



## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY -**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This Substance Abuse Policy has been prepared to help educate Staff about alcoholism and drug abuse, to encourage those who think they might have problems to seek help at an early stage, and to define policy and procedures for handling specific cases within the School.

### **2. WHY SHOULD THE SCHOOL BE CONCERNED?**

As a School, we care about the health and well-being of all members of staff. We also have a responsibility to parents and the community to ensure that all members of staff, especially teachers, are fit and stable and free from substance abuse. This is not only relevant for a Teacher's capacity to perform well, but for the social position of the Teacher as a role model for the children. It follows that the School's commitment to educate children about substance abuse and our determination to prevent its appearance in the school, must start with our staff.

### **3. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM**

Substance abuse refers to the repetitive, compulsive use of a substance which begins to compromise behaviour and inter-personal relations and generally comes to pervade the life of an individual, adversely affecting health, work and family, and producing withdrawal symptoms when stopped. The dependency may be physical, psychological or both.

Substances abused are typically alcohol and drugs, legal or illegal, but may include glue and other chemicals.

The effects of substance abuse vary with the substance and from person to person. In principle, the earlier the problems can be detected and arrested, the easier it is to prevent the growing dependency, and the inevitable negative progression and deterioration.

Alcohol in particular has a cultural acceptance which leads many people to fail to recognise that there is a growing problem. You do not have to be an alcoholic to have an alcohol problem. Frequently the problem is recognised by others first, as denial is frequently involved.

### **4. POLICY**

#### **A. Voluntary**

The School believes that voluntary individual initiative and responsibility should be encouraged wherever possible.

It is desirable that members of staff inform themselves about substance abuse. Information is available through the school medical unit. No-one should be afraid to ask for information. A search for knowledge and understanding is not a stigma; it is ignorance and abuse that does discredit. Individuals who feel they may have or be developing a problem should seek help independently of the school, or confidentially through the school medical unit, where advice on appropriate outside treatment facilities or counselling is available.

Members of staff voluntarily seeking assistance may do so without jeopardising continued employment or salary; but costs for substance abuse treatment or counselling are primarily the responsibility of the individual, whether through health insurance, *Caixa*, or privately.

Any member of staff suspecting another of having a problem should encourage that person to seek help in the above way.

## **B. INVOLUNTARY**

Members of Staff brought to the attention of school management by a documented record of incidents of poor performance or inappropriate behaviour, considered to be due to substance abuse, will become involuntarily subject to the following regulations:

- i) The member of staff will be obliged to contact the school medical unit.
- ii) The situation will be evaluated in confidence by the medical unit.
- iii) Where substance abuse is confirmed, the medical unit will inform the school management in writing of the existence of a medical problem requiring further assessment, without compromising confidentiality, and a copy of the report will be given to the member of staff.
- iv) The member of staff will be obliged to receive counselling or treatment at an appropriate centre.
- v) Time will be made available for treatment and there will be no salary loss during this period. However treatment costs will be borne by the individual, as above. (see 4A)
- vi) The member of staff is expected to cease immediately use of the substance abused.
- vii) The member of staff will be required to maintain regular contact with the Medical Unit for support and follow-up.
- viii) Failure to agree to counselling or treatment will be a cause for dismissal.
- ix) It is however recognised that persons with substance abuse problems may relapse despite genuine effort on their part. Where this occurs, the Member of Staff will be re-evaluated by the Medical Unit and may be required to undergo compulsory drug testing.
- x) In the case of illegal drugs, school management will be informed and the most likely outcome is instant dismissal.
- xi) In the case of abuse of legal drugs such as alcohol, the member of staff may be given further opportunities to improve, including new treatment or counselling, but may be subject to random blood or urine testing.
- xii) Further relapses or evidence of a lack of genuine effort by the member of staff will become a potential cause for dismissal.