

Drugs Statement

The purpose of this policy is to address the use of prescription, legal and illicit drugs at Whitsunday Christian College and to give guidance to teachers, parents, students and administrators on the consequences of a drug incident at the school, either on campus or at school functions. In addition, it sets out the expectations of all students while enrolled in the College including those who are 18 years of age and over.

This policy applies to employees, volunteers, parents/carers and students and to all school activities, including school social events, camps, excursions and sporting events in which the school may participate. Students travelling away from school on official school activities are automatically covered by the policy. The policy outlines the rationale, the responsibilities of all stakeholders and the procedures for dealing with drugs, prescription, legal and illegal, at Whitsunday Christian College.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, a drug is defined as 'any substance which affects physical or mental functions'. As such, drugs include a range of materials, many of which are legal in our culture although prohibited from use at school. These include alcohol and tobacco products.

Rationale and Objectives

The primary objective of this policy is to provide for a school environment free of drugs, whether the drugs in question are legal or illegal.

The following values underpin all that follows in the policy and may need to be referred to when the policy itself is unclear in its application to one of the many situations which may arise.

Every student has the right to come to school to learn in an atmosphere free from the distractions and dangers imposed by drug use. College students have the right to attend peer social gatherings organised by current college students that are free from the pressures and dangers imposed by (including alcohol) use.

Parents have the right to expect that their children will be educated in an atmosphere free from the distractions and dangers imposed by drug use. College students have the right to attend peer social gatherings organised by current college students that are free from the pressures and dangers imposed by (including alcohol) use.

The school acknowledges that it shares responsibility with parents and the wider community to provide students and parents with factual information on drug abuse and advice on the legal questions surrounding the use of drugs. Principles underpinning the school's Drugs Policy are:

1. The school acknowledges that it shares with parents, responsibility to inform students of the best ways of resisting pressures to become involved in drug use and experiences to build their self-esteem to the level where they feel confident to make informed decisions for themselves.
2. The school commits itself to deal in Truth and Grace with students who become involved in situations of illicit drug use but such treatment must always be given within the context of due regard for the needs and rights of the whole school community.
3. The school commits itself to work closely with the police and welfare agencies in this matter which face common problems in this area.
4. Teachers share with parents the responsibility for modelling appropriate drug usage both in and out of school. Teachers accept that they are under an obvious professional obligation to set an example to their students in this matter.
5. Although this policy refers directly to drugs, it also, by extension, applies to the implements involved in the use of drugs. Such implements indicate an intention to use the prohibited drug and will attract penalties consistent with the use of drugs at school.

Policy - Prescription Drugs

From time to time, parents may request that members of staff administer prescribed medication during school hours. All such requests must be referred to the Student Support Officer. In consultation with the Principal, the Student Support Officer will assess the situation and if it is agreed that the situation requires supervised administration of medication the following procedures are to be followed:

1. The student's parents must make a written request to the Student Support Officer including instructions for the administration of the drug, and any special needs of the student.
2. The Principal will authorise a staff member to administer the medication.
3. Only the designated member of staff has this authority.
4. The designated member of staff must ensure that all medication is in a container labelled by a health care professional or pharmacist, showing:
 - The name of drug
 - Use by date
 - Name of medical practitioner prescribing the drug
 - Name of student
 - Dosage
 - Frequency of administration

Medication which is not so labelled must not be administered.

5. Non-prescription medications such as analgesics are not to be administered by school staff unless the designated member of staff is a registered nurse or equivalent.
6. All medication is to be kept in a lockable cupboard.
7. An official register on the Administration of Drugs to students is to be kept by the designated member of staff.
8. Parents are to be notified in writing of the school's policy including the requirement that the school takes no responsibility to ensure that medication is not out of date or that sufficient quantities of the medication are provided.
9. The designated member of staff is to return all unused medication to parents when the parents inform the school in writing that medication is no longer needed or it is past the use-by date.
10. If a member of school staff becomes aware that a student has possession of a medication without written advice from a parent, or the parent's advice is inconsistent with the medical instructions provided, he/she should confiscate the medication, store it securely and notify the Principal. The Principal or designated member of staff will contact the parents.
11. The designated member of staff is the Student Support Officer.

Policy - Legal drugs

There are clear legal sanctions governing the sale to and use of alcohol and cigarettes by minors. These legal sanctions apply at the Whitsunday Christian College as in the rest of the community. It is, therefore, the school's policy that use of cigarettes and alcohol is banned on all school property and at school functions, activities or excursions where students are involved.

In formulating the policy, the following has been considered:

1. Health and Safety legislation places a duty of care on the employer to provide a safe working environment.
2. Smoking is now banned in most states in enclosed public spaces.
3. It is illegal to supply cigarettes or alcohol to children less than 18 years of age.
4. Most non-government schools in Queensland have a complete ban on smoking on school premises and at all school functions where students are involved, and most schools restrict the supply of alcohol at school functions.

The following applies in relation to the use of alcohol and cigarettes on school property or at school functions:

1. Students are prohibited from using alcohol and/or tobacco on school property or at school functions and activities.
2. Staff at school camps and excursions will refrain from drinking alcohol or smoking. This observation is in keeping with the legal duty of care incumbent on all school staff and with the acknowledged need to model appropriate behaviour for students.

3. Schools were declared 'smoke free zones' in 1989 and this prohibition on smoking applies to staff, students and members of the public.
4. In this policy, glue, solvents and other inhalants will be treated in the same way as alcohol. That is, their use at school is prohibited and their use will attract similar penalties.
5. The school undertakes to develop as part of its curriculum, information for students on the responsible use of alcohol and the dangers of tobacco use.

Policy - Use of Illicit Drugs

All school personnel have legal and professional responsibilities to respond to information about, and incidents involving, student use or possession of illicit drugs at school or during school activities.

Students and staff should be aware that possession, use and sale of drugs, and possession of implements related to drug use, is illegal and, in most cases, the police will be called if a student is found in possession of or using an illicit substance at school.

It should be noted that students who are 17 years or older are regarded, in the eyes of the law, as adults. An incident involving an adult is very likely to result in court action.

The school will:

1. Include information about drug abuse and decision making as part of the school's Human Relationship/Life Skills/Health and Physical Education programs.
2. Ensure teachers on playground duty are vigilant and aware of this issue.
3. Inform students, parents, teachers and the police of the school's drug policy.
4. Build on trust between students and staff.

Responding to an Incident of Illicit Drug Use:

1. Once the school has established that there is a drug incident, the principal or delegate will inform the parents of the student/s concerned immediately.
2. Where a number of students are involved, students are to be isolated as much as possible from one another during the school investigation. This will make it easier to arrive at the truth.
3. Schools have a limited capacity to search students and their property. Unless given permission by the student, school authorities cannot search their possessions for suspected illicit drugs. School authorities do not have the right to do a body search of a young person. Given this caution, it is better to call the police whose responsibility in this area is much clearer.
4. Because of the seriousness of this kind of incident, investigation of an incident involving illicit drugs should be conducted by the principal wherever possible, and with another member of staff present to take notes of the questioning.

5. Accurate record taking is crucial and the writing up of clear and direct records of the incident is to occur as soon as possible after the matter has been investigated.
6. The principal or delegate will inform the whole staff as soon as possible after the incident, provided in so doing they are not breaching any aspects of the Privacy Act. Consideration of whether or not it is appropriate to inform parents and students, particularly if the incident has been mentioned in the media, is a decision of the Principal, in consultation with the Board Chairman.
7. If police are called to the school, school staff are expected to respect the responsibility of the police as they conduct their investigation. Police have considerable discretionary power when dealing with juveniles and have shown themselves to be resourceful and compassionate in handling matters of this kind. Students and the whole school community benefit when police and the school work closely, sharing information and openly seeking the same goals. Note: in implementing the school's drug policy consideration must be given at all times to protecting the privacy of individual students, and their families.

Minimising Illicit Drug Use

In order to minimise illicit drug use, the school will:

1. Advertise widely that illicit drug use, possession and supply in the school is unacceptable and, when detected, will result in serious consequences, including police and parental involvement.
2. Reinforce the unacceptability of illicit drugs in schools by consistently carrying through on stated actions.
3. Identify consequences and apply them consistently and fairly to users and suppliers.
4. Establish an environment in which all school community members have enough care and concern for each other that they will confidentially pass on information about people using, carrying and/or selling drugs.
5. Use police cautioning processes where possible and utilise reintegration processes such as Community Accountability Conferencing and community services where appropriate.
6. Implement education programs which reinforce consequences of having illicit drugs at school.
7. Ensure that detection and deterrent processes are maintained and sustained.
8. Inform the whole community about the processes, possible consequences and potential outcomes of being found with drugs at school.
9. Review and evaluate strategies and procedures regularly and revise them as required.
10. Devise a strategy to inform and educate the media in relation to procedures for managing drug incidents in the school.

Whitsunday Christian College: FAQ Drugs

1. Why does the College include the following requirements and rights as part of its contract and other statements with families and students?

Students agree not to use tobacco, alcohol or any other harmful drugs while enrolled at the college. That is, on enrolment families and students agree that students will not use tobacco, alcohol or any other harmful drugs while enrolled at the college. We respect and trust families and students to honour their commitment.

Every student has the right to come to school to learn in an atmosphere free from the distractions and dangers imposed by drug use. College students have the right to attend peer social gatherings organised by current college students that are free from the pressures and dangers imposed by drug use.

Parents have the right to expect that their children will be educated in an atmosphere free from the distractions and dangers imposed by drug use. Parents have the right to expect their children will attend peer social gatherings organised by current college students that are free from the pressures and dangers imposed by drug use.

It is our desire to see our young people have a life of hope and purpose orientated around a positive lifestyle free from the dangers of harmful drugs in their school years.

The safety and health of students is of our concern especially in promoting learning, we know:

- Youth are at much greater risk of emotional and physical harm than adults in terms of alcohol use. Higher risk includes sexual coercion or abuse and physical recklessness, abuse or attack.
- Alcohol and other drug taking is linked to the death and serious harm incidents among adolescents most of which are from unnatural causes and preventable.
- Teenagers are still physically developing. Adolescence is a period of rapid growth. The brain, nervous system, reproductive system and liver are still maturing. The body and muscle mass is incomplete and much more sensitive to the chemicals in drugs. The younger a child starts using alcohol, the greater the chance of becoming an alcoholic.
- Teenagers are still emotionally developing. A young person is forming a sense of personal identity and is learning basic social skills. Alcohol disrupts this process by producing a chemical "high" that affects the process of learning how to deal with others, carrying out responsibilities, and handling problems.
- Adolescents who experiment with alcohol often get drunk. They often drink to get "buzzed" or "wasted". The teenage party that permits alcohol use often has the focus on drinking rather than on other activities. Most of these parties have little or no parental supervision.
- There is no known "safe" dose of alcohol for young people. Any level of alcohol in the body of a young person puts him or her at higher risk.

2. Is this a Christian thing, not drinking alcohol?

Actually the Bible (1 Corinthians 10:23-24) tells Christians that, "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive. ²⁴Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus, lived in a time when wine was a common drink. One day at a wedding where they had run out of wine, His mum asked him to do something, the result; Jesus made the best wine from water at a wedding. Chiefly, the Bible warns people to be wise and refrain from the dangers of getting drunk.

Rather a rule, it is to do with choice and wisdom. Some people in society have made decisions not to drink alcohol because of its negative effects on individuals and the community. Other people enjoy a beer or a class of wine without getting drunk. Unfortunately, alcohol related issues in Australia have major negative effects on many members of our community and their families (drink driving, physical abuse, mental illness etc.). These days there are many alternatives to wine to drink that do not contain alcohol; this wasn't the case throughout history.

The College believes your decision to consume alcohol needs to happen when you have completed your school studies. It is better made once you have had a chance to reflect on the impact of alcohol in our society and what it would mean in your own life as you mature into adulthood.

Again the main reason for the college's expectation is to protect you from harm in your school years.

3. What does the college base its position in regards to alcohol on?

Life experience and research. For example the best and latest research undertaken by the 2009 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines . It states:

Alcohol has a complex role in Australian society. Most Australians drink alcohol, generally for enjoyment, relaxation and sociability, and do so at levels that cause few adverse effects. However, a substantial proportion of people drink at levels that increase their risk of alcohol-related harm. For some, alcohol is a cause of significant ill health and hardship. In many countries, including Australia, alcohol is responsible for a considerable burden of death, disease and injury. Alcohol-related harm to health is not limited to drinkers but also affects families, bystanders and the broader community.

These 2009 National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines aim to establish the evidence base for future policies and community materials on reducing the health risks that arise from drinking alcohol. The guidelines communicate evidence concerning these risks to the Australian community to allow individuals to make informed decisions regarding the amount of alcohol that they choose to drink.

Guideline Number 3. For children and young people, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

Smoking health warnings are well established in our community. Nobody smokes here anymore.

4. What about medication prescribed for me by my health professional?

This is something between you, your family and your doctor. In this context, these would not be classed as harmful drugs. See medication identification and storage rules for at school use.

5. Why are students asked not to attend social gatherings (parties, group of friends etc.) where tobacco, alcohol and other harmful drugs are being consumed by school aged young people?

- The risk of attending such a party is high: See earlier questions.
- Life has more potential and hope than reducing a Friday night down to sitting around watching peers become intoxicated, sick, abusive and potentially abused.
- Associated behaviour of others at the party often brings disrepute to bystanders.
- This type of behaviour is totally against stated school policy and acceptance by the school community

6. What happens if a student breaks his or her agreement with the college?

Each case is handled on an individual basis. The school may have a legal obligation to inform the police. The school has a moral obligation to inform parents. A student in leadership may lose their role. If this happens at school, or at a school event, or representing the school, there will be appropriate consequences.

7. Why does the college talk about respect and trust in these matters?

Young people in our college community are treated with respect and we trust them to do the right thing. Likewise, we expect our students to respect and trust us in these matters. Tobacco, alcohol and other harmful drugs have been an issue in the lives of young people for generations. Parents and staff members have been around long enough to see enough of the downside of when these substances and young people mix.