Drug Issues Policy

Preamble
The John Paul College mission statement speaks of the commitment of all members of the community to recognising the essential dignity of the person and of the need for all to experience the ‘fullness of life’ promised in John 10:10.

Purpose
This policy focuses on how John Paul College should treat the important issue of drugs. As students mature they are faced with decisions about their own health and wellbeing. John Paul College strives to provide an educational environment where student decisions can be made with appropriate knowledge and understanding of the potential consequences to themselves and others.

Definition
A drug is any substance, with the exception of food and water, which when taken into the body alters its function physically and psychologically. This includes all legal and illegal substances.

An illicit drug is a drug of which the production, sale, possession or use is prohibited. An alternative term is ‘illegal drug’.

An unsanctioned drug is a drug for which use is restricted by law, school authorities and/or school policies/guidelines. The term includes illicit, social and prescription drugs.

Harm minimisation refers to policies and programs aimed at reducing drug-related harm which includes the promotion of abstinence, prevention of anticipated harm, and reduction of actual harm.

Rationale
John Paul College aims to promote a positive, healthy and caring school environment embracing family, spiritual and community values within our unique and multicultural community. John Paul College’s drug policy promotes a ‘drug free’ environment and is binding on all members and visitors of the college community.

The college recognises the need to provide students with a comprehensive drug education program so that they can make informed choices based on factual information. This program is based on the harm minimisation approach.

Behavioural Expectation
There is an expectation of no unsanctioned drugs at school approved activities and/or when wearing school uniform. At these times it is expected that students
- Are not in possession of any unsanctioned drugs, including cigarettes and alcohol
- Are not affected by drugs
- Do not possess any drug related equipment such as syringes, bongs, pipes etc, except in the case of lawful medical use
- Do not deliberately inhale solvents including paint, glue and petrol
- Do not arrange for the distribution and/or sale of any drugs or be involved in situations that may put other students at risk
- Will not knowingly congregate with others using drugs

Those who have knowledge of drug use by others will act morally and with a duty of care by reporting the matter to a responsible member of the John Paul College Community.
Education
The John Paul College program is student centred with an increased emphasis on preventing drug use and looking at why students may be likely to take drugs.

John Paul College's drug education program aims to:
- provide knowledge about the effects of individual drugs, including the consequences of drug use and safety messages about risks
- implement a harm minimisation approach which encompasses a range of strategies, including non-use which aims to reduce harmful consequences of drug use
- develop resilience skills that enable young people to deal with everyday stresses and
- develop community links with DEECD (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development), Victoria Police, Youth Resources Officers and other community agencies

Consequences & Procedures
Each instance deemed to be in breach of this policy will be considered individually and independently according to the given set of circumstances at the time.

The Pastoral Care Policy will be referred to in dealing with breaches of this policy. If an individual instance involves the use, possession and/or distribution of illicit drugs the local designated police officer must be contacted in order for a collaborative approach with the wellbeing of the young person being the priority. The College will work collaboratively with Victoria Police to ensure appropriate action is taken in response to drug related incidents including those involving illicit drugs.

Students must accept the consequences of their behaviour and these consequences will contain a blend of sanctions, education, counselling and support.

Where students are found in possession, using, selling or otherwise distributing illicit drugs
- parents will be informed
- police will be notified
- an investigation will follow – this may be conducted by school personnel or the police
- a record of the incident and procedures will be documented.

In deciding consequences the seriousness of the matter and the age of the student will determine the appropriate response.

The student may be:
- warned and placed on a contract which may include counselling
- suspended, and on return to school placed on a contract which may include counselling

In some serious circumstances, a change of school or a move to an alternative setting may be judged the most appropriate means by which a student’s wellbeing can be responsibly supported or restored. Such a change, known as negotiated transfer, offers opportunity for personal growth, and for a fresh start in an environment more suited to the student’s needs and circumstances.

In each instance, the Principal will determine the appropriate sanctions.