



# UNITED HERZLIA SCHOOLS

## בתיה"ס המאוחדים הרצליה

## SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

### 1. GUIDING PHILOSOPHY

There are few issues relating to school-going children in our time and place which are as important as substance abuse. The matter is fraught with ignorance, rumour, hysteria, emotion and moral questions. Even experts are not always in agreement on certain issues, and many questions are as yet unanswered. Our policy is based on the best information available to us, and is entirely predicated on what we believe to be the long-term interest of the children of our community.

We base our policy on a clear distinction between two often confused things: substance abuse and addiction.

Current thinking in the field of addiction sees addiction as a disease, possibly with a genetic component. Out of any group of people who abuse habit-forming substances, some will become addicted and others will not.

People who work in the field of addiction speak of an “addictive personality”. Unfortunately, such a personality is not easily recognisable: addiction cuts across every personality type, every social class, every ethnic group, every educational level and every intelligence level. Few addicts fit the Hollywood stereotype of the down-and-out low-life from a deprived background.

Substance abuse is a foolish and dangerous thing. It is also illegal in the case of certain substances, but not of some of the most dangerous (e.g. tobacco and alcohol). Young people are very strongly attracted to it, and often lack the maturity and strength of character to resist the peer pressure to participate in it. It is antisocial. For these reasons, it is treated as a discipline issue.

Addiction, on the other hand, is a different matter entirely. It is the end result of foolish, illegal and antisocial activities, but once it exists it can only realistically be treated as a medical problem, not a disciplinary one. Someone who has slipped over that boundary from abuse into addiction needs medical, counselling and psychological treatment – not rejection, anger and discipline.

Based on this understanding of drugs and addiction, the School has formulated a policy for dealing with the situation as it affects our children. This policy may be summarised as:

Substance abuse is wrong, foolish, dangerous and anti-social. We shall do our best to educate children in every way possible to avoid it. In addition, we have strict rules prohibiting it, with strong penalties for offenders.

However, in those tragic cases where abuse has led to addiction, our role changes radically: we are partners with parents and family in a process of dealing with a disease, not disciplinarians involved in punishment of offenders.

## 2. THE ROLES OF THE SCHOOL AND THE PARENTS

As an institution expressly set up for the education of our children, the school recognises that it has a major role to play in informing pupils of the dangers of substance abuse. This we do to the very best of our ability. Among other things, we provide guidance and information in Guidance classes, expose the pupils to plays and films and literature dealing with substance abuse, bring in visiting speakers such as members of the Narcotics Squad, professional drug counsellors, addicts in recovery and addicts not in recovery, and set a suitable example in our own behaviour. We run programmes such as Bridges which provide further information for pupils, teachers and parents. In addition, we provide a disciplinary structure to deal with offenders, thereby keeping our pupil's environment as drug-free as we can. We also provide an extensive personal counselling service, of which any pupil may make use.

It must be emphasised that the parents play as large a role as the school. If youngsters are permitted to spend weekends at venues which are known to be places of great exposure to drugs, then the probability of abuse by the children is very high indeed. Many parents underestimate the power of peer pressure.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this document, *at school* includes all of the following:

- On the school premises at any time
- Participating in a school function in any place and at any time
- In school uniform in any public place, whether on school business or not
- In any context in which the pupil is clearly associated with the school

Situations not mentioned above will be regarded as "outside school". In situations where pupils abuse any substance at all outside school, but in such a manner as to bring the school into disrepute in any way, then the school reserves the right to take action in terms of the rules relating to bringing the school into disrepute, as well as, or in place of, the rules relating to substance abuse.

For the purposes of this document, *Drugs* refers to illegal mind-altering substances, including, but not limited to, cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, LSD and mandrax.

*Alcohol* refers to all alcoholic beverages.

*Tobacco* refers to legal substances which are usually smoked, including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars and pipe tobacco.

Abuse of over-the-counter or prescription drugs is dealt with separately.

*Excessive* use of alcohol, or *abuse* of alcohol, is taken to mean sufficient use to bring persons into a clearly visible state of intoxication, such as would make one embarrassed to be associated with them.

## 4 POLICY

- In the event of a rumour concerning alleged drug, alcohol or tobacco abuse by a pupil outside the school, provided that the rumour is from a source which, in the opinion of the teaching staff, has at least some degree of credibility, the School will speak confidentially to the pupil, passing on the rumour, and will offer the pupil the opportunity of discussing the matter with his or her parents before the school contacts them. Thereafter, the School will contact the parents and tell them of the existence of the rumour. From that point on, the matter is left in the hands of the parents, with the School offering all of the assistance it is in a position to provide.
- In the event of the school obtaining solid evidence of abuse of alcohol or tobacco outside school, the parents will be informed of the situation. The school may choose to speak with the pupil first, and give the pupil the opportunity to discuss it with their parents before the school does.
- Use of alcohol or tobacco at school, or arriving at school under the influence of alcohol, will lead to the pupil's being suspended from school for three school days for the first offence. In the event of a second offence the pupil will be suspended for five school days. In the event of a third offence, the pupil will be expelled. In all of these instances, the possibility that the pupil is already addicted to nicotine may be considered. If the pupil is indeed addicted to nicotine, then the School may instead require the pupil to undergo a suitable rehabilitation course, under the same conditions as for addiction to drugs.
- If the school obtains solid or convincing evidence of drug abuse outside school, the pupil will be called in for a confidential meeting with the Principal and at least one other senior member of staff, following which the parents will be informed. The school will make available its full range of guidance and counselling to the pupil and the family of the pupil, including referral to outside agencies who may be in a position to assist.
- If a pupil abuses drugs at school, or arrives at school under the influence of drugs, the pupil will immediately be suspended while the matter is fully investigated and the parents are informed.

The immediate priority will be to establish whether addiction is present. For this purpose, the pupil will be referred to professionals in the field of addiction. Such professionals must be acceptable to the Principal of the school. If no addiction is present, the matter is considered purely disciplinary, and the pupil will be expelled. If addiction is present, the matter is considered medical, and the pupil will be required to attend a suitable rehabilitation programme (which must be one acceptable to the school). This may also include an agreement or contract with pupil and parents allowing for medical testing of the pupil for the presence of drugs. If the pupil refuses to do this, or defaults from the programme, the pupil will be asked to leave the school.

- If a pupil sells drugs outside school, and it comes to the attention of the school, the matter will be referred to the SAPS for investigation. If it is confirmed that the pupil has been selling drugs, the pupil will be expelled.
- If a pupil sells, buys, distributes or receives drugs at school, or brings drugs to school, the pupil will be expelled, and the matter may be handed over to the SAPS.
- In any instance of alcohol abuse outside school, the School would be expected to use discretion before taking action. This applies also in the case of an under-age person using

alcohol; if a 15 year old has a glass of sparkling wine at a Barmitzvah, for instance, the School might not feel it necessary to inform the parents.

These consequences of substance abuse are summarised below.

## **SITUATION / SCHOOL'S RESPONSE**

### **Selling, buying, distributing or receiving drugs at school, bringing drugs to school:**

Pupil expelled; case possibly referred to police; counselling recommended

### **Selling drugs outside school:**

Immediate suspension while police investigate

### **If confirmed, expulsion:**

Counselling recommended

### **Using drugs at school, or arriving at school under the influence of drugs:**

Immediate suspension while case investigated. Parents called in. Compulsory counselling and professional assessment to establish if addiction is present. If addiction present, compulsory rehabilitation programme. If pupil refuses program, or defaults, expulsion. If no addiction present, expulsion

### **Using drugs outside school:**

Pupil informed confidentially, following which parents informed confidentially. Referral to various counselling services inside and outside the school. The pupil's performance and behaviour at school will be closely monitored

### **Using alcohol at school, or arriving at school under the influence of alcohol:**

If alcoholism present, compulsory suspension and referral for counselling and treatment. If not, the following applies:

First offence: external suspension for three days

Second offence: external suspension for five days

Third offence: expulsion

### **Using alcohol to excess outside school:**

Parents informed

### **Using alcohol outside school while under age:**

Parents informed

### **Using tobacco at school:**

First offence: suspension for three days

Second offence: suspension for five days

Third offence: expulsion

### **If addiction present:**

At the School's discretion, same as for using drugs at school

### **Using tobacco outside school:**

Parents informed

**Abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs, inside or outside school:**

Mandatory counselling; parents informed

**NOTE:** Human affairs are rarely straightforward, and the school attempts to treat each case on its merits. The school therefore reserves the right to implement less harsh measures than the ones above, if, in the school's opinion, extenuating circumstances justify doing so.