



SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY (2026)

1. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Policy Owner	SMT and Board of Governors
Drafted By	SMT
Date of Approval	02 June 2026
Review Date	May 2027
Related Policies	Learner Code of Conduct & Handbook (2026); Anti-Bullying & Harassment Policy (2026); SHE & Crisis Management Policy (2026); Data Management & POPIA Compliance Policy (2026); Tours, Excursions & Camps Policy (2026).

2. PREAMBLE & ETHOS

Loreto Convent School is committed to maintaining a safe, substance-free environment for every learner, every staff member, and every visitor. Substance abuse is not only a disciplinary matter — it is a health matter, a safeguarding matter, and a matter of profound pastoral concern.

We recognise that learners who come into contact with substances are frequently acting under peer pressure, family stress, or circumstances of vulnerability. Our first instinct is not punishment but accompaniment. At the same time, we are clear that the possession, use, and especially the distribution of substances on school premises poses an immediate risk to the safety of the entire school community, and we will not compromise on this.

Guided by the charism of Mary Ward, this policy is anchored in:

- **Sincerity:** We are honest with learners and families about the risks of substance abuse. We do not minimise the harm that drugs and alcohol cause to developing adolescent brains, to relationships, and to futures. Equally, we are honest about our intentions: this policy is primarily a health and formation instrument, not a weapon of exclusion.
- **Justice:** Every case is assessed individually and proportionately. The learner who is pressured into carrying a substance is not treated the same as the learner who is distributing. We distinguish between use, possession, and supply. We distinguish between the learner in crisis and the learner who is a risk to others.
- **Freedom:** True freedom requires the capacity to say no. The school's drug testing programme exists in part to give vulnerable learners a socially acceptable reason to resist peer pressure. A learner who can say "I could be randomly tested at school" has a tool that genuine freedom requires.
- **Truth:** We are honest with learners about the nature of the testing process, its purpose, its consequences, and their rights throughout. No learner is tested covertly or without due process.

- **Excellence:** A learner in the grip of substance dependency cannot achieve their potential. This policy exists to protect the conditions in which every learner can pursue academic, personal, and spiritual excellence.
- **Accompaniment:** We walk alongside the learner who is struggling with substances. Rehabilitation, not expulsion, is our preferred outcome wherever the safety of the community allows it. We also accompany the family — recognising that a learner's substance use is rarely only a school problem, and that parents need support alongside consequences.

3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

This policy is drafted in compliance with:

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Section 28 — Rights of the Child; Section 10 — Human Dignity; Section 14 — Privacy).*
- *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA), s8 — Code of Conduct; s9 — Disciplinary proceedings.*
- *Children's Act 38 of 2005 — mandatory reporting obligations; best interests of the child.*
- *Prevention of and Treatment for Substance Abuse Act 70 of 2008.*
- *Drug Trafficking Act 140 of 1992 (as amended).*
- *Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013 — test results as Special Personal Information.*
- *GDE Circular: Substance Abuse in Schools — Guidelines for Governing Bodies.*

4. DEFINITIONS

"Substance": Any substance with the potential for abuse, including: illegal drugs (cannabis, cocaine, heroin, MDMA, LSD, tik, Mandrax, etc.); alcohol; tobacco and nicotine products (including vaping devices and e-cigarettes); solvents and inhalants; over-the-counter or prescription medication used outside its prescribed purpose; and any other psychoactive substance not prescribed by a medical practitioner for the specific learner.

"Vaping device": Any electronic cigarette, e-cigarette, or similar device that delivers nicotine or other substances via an inhaled aerosol. Vaping is explicitly included in this policy and in the definition of "substance" above.

"Possession": Having a substance on one's person, in one's bag, locker, or any space the learner has access to or control over.

"Use": Being under the influence of a substance, having consumed a substance, or having a positive test result.

"Distribution or Supply": Buying, selling, exchanging, sharing, or otherwise transferring a substance to another person, whether or not for financial gain.

"Self-referral": A learner who voluntarily discloses substance use to the School Counsellor, a trusted teacher, or the Executive Principal, outside of any investigation or testing process.

5. JURISDICTION

This policy applies to all learners of Loreto Convent School in the following circumstances:

- On school premises, at any time.
- During the school day, including travel to and from school.
- At any school-sanctioned activity, event, or excursion, whether or not in uniform.
- Whenever a learner is in school uniform or is recognisable as a learner of the school.
- Off-campus, where the learner's conduct materially affects the school community, the welfare of fellow learners, or brings the school into disrepute.

6. PREVENTION & EDUCATION

Prevention is the primary objective of this policy. Disciplinary response is a last resort, not a first instinct.

- **Life Orientation programme:** Substance abuse education is integrated into the Life Orientation curriculum at all relevant grade levels. This includes age-appropriate content on the health effects of substances, peer pressure management, and decision-making skills.
- **Annual awareness session:** An annual substance abuse awareness session is held for learners, facilitated by the School Counsellor and where appropriate, by an external specialist. A parent information session accompanies this.
- **Peer resilience:** The school's merit and demerit system, together with the Prefect Body's anti-bullying and wellness campaigns, reinforces the social norms and community culture that reduce vulnerability to substance abuse.
- **Counsellor proactive monitoring:** The School Counsellor maintains proactive awareness of learners who may be at heightened risk. Identification is supportive, not punitive, and does not result in automatic testing or disciplinary referral.

7. DRUG TESTING PROGRAMME

Loreto Convent School operates a drug testing programme as an additional safeguard within a broader substance abuse prevention strategy. Parents/guardians provide written consent for their child to participate in this programme at the point of enrolment, through the Informed Consent Agreement (Annexure A).

7.1. Random Testing

- Learners are drawn from a grade where reasonable suspicion arises.
- The school administration has no discretion to exclude or protect a randomly selected learner.
- The testing schedule, selection criteria, and selection process are kept strictly confidential and restricted to the minimum number of staff. Testing does not occur on a predictable schedule.

7.2. Targeted (Suspicion-Based) Testing

The Executive Principal may require a learner to submit to a targeted drug test where there is **reasonable suspicion** of substance use. Reasonable suspicion must be based on specific, documented observations and may include:

- Direct observation by a staff member or credible source of substance use or possession by a learner.
- Abnormal, erratic, or uncharacteristic behaviour.
- Physical indicators: slurred speech, impaired coordination, altered pupils, smell of alcohol or cannabis.
- Reliable first-hand information from a member of the school community.
- Possession of drug paraphernalia.

The Executive Principal must document the specific grounds for reasonable suspicion in writing before authorising a targeted test.

7.3. Testing Procedure

1. **Consent:** Written parental consent (Annexure A) is obtained at enrolment and remains valid for the duration of the learner's enrolment. Learners aged 18 and over may be required to sign an additional release form for results to be shared with parents.
2. **Two-person team:** Every test is conducted by a team of two school staff members. At least one member must be the same sex as the learner being tested.
3. **Witnessing the sample:** The same-sex team member accompanies the learner and must have a clear, direct view of the sample being passed from body into the collection container to prevent substitution or tampering. The learner is informed of this requirement before the test begins.
4. **Test device:** The learner is shown two sealed, unused test devices and selects one. The learner observes the device being opened and activated.
5. **Test report:** A written test report is completed for every test, cross-referenced with a unique reference number on the test kit. The report records the learner's details, any medication or supplements declared in the prior 48 hours, the result, and any relevant observations. Both team members sign.
6. **Laboratory confirmation:** Where the initial test returns a positive result, the urine sample is sent to an accredited laboratory for confirmation testing before any disciplinary action is finalised. The learner's suspension pending the hearing is not contingent on the laboratory result; however, the disciplinary sanction is not finalised until the laboratory result is received.
7. **Confidentiality:** All team members and administrative staff involved in the testing process sign confidentiality agreements. Test results constitute Special Personal Information under POPIA and are accessible only to the Executive Principal and the relevant Deputy Principal. They are not shared in the general staffroom.

7.4. Refusal to Test

Refusal to submit to a randomly selected or reasonably suspected test, or the deliberate provision of a contaminated or substituted sample, may result in the inference being drawn that the learner has breached this policy. The school may proceed to the applicable disciplinary process on the basis of refusal alone.

7.5. Cost of Testing

The cost of confirmatory laboratory testing is for the parents' account where the initial on-site test returns a positive result.

8. RESPONSE FRAMEWORK

The school's response to a substance abuse incident is graduated and proportionate. The following matrix summarises the primary pathways. Every case is assessed individually; the matrix is a guide, not a fixed formula.

Situation	First response	Process	Possible outcome
Self-referral or voluntary disclosure	Support & Rehabilitation Contract	Counsellor, parents, rehabilitation provider. No disciplinary action if contract adhered to.	Rehabilitation; no sanction
Positive random or targeted test (first incident, personal use)	Immediate suspension pending hearing	Parents notified. Lab confirmation. Disciplinary hearing. SMT counselling plan.	Suspension; counselling; conditional return
Positive test (repeat incident or refusal to engage in rehabilitation)	Disciplinary Hearing	Full hearing. Board involved. Counselling offered. Rehabilitation contract reviewed.	Final written warning or expulsion
Possession on school premises	Immediate suspension	Search, confiscation, SAPS notification. Disciplinary hearing.	Expulsion likely
Distribution or supply to others	Immediate expulsion process	SAPS referral mandatory. Board hearing.	Expulsion; criminal referral

8.1. Self-Referral and Voluntary Disclosure

A learner who voluntarily discloses substance use to the School Counsellor, a trusted teacher, or the Executive Principal — before any investigation or test result — will be responded to with support in the first instance. A written **Rehabilitation Contract** will be drafted and signed by the learner, the parents or guardians, and the Executive Principal. The contract will specify the rehabilitation programme the learner undertakes, the monitoring arrangements, and the conditions under which the school will refrain from formal disciplinary action.

If the Rehabilitation Contract is adhered to and there is no adverse impact on fellow learners or staff, no formal disciplinary action will be taken. If the contract is breached, or if the learner's conduct subsequently affects the school community, the school reserves the right to institute full disciplinary proceedings.

8.2. Positive Test Result — Personal Use (First Incident)

- Parents are notified immediately.
- The learner is suspended pending the outcome of a formal disciplinary hearing.
- The urine sample is sent for laboratory confirmation.
- The School Counsellor meets with the learner and the family.
- A formal disciplinary hearing is convened under the Learner Code of Conduct & Handbook (2026). The hearing will consider the test result, the laboratory confirmation, the School Counsellor's report, and any mitigating factors.
- Alongside any disciplinary sanction, a Rehabilitation Contract and counselling plan will be offered as a condition of return to school.

8.3. Possession on School Premises

Possession of a substance on school premises — whether or not the learner is under the influence — is a serious breach of this policy. The substance will be confiscated, the learner will be suspended immediately, and a formal disciplinary hearing will be convened. Where the substance is illegal, the Executive Principal will notify the South African Police Service (SAPS).

8.4. Distribution or Supply

A learner found to be distributing, selling, or supplying substances to other learners is liable for **immediate expulsion proceedings**. This is the most serious category of breach in this policy. The Executive Principal will notify SAPS in all such cases. The expulsion process complies with section 9 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

8.5. Learner Under the Influence on Campus

Where a learner is assessed as being under the influence of a substance on school premises, they will be isolated from other learners immediately, parents will be called and required to take responsibility for the learner, and the learner will be suspended until a disciplinary hearing can take place. A targeted test will be conducted where possible.

9. ACCOMPANIMENT & REHABILITATION

Consistent with the school's Catholic ethos and its commitment to the whole person, the school regards substance abuse as a health and formative issue as much as a disciplinary one. Even where disciplinary consequences are imposed, the school undertakes to:

- Ensure the learner and their family have access to the School Counsellor throughout the process.
- Facilitate referral to appropriate external counselling, rehabilitation, or treatment services where clinically indicated.
- Where a learner is suspended or faces expulsion proceedings, ensure the continuity of their academic work where this is practically possible.
- Support the learner's re-integration into the school community after suspension, where a return is permitted, with a structured re-entry plan co-ordinated by the School Counsellor and SMT.

A learner who has completed a Rehabilitation Contract in good faith, and who demonstrates genuine commitment to recovery, will not have the substance incident permanently held against them in future disciplinary proceedings, provided no further breach occurs.

10. PARENTAL PARTNERSHIP

Parents are the school's most important partners in preventing and responding to substance abuse. The school undertakes to:

- Notify parents immediately upon any positive test result, any confirmed incident of possession, or any reasonable suspicion that their child is using substances.

- Provide parents with honest, factual information about the nature of the substance involved and the school's proposed response.
- Involve parents in the Rehabilitation Contract and counselling process from the outset.
- Never discuss a learner's substance incident with other parents or share identifying information outside the immediate process.

11. CONFIDENTIALITY & DATA PRIVACY (POPIA)

Drug test results, Rehabilitation Contracts, counselling records, and all documentation relating to a learner's substance abuse incident constitute personal information, and in many cases Special Personal Information, under the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA, Act 4 of 2013). These records are governed by the Data Management & POPIA Compliance Policy (2026).

- **Access:** Accessible only to the Executive Principal, the relevant Deputy Principal, and the School Counsellor.
- **Retention:** Records retained for 3 years from the date of the final resolution or the learner's departure from the school, whichever is later.
- **Staffroom prohibition:** A learner's substance abuse history is never discussed in the general staffroom or shared with staff who have no direct need to know.
- **SAPS referral:** Where a referral to SAPS is made, the Executive Principal records the basis for the referral and the information disclosed in the learner's confidential file.

12. APPEALS

Any disciplinary outcome under this policy is subject to the appeal process set out in the Learner Code of Conduct & Handbook (2026). A learner's parent or guardian may appeal to the Board of Governors within **5 working days** of receiving the written disciplinary decision. For expulsion decisions, the family retains the right to escalate the matter to the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education (Gauteng) in terms of section 9(7) of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996.

13.APPROVAL

Signed on behalf of the Board of Governors:



Date: 02 June 2026

Fatima Rawjee

Chairperson: Board of Governors

Signed by the Executive Principal:



Date: 02 June 2026

Suzette Truter

Executive Principal

ANNEXURE A: INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT – DRUG TESTING PROGRAMME

This form is to be completed by the custodial parent or guardian of every learner at the point of enrolment or at the start of each academic year. It remains in effect for the duration of the learner's enrolment unless revoked in writing.

I, _____ (full name of parent/guardian),

the custodial parent/guardian of _____ (full name of learner, Grade _____),

hereby declare that I am aware of and fully understand the Substance Abuse Policy (2026) of Loreto Convent School.

I consent to the following:

- My child will co-operate in providing a urine sample for drug testing whenever requested to do so under the terms of this policy, whether by random selection or on the basis of reasonable suspicion.
- The urine sample will be obtained by a two-person school staff team using the procedure described in Section 7.3 of the Substance Abuse Policy.
- The result of any test, and any related documentation, will be shared with me as a parent/guardian and, where legally required, with the relevant authorities.
- Where a confirmatory laboratory test is required following a positive on-site result, I accept liability for the cost of that test.

I understand that refusal to submit to a test may result in the school drawing an adverse inference and proceeding to disciplinary action.

This consent remains in effect for the duration of my child's enrolment at Loreto Convent School, unless I revoke it in writing to the Executive Principal.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Contact number: _____

Please return to admin@loreto.co.za