



POLICY ON TOBACCO, ALCOHOL AND OTHER ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES AND DANGEROUS WEAPONS

Letter of agreement between Westerford High School and all learners and parents' / guardians' regarding possession and use of drugs, other illegal substances and dangerous weapons

Westerford High School aims to encourage all its learners to abstain from using any drugs (other than those which are medically prescribed), including alcohol and tobacco. We want the school to be free of all such substances and in particular to be a drug free area. In order to promote this, we need the cooperation of all concerned, learners, staff and parents' / guardians'. This letter sets out the school's policy towards drugs, alcohol and tobacco use and requests that all those attending Westerford sign this letter to acknowledge:

- that they have understood the school's policy, and
- that they agree to abide by and promote this policy.

1. **POSITION:** The school does not tolerate:

- 1.1 the use or possession of any illegal or prohibited substances. For the purposes of this agreement, such substances include dagga (marijuana), hash, cocaine, heroin, mandrax, speed, ecstasy, tik and all their derivatives and similar drugs;
- 1.2 the possession of drug-related equipment such as cigarette papers, pipes, etc.
- 1.3 the use of anabolic steroids and other performance enhancing substances;
- 1.4 the inappropriate use of solvents, inhalants and similar agents;
- 1.5 the consumption of alcohol and the smoking of tobacco;
- 1.6 being in possession of, or using any knife or similar sharp object or any kind of firearm

2. **PROCEDURE:** Anybody found in possession of, or using, any of these substances either on school property, or when they are wearing school uniform, or during any outing or school-related function, including sports outings and school social events, will be subject to the following procedure:

- 2.1 The learner will first be interviewed by the school's Wellness Department and the senior teacher/s in charge of wellness. The purpose of this is to ascertain the nature of the learner's involvement with drugs (casual experimentation, habitual use, drug dependence, dealing, etc) and to determine the appropriate response in each case. If other learners are implicated, they may be interviewed as part of this fact-finding process. If this initial assessment indicates that the parent's / guardian's need to be informed, they will be requested to come in as soon as possible to discuss the matter with the school.
- 2.2 If it is felt that the learner needs professional drug counselling or other treatment, the parent's / guardian's will be told, and the learner referred to such independent professionals. The cost of such treatment shall be paid for by the learner's family.
- 2.3 If the initial assessment indicates that disciplinary proceedings should be initiated, this will take place in accordance with procedures laid down by the SA Schools Act and associated regulations. This may involve appearing before a disciplinary committee of the Governing Body which will include senior school staff. The learner concerned has the right to be accompanied by parent's / guardian's and represented by a lawyer if they so desire.



- 2.4 The results of such disciplinary hearing will depend on the circumstances of each case, and may range from providing assistance, including professional drug counselling, to a range of punishments which include expulsion. In the case of illegal substances, the matter may be reported to the S.A. Police. Dealing in drugs or involving other learners in their use could carry the sanction of expulsion from the school.

3. **POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON SEARCHING OF LEARNERS AND THEIR BELONGINGS:**

In terms of the South African Schools Act the Principal or a delegated staff member has the right to search a learner or groups of learners if there is a “fair and reasonable suspicion” that they have any ‘dangerous object or illegal drug’, and to conduct tests to verify whether drugs have been inhaled or ingested.

- 3.1 The searches will be conducted strictly according to the detailed guidelines set out in an amendment to the SA Schools Act (Government Gazette No. 31417 – Notice 1140, available online at <http://www.policy.org.za/page/2008-1/page:10>), which
- (i) sets out in detail what is understood by “fair and reasonable suspicion”,
 - (ii) ensures that the dignity and rights of the learner are respected, and
 - (iii) specifies the searching and drug testing procedures.
- 3.2 The search or drug test will be conducted by a member of staff of the same gender as the learner in a suitable room out of sight of other learners, and with another adult of the same gender as the learner present. Careful records of the outcomes of these searches or tests will be kept, and the parents / guardians of the learner contacted as soon as possible (within one working day) to inform them and to discuss the implications.
- 3.3 If an illegal object or substance is found, the principal or investigating teacher is obliged to turn it over to the police.
- 3.4 If this process confirms suspicion regarding possession of, or use of drugs; or possession of, or use of a dangerous weapon, then the counselling and/or disciplinary procedure outlined in section 2 above will be followed.

4. **ADDICTION, HELP & TREATMENT:** The school understands that addiction is a medical problem and that certain drug-use may need support and treatment rather than punishment. If any learner asks for, or is identified as needing, assistance in dealing with drug-use, they will not be punished but the appropriate counselling will be set up. If a child has a drug-related problem, it is far preferable that this is disclosed to the School so that treatment and support can be considered, rather than have the school discover such drug use in circumstances which may result in discipline rather than appropriate support. There are experienced Wellness staff at school, headed by a Deputy Principal, and there is a professional therapist, all of whom will treat such matters with sensitivity.

The aforementioned and the teachers are on the lookout for changes in a learner’s behavior which may indicate drug-use and the need for sensitive intervention. There will be random drug testing and in specific cases, relapse prevention, treatment and monitoring of drug addiction may involve random urine testing as well as professional drug therapy, involvement of drug rehabilitation professionals and any other treatment which may be professionally indicated.



5. **CONFIDENTIALITY:** All approaches by any learner to any of the school's staff will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Apart from the senior staff involved in wellness and counselling, and the learner's parent's / guardian's, no other staff nor parent's / guardian's will be involved or informed. If it is considered in the learner's interest that any of their teachers be informed, this will only be done in consultation with the learner.
6. **ALCOHOL & TOBACCO:** The school opposes the use of alcohol and tobacco. The buildings of the school are a smoke free zone. No learner is allowed to smoke or drink alcohol while on school premises or on any school-related function or activity, including sports outings and national and overseas tours.
7. **PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION:** If a learner is taking prescription drugs the school should be notified of this, especially in the case of medication for chronic illness. The learner must not bring more than one day's supply of such prescription drugs to school.
8. **LIFE ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES:** The school has an extensive Life Orientation programme which aims to teach our learners about the dangers of, and to make responsible decisions about, drugs, alcohol and tobacco. As part of this programme the school may call in outside agencies and individuals. In addition, teachers and parent's / guardian's will from time to time be offered workshops and lectures on drug awareness and how to recognise and respond to drug abuse among our children.
9. **PARENTS' / GUARDIANS' RESPONSIBILITY:** Although this school will do its best to protect our learners during school hours, the ultimate responsibility for teaching children about the dangers of drug use and how to withstand peer pressure rests with the family. No school, however good its drug prevention policies, can be a substitute for an involved and nurturing family environment.

If there is anything in this letter about which parent's / guardian's or learners are uncertain, or if they would like more information about the school's policy on drugs, alcohol and tobacco, they are encouraged to contact the school.



Signed in agreement:

For Westerford High School:

By the learner: NAME: GRADE:

SIGNED: DATE:

By learner's parent(s) or guardian(s):

NAME: SIGNATURE: DATE:

NAME: SIGNATURE: DATE: