

Substance Abuse Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy has been drawn up in order to confront the reality of substance abuse in a responsible and constructive manner. Where substance abuse occurs, the underlying aim is to change behaviour rather than enact punitive measures, and in so doing develop and maintain healthy levels of self-confidence and self-worth. While it will always be the school's aim to help in situations of abuse, it must be stressed that the school will always view the possession, exchange and use of tobacco, alcohol, and illegal drugs or related equipment in a very serious light. This will apply at school, at school events or when a pupil is associated with the school. Any such behaviour could result in the matter being handed over to the South African Police Services for investigation.

This policy has been drawn up in the course of a thorough process of discussion and consultation involving pupils, teachers, parents and the Board of Governors. It needs to be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Conduct and other policy documents. The school will endeavour to review and adapt this policy when necessary and in conjunction with all its stakeholders.

2. STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

- The school acknowledges that we are part of a greater community, and are in partnership with parents to ensure the best for their children.
- The school will always endeavour to ensure a safe environment, free of all substance abuse, in which pupils will not be exposed to harmful substances.
- The school realises that a wide variety of substances is available to our pupils. We believe that substance abuse is harmful to an individual's normal development, and we encourage a healthy, drug-free life. In order to do this we seek to empower pupils to say 'no' to drugs.
- It is our policy to support those of our pupils who need help in this area and who can benefit from help.
- The school does not condone the inappropriate use of alcohol, tobacco or any other potentially harmful substance by any member of its community.
- The school will not tolerate the possession and use of prohibited substances and it opposes the abuse and misuse of legal drugs.

3. THIS POLICY APPLIES:

- on Bridge House School premises, including the boarding house.
- at any activity organised by Bridge House.
- when a pupil represents the school or is identified as belonging to the school.

4. UNDERTAKING

The School will endeavour to:

- present age appropriate prevention and information sessions to all pupils so as to actively empower them to deal with the many aspects of the issue
- present education and prevention sessions to parents, and to supply information about internal and external support structures when needed
- make information and training available to teachers
- provide an on-campus counselling service
- involve outside organisations (eg Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre) on a consultative basis
- support the idea of a healthy life, free of substance abuse
- implement a pupil-support structure, if this is deemed necessary.

5. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

The use of mood-altering or habit-forming substances by pupils (without a doctor's guidance) will not be tolerated.

Pupils may not :

- use or possess prohibited substances (e.g. dagga, ecstasy, cocaine)
- use or possess prescribed/non-prescribed medicines inappropriately (e.g. ritalin, panado)
- use or possess solvents, inhalants or other chemical agents inappropriately (e.g. thinners)
- use or possess tobacco, alcohol or other drugs
- use or possess drug-related equipment (e.g. cigarette rollers, lighters and paper)
- be under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- consume alcoholic beverages, except in situations sanctioned by the Head and with the knowledge of the parents (e.g. Matric dance)
- be involved in procuring, or in transacting in, such substances.

The School recognises its responsibility to intervene if, in the school's opinion, a pupil's substance abuse outside school influences his achievement, behaviour or attendance; or if it is likely to influence other pupils negatively. This intervention will be in accordance with the Action Guidelines (paragraph 7).

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

This Policy recognises the following:

- a pupil may use the services of the school counsellor who will explain the conditions of confidentiality before giving counselling. As a result of the ethics of the counselling professions, there may well be circumstances in which the school counsellor will not pass on information to parents or teachers disclosed in the course of counselling.
- in the event of a pupil informing a teacher about substance abuse by him/herself or another person, teachers are not able to maintain absolute confidentiality as the school has a legal and professional responsibility to inform parents.
- the school reserves the right, where it is deemed necessary, to inform the pupil body and broader school community of any situation involving transgressions of the code of conduct. However, the school will strive to protect the privacy and dignity of pupils in all circumstances.

7. ACTION GUIDELINES

Considering the breadth of this problem in our society, the school encourages open communication in the best interests of the school community. Further, in every case of substance abuse, it must be recognised that counselling, skills training and self-image support are always appropriate responses by the school. The school's intention will always be to educate and rehabilitate, and not simply to punish. In the event of suspected, confirmed or self-acknowledged substance abuse the school reserves the right to act in terms of its disciplinary procedures or these guidelines, or both the disciplinary procedures and these guidelines, as it deems appropriate:

1. Each case will be considered individually.
2. Each case will be dealt with confidentially (as described in paragraph 6), and parents will be informed and involved. In the event of suspicion of drug abuse, parents will be asked to arrange for an appropriate drug test, and to inform the school of the results.

3. An agreement will be drawn up between the pupil, parents and School. This agreement will specify, inter alia:
 - what treatment the pupil should undergo
 - whether a report should be supplied to the school detailing the pupil's progress in treatment
 - what further testing will be carried out where this is deemed necessary
 - who will pay for the costs incurred where testing is deemed necessary
 - standards of work and levels of behaviour that the school will require from the pupil.
 - consequences for breach of contract
4. Failure to comply with the request for testing (paragraph 7.2) or with the need to draw up an agreement (paragraph 7.3) may result in parents being required to remove the pupil/s from the school.

Bearing in mind that each case will be dealt with individually, where disciplinary procedures are seen to be necessary by the school, the consequences that may result include the following and must be considered in conjunction with the Code of Conduct:

- Using or possessing tobacco or alcohol or inappropriately using other legal drugs
 - Detentions/Community Service
 - Withdrawal of rights and privileges, including sport and social activities which form part of the Bridge House curriculum
 - Suspension from school
 - Expulsion from school
- Using or possessing illegal drugs
 - Withdrawal of rights and privileges, including sport and social activities which form part of the Bridge House curriculum
 - Suspension from school
 - Expulsion from school
- Procuring and/or transacting in and/or distributing legal or illegal drugs or alcohol
 - Expulsion from school

Where the offence is governed by any South African law or statute, the school may require the South African Police Service to investigate the matter and to institute legal proceedings.

8. FURTHER OPTIONS

Should the school consider it necessary, a system of random drug testing may be instituted.