

## **Thomas More College Drug Policy**

### **WHY TEST?**

- a. The availability of drugs is a key issue. Youngsters no longer need to seek out drugs. It is a current social reality.
- b. Drug use in South Africa has increased by 600 per cent in the last decade.
- c. Drug consumption in South Africa is twice the world norm.
- d. 15% of South Africa's population have a drug problem.
- e. Drug abuse is costing South Africa R20-billion a year and could pose a bigger threat to the country's future than the Aids pandemic.
- f. The recently-released United Nations World Drug Report named South Africa as one of the drug capitals of the world.
- g. The abuse of alcohol and usage of dagga has led to the country being one of the top ten narcotics and alcohol abusers in the world.
- h. One Rand in four in circulation in SA is linked to the substance abuse problem.
- i. Drug arrests leapt from 300 in 2006 to 1500 in 2012.
- j. Trend in drug taking is an upward movement; it is a reality.
- k. The age of drug taking is lowering.
- l. The destruction that drugs create in personal and family life is devastating.

### **RESPONSIBILITY FOR PREVENTION EFFORTS?**

- a. The whole of the Thomas More College Community.
- b. Parents, role models, adolescents and MLC Peer Support Group need to speak out freely and often.
- c. Private parties, restaurants, clubs and bars should not allow underage drinking or illegal drug usage.
- d. Schools need to present age specific programmes throughout the Grades; prevention is better than cure; regular talks by ex-drug users, doctors, psychologists et al; discussion in LO classes and at assemblies.

### **THOMAS MORE COLLEGE APPROACH AND GENERAL POLICY**

- a. Drug awareness through education in order to ensure that pupils, staff and parents are aware of the dangers of drug abuse and to create a social ethos where drug taking is viewed as unacceptable.
- b. Zero tolerance for drugs at school: possession, use or sale of drugs on the Thomas More College campus are serious offences and will lead to formal disciplinary steps being taken against offenders.
- c. Preventative drug testing.
- d. Pupils who get caught in the web need help. The earlier rehabilitation takes place, the better the chances of recovery.

## **THOMAS MORE COLLEGE POLICY FOR DRUG TESTING AND SEARCHES**

- a. Support systems will be in place to assist with possible warning signs e.g. teacher and pupil training
- b. Drug testing and searches are aimed at prevention and rehabilitation, not necessarily punishment, but the latter can result (see Point b. under Approach and General Policy).
- c. The issue of rights, respect and privacy with regard to ALL Thomas More College pupils is a priority.
- d. Drug testing and searches may be random or specific/targetted.
- e. The counselling department, management and staff will prepare the pupils for the drug process by educating them on the purpose and aim of the drug testing. It is important that testing should not be seen or experienced by the pupils involved as demeaning or threatening in any way.

### **PROCEDURES FOR SPECIFIC DRUG TESTING AND SEARCHES**

- a. Specific/Targetted testing: where there is a reasonable suspicion, as a result of unusual behaviour, poor work ethic or other possible indications of drug abuse, and it is considered to be in a pupil's interests to be tested, he/she will be selected for testing. The parents will be informed wherever possible and specific/targetted testing will be arranged by Thomas More College.
- b. The cost of specific/targetted testing will be borne by the parents of the pupil concerned (if a test result comes back negative, the school will bear the cost). Thomas More College and the parents will be provided with the results of the testing as they become available.
- c. Specific drug searches and seizures: where there is a clear link between an illegal activity and a pupil, that pupil will be searched, and any drug found in his or her possession will be seized in terms of the Regulations Relating to Safety Measures at Independent Schools, published in the Government Gazette GN 975 of 20 August 2004.
- d. Disciplinary/Counselling action will be taken in the event of possession of drugs or a positive specific test.

### **PROCEDURES FOR RANDOM DRUG TESTING**

- a. The Head or his/her delegate may at random administer drug tests, approved by the Minister of Education, to a randomly selected group of pupils on fair and reasonable suspicion of drug abuse.
- b. The tests will be administered:
  - i. by a person of the same gender as the pupils
  - ii. in a private area and not in the view of other pupils
  - iii. in the presence of an adult witness of the same gender as the pupils
- c. All procedures necessary will be implemented to avoid any possible contamination of samples taken from the pupils who present themselves for testing.
- d. Within 1 working day, if practicable, the Head or his/her delegate will inform the pupils' parents that a random drug test was administered on him/her.
- e. The Head or his/her delegate will inform the pupil and his/her parents of the result of the test immediately after it becomes available. Strict confidentiality will be observed.
- f. The cost of initial random testing will be for Thomas More College's account.
- g. If a pupil tests positive, disciplinary action will be taken. However, it is vital that both the pupil and his/her parents understand that the rationale behind the drug testing is very much to protect the interests of the pupil. Empathy and understanding will be shown and advice and support will be given, but Thomas More College reserves the right to implement the maximum sanction.

- h. The parents will be required to arrange counselling for their son or daughter, and advice in this regard will be offered by Thomas More College. The pupil will then be required to undergo a follow-up test. The timing of the test will depend on the substance involved. The cost of the counselling and the follow-up test will be borne by the pupil's parents. If the pupil tests positive a second time, or if the pupil is uncooperative and/or progress in rehabilitation is not being made, he/she will become subject to more serious disciplinary action.
- i. Records of all drug testing results will be kept in confidence by the Head. The Head will not make any public disclosure of test results. No "labelling" of pupils will take place.

#### **PROCEDURES FOR RANDOM DRUG SEARCHES**

If there is fair and reasonable suspicion that

- i. an illegal drug may be found on school premises, or during a school activity
- ii. one or more pupils are in possession of illegal drugs on school premises, or during a school activity,

the Head or his/her delegate may;

- a. Conduct a random search of the property of all pupils, or group of pupils, for any illegal drug
- b. Conduct a random search of any single pupil or group of pupils; a body search may be done but will not extend to a search of any body cavity of the pupil. A body search will only be done
  - i. by a person of the same gender as the pupil;
  - ii. in a private area and not in the view of another pupil;
  - iii. in the presence of an adult witness of the same gender as the pupil.

Disciplinary/Counselling proceedings will be instituted against a pupil if an illegal drug is found in his possession, or on/in his property.

#### **ALCOHOL**

For the purposes of this policy, illegal drugs are deemed to include **all** makes, brands and kinds of alcohol in any form.

#### **IMAGE AND PERFORMANCE ENHANCING SUBSTANCES**

For the purposes of this policy, illegal drugs are deemed to include **all** image and performance enhancing substances such as anabolic steroids and illegally obtained diet pills.

#### **CONCLUSION**

It is important that the pupils view the drug testing and searches as constructive measures which have been implemented in order to help them to say **no** to drugs, and to provide them with an environment in which they can learn and develop optimally. All parents and pupils will sign an undertaking acknowledging the reading and understanding of this document, and the acceptance of the policy in its entirety.