of the possible ramifications of disclosure beforehand. Students are likely to be unwilling to take up counselling opportunities when confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.*

## *2. Counselling should be kept separate from discipline*

*At some schools it may not be possible to have two separate staff members to provide counselling and discipline. Where possible, however, those roles should be separated in order to increase the effectiveness of intervention in both areas.*

## *3. De-stigmatizing without condoning drug use*

*Teachers should avoid trying to force the student to change, as that may increase their resistance. Similarly, condoning or condemning the student's behaviour is counter-productive. Instead, the student should be treated as a decision-maker who has certain reasons for his or her choices based on how he or she sees the world. Teachers should direct their efforts to helping the student balance the costs and benefits of his or her decisions.*

## *4. Concentrating on rapport and empathy*

*Drug use is a sensitive topic and one that young people are often reluctant to talk about. Some of them believe that adults will attempt to convince them to stop, criticize their behaviour or punish them. Establishing a rapport and expressing understanding is vital to a healthy helping relationship.*

(Taken from 'Guiding Principles for school based education for drug abuse prevention' – Schools – school based education for drug abuse prevention - United Nations Publications- Office on Drugs and Crime)

**Note:** Involved students will require and be sent by way of a referral to a professional counsellor/expert in the field, in consultation with the parents.

Actions in progress:

- ✓ Developing a school response chart to deal with involved students
- ✓ Creating and incorporating into the curriculum, a well structured and organised set of activities for the school based education for drug abuse prevention programme