



MERCEDES COLLEGE

COMPASSION LOYALTY JUSTICE INTEGRITY RESPONSIBILITY MUTUAL RESPECT

Drug Education Policy

Introduction

Mercedes College recognises its responsibility to educate the whole person and therefore the need to include within its curriculum, age appropriate education on drug use and its effects on the human body, relationships and societies.

While it is recognised that a comprehensive, whole school approach to drug education is necessary, principal responsibility for developing, implementing and delivery of a drug education curriculum will lie with the Science and Physical Education Areas of Study and with Pastoral Care through Growth and Personal Skills (GPS) in Years 6 – 12 (the Health and Well-Being Programme) and with Pastoral Care and Health in Reception to Year 5.

Other Areas of Study are encouraged to include Drug Education elements within their own curriculum and/or through the use of interdisciplinary learning units.

Drug Education, healthy lifestyle choices and harm minimisation are incorporated within each year level's programme.

Drug Education is supported within and through Pastoral Care activities.

The Drug Education Policy, incorporating procedures for responding to drug related incidents, is based upon the core College values, the Mercy Keys. In particular, Compassion, Justice and Mutual Respect, will guide both the delivery of educational programmes and the support provided to students who may be involved in drug related incidents.

The Policy incorporates the College's expectations for student behaviour, procedures for managing suspected drug related incidents and the support services available to students, staff and parents both from within the College and from specialist agencies.

The Drug Education Policy has been prepared in consultation with staff, students and the College Executive Leadership Team. The policy is based upon the principles of Natural Justice and Restorative Justice.

Natural Justice

Natural Justice is a legal philosophy that operates on the principles that people are basically good, that a person of good intent should not be harmed, and one should treat others as one would like to be treated.

This includes the notion of procedural fairness, that a person believed to have breached a rule is given adequate notice of the matter under investigation; investigators do not have a conflict of interest; decisions reached will be done so in in good faith and in an unbiased fashion; proceedings are fair to all

the parties; each party is able to express concerns and ask questions; all relevant considerations and extenuating circumstances will be taken into consideration, irrelevant considerations will be ignored; and justice should be seen to be done.

Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice is a process that advocates that the people most effective at finding a solution to a problem are the people who are most directly affected by the problem.

Restorative processes create opportunities for those involved in a conflict to work together to understand, clarify and resolve the situation and work together towards repairing the harm caused.

The Drug Education curriculum is delivered in accordance with:

- The teachings of the Catholic Church.
- Federal and State government requirements and principles (e.g. Principles for school drugn education DEST, 2004).
- Curriculum delivery that applies age appropriate pedagogy.

Drug Education

The Drug Education Policy is framed within our Catholic and Mercy ethos, as well as our obligations under the requirements of the South Australian legal system.

In particular, Mercedes College:

- Promotes and fosters the spiritual, emotional and physical well-being and growth of young people (educating the whole person);
- Seeks to develop students' decision-making skills that lead to personal growth and the development of personal responsibility;
- Reinforces students' responsibilities to the wider community with respect to prohibited substance and Civic Law;
- Respects the rights of individuals and the well being of the College community and the provision of a safe and supportive learning environment;
- Seeks to ensure that natural justice for students is served.

Mercedes College provides support for students in understanding drug use and abuse through Drug Education Programmes in the R-12 curriculum, incorporating annual visits from the Life Education Van as well as through curriculum delivery across Health and Pastoral Care. All staff have a responsibility to ensure students are provided with relevant information to enable them to make informed choices and to minimise the harm associated with drug use.

Drug Education will address:

- Legal drugs e.g. alcohol, tobacco and prescription medications;
- Illegal drugs e.g. marijuana, amphetamines and dexamphetamines.

The College will respond to all drug related incidents with the health of students as the primary concern and utilising principles of natural justice and procedural fairness.

Drug Education Programmes will enable students to:

- Make well-informed choices about drugs that they may reasonably be expected to encounter
- Develop attitudes and skills to reduce the likelihood of drug-related harm.

Students will have an understanding of the effects of drug use on the body including:

- Short and long term effects
- The effects of moderate and heavy use
- Physical, psychological and psychosocial effects.

Students will have an understanding of the effects of drug use on society and relationships as well as the effects of drug use on the health system including:

- Crime and policing
- Sports and sporting performance
- Workplace safety and performance
- Interpersonal relationships and self-esteem.

College Expectations

At Mercedes College, the use, possession and/or distribution of illicit drugs and the unsanctioned use and distribution of alcohol, tobacco, prescription and “over the counter drugs” are not accepted:

- On College premises.
- At functions, excursions, Retreats, Camps, or any College related activity.
- When members of the College community are representing the College or wearing the College uniform.
- In transit to and from the College or College functions.

Incident Management

A drug related incident occurs when the suspected use of an illegal or unsanctioned substance occurs on the College site or at a supervised College activity.

When a drug related incident occurs the following principles and procedures apply:

1. The Principal or Head of School will investigate the incident.
2. In the process of investigation, the Principal or Head of School may ask a student to display their possessions or contents of their locker or bag. Should such an investigation be necessary, it will occur in the presence of the student concerned and a second, adult witness. All necessary safety precautions will be taken when viewing students' possessions.
3. The College Psychologist will provide support to a student involved in a drug incident. Another adult (Teacher) may be nominated by the student as an advocate.
4. Students have the right to natural justice, including the right to privacy, confidentiality and the right to be heard. They also have the right to an advocate and to personal support through the investigation process.
5. Parents/caregivers will be informed of any investigation of a drug related incident involving their son/daughter and support will be offered to the family.

6. As required by the Police Drug Diversion Programme in SA, the SA Police will be informed of incidents of an illegal nature i.e. the use and possession of illegal drugs and the unsanctioned use of prescribed medications.

The Police will be asked to seize the items under investigation. Only in the event that the Police are unable to respond to a request to seize prohibited items, will the investigating staff member, in the presence of an adult witness, place the item/s in a secure location, with a written record made of the seized items.

7. Where a drug related incident occurs during a College activity out of the College, the responsible member of staff will take the necessary action to seize and secure the prohibited substance. This will be done in the presence of another adult witness and details of the seized items will be recorded in writing. The items will be handed to the Police at the earliest opportunity.

Consequences of Drug Incidents

After the investigation of a drug related incident involving all the relevant parties, follow-up action as deemed appropriate by the Principal, will be carried out, while taking into account the chronological age and developmental stage of the student.

Consequences may include:

- A contractual agreement between the student and the College.
- Community service conducted as a form of restorative justice.
- Detention of the student for a specified time period.
- Suspension (internal or external) of the student.
- Exclusion from attendance as a student of the College.

The student and their family will be offered access to specialist counselling support.

When determining follow-up action, the Principal or Head of School will consider:

- The nature of the drug related incident and its breach of College policy and law.
- The circumstances of the incident and the student(s) involved.
- The welfare of the student and the family, while keeping in mind the welfare and expectations of the general College community.

Links

The Mercedes College Drug Education Policy has links to the following College policies, documents and procedures:

- OHSW Policy
- Personal Responsibility Policy
- Safe School Policy
- Critical Incident Management Plan
- Growth and Personal Skills
- Health and Physical Education Programme
- Medication Management Procedures

Policy Review Cycle

This policy will be reviewed on a two year cycle by relevant members of the College community and following each drug related incident.