



SUBSTANCE ABUSE – RANDOM DRUG SCREENING PROGRAMME

Dear Parents

In order to help our children resist the temptation of drugs, we have a Random Drug Screening Programme. The School operates in the spirit of co-operative partnership with parents and students in this programme.

Today's adolescents face an increasing number of threats and challenges to both their code of values and to their right to freedom of choice. Among certain groups, the use of illegal drugs (such as dagga, ecstasy and "acid") is perceived as being socially acceptable, and the ready availability of drugs like dagga, combined with natural curiosity and peer pressure can result in children making decisions which could have negative and long-lasting effects on their lives.

Dagga, the most common of these drugs, is particularly dangerous to adolescents, as it affects their ability to concentrate, removes or greatly reduces motivation and goal-orientation, and interferes significantly and negatively with their academic performance. In addition, while the Constitutional Court recently decriminalised the consumption of marijuana by *adults* in a private home, the use, possession and distribution of dagga by persons under 18 years of age is prohibited under South African Criminal Law and punishable by substantial fines, imprisonment and other sanctions upon conviction. Furthermore, for persons who are 18 years of age or older, it is illegal to possess or consume marijuana at school, to be intoxicated at school, and to consume marijuana in the company of those under 18.

In order to protect our children, and support their right to say "No", the school follows a Random Drug Screening Programme. All boys are on the programme. The drug testing will be done by analyzing urine samples, and the Deputy-Principal (Pastoral) will oversee the process. The samples are collected at the School Sanatorium under strictly controlled conditions and with respect to the dignity of the student. These samples will be tested using over-the-counter tests in the first instance. Any non-negative result will be sent away to a laboratory for a second test. These tests are to the school's account. Students will be tested based on numbers generated by a random number generator only. The results of tests will be dealt with confidentially and sensitively, and will be made known to the School Psychologist, the House Director, the Principal, the student and his parents.

The School does not involve the South African Police Service unless drug trafficking at the School is suspected, in which case the School reserves the right to request the assistance of the police to identify "dealers" or "pushers".

On confirmation of a positive sample:

inspires individuals

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1. The Deputy-Principal will contact the parents involved and inform them of the result. He will ask them to come in with their son to see the school psychologist. The psychologist will control things from there with respect to future counselling. The parents and boy will be offered the option of independent counselling, which may be arranged by an independent health practitioner of the parents' choice.

2. Should the boy already have a record involving drug use whilst at Bishops then the Deputy-Principal (Discipline) and the student's House Director will also be involved in the process of plotting the way forward for the student.

Studies show that children who remain drug-free until the age of eighteen are far less likely to use drugs as adults than their counterparts who use drugs while still at school.

You can view the *Policy on the Management of Substance Abuse by Students* on the College portion of the Bishops website under the "Pastoral" heading.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Yours sincerely

PETER FARLAM
Clinical Psychologist
Bishops Support Unit

TONY REELER
Principal

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