# GUIDELINES FOR DRUGS IN SCHOOLS

**DIOCESE OF WAGGA WAGGA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline Number</th>
<th>02/145</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guideline Name</td>
<td>Guidelines for Drugs in Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability</td>
<td>All Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Person</td>
<td>Director of Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline Status</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of Approval</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date Last Amended</td>
<td>2013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Related Policies/Documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Safe Schools Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suspension, Exclusion, Expulsion Policy and Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Period:</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guidelines for Drugs in Schools

**Purpose**
This set of documents has been prepared to:
- Set out the policies and procedures for systemic catholic schools in the Diocese of Wagga Wagga regarding illegal substances;
- Assist school leaders to deal with incidents involving students and illegal substances by outlining procedures which are congruent with diocesan policies on pastoral care.

**Philosophical basis**
All students in diocesan schools have the right to attend a school which is free of illegal substances. In responding to the impact of illegal drugs in schools, this policy attempts to strike a balance between the rights of individual students and members of any families concerned, and the rights of the broader community. Because our schools value the worth of each child, responses to individual situations will be made in the light of the gospel values of justice, compassion and forgiveness.

**Principles**
- The safety and welfare of each student is the prime consideration in addressing the issue of illegal substances in the school context. The responsibility of all citizens to uphold the law is acknowledged.
- Schools have educational and pastoral responsibilities towards all students and their families in addressing these issues.
- The principal is responsible for the formulation and publication of school policies consistent with diocesan policies.
- The Catholic Schools Office is responsible for ensuring schools have access to adequate curriculum, counselling and advisory support in dealing with the issue of illegal substances.

**Management by schools - individual school policy on drugs**
All schools are asked to develop a clear policy statement on illegal drugs, whether as part of the student management/discipline policy or code of conduct, or as a separate statement.

The policy needs to be understood by the school staff, students and parents. While the additional element of illegality will require specific responses, the school’s first priority in any disciplinary matter is the safety and welfare of students.

The expectations of the school should be made very clear to students and parents through such means as the provision of age-appropriate preventative education (Drug Education Policy) relating to substance abuse through Personal Development Health and Physical Education Programs. Parents should be made aware of this education.

**Dealing with specific incidents**
These guidelines and procedures are designed for use in situations where school staff know or have reasonable grounds to believe that:
- Illegal drugs have been brought to a school, its immediate vicinity or to school events
  Or that
- Students at school, in its immediate vicinity or at school events are affected by illegal drugs.

These guidelines should also apply when such knowledge or suspicion involves students who are travelling to or from school, or are in other school related situations.

**Pastoral responsibilities**
An essential element of a Christian response to the impact of illegal drugs is to provide support to those affected. On various occasions these will include students alleged to have been involved, those proved to have been involved, families of such students, especially siblings in the school, other students in the school and staff.

In all cases of substance abuse involving students, the possibility of a need for counselling should be investigated. When necessary, support should be available as soon in the process as practicable, rather than being delayed until formal resolution of the situation. In many cases, the student’s family may also benefit from counselling. In some cases, participation in a designated program may become a compulsory element of an enrolment contract for students who have broken school drug rules.

Legal requirements: when to involve police
A principal is obliged to report a matter to police if there is evidence of a serious offence. A serious offence is defined in the Crimes Act as one which involves imprisonment of at least five years. The following offences carry a penalty of imprisonment of five years or more and are therefore matters which must be reported to police:

- Cultivation of an indictable quantity of illegal drugs;
- Manufacture or production of an indictable quantity of illegal drugs;
- Supply of an indictable quantity of illegal drugs (including supply to a person under 16 years of age); and
- Conspiring, aiding or abetting the cultivation, manufacture, production or supply of an indictable quantity of illegal drugs.

Indictable quantities of the more common illegal drugs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>1000 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hash resin</td>
<td>50 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>5 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSD</td>
<td>0.005 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td>5 grams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>5 grams</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the amount in question is less than the above amounts then whether to report the matter to police is a matter for the principal’s discretion.

The purity of the drug does not matter; only the weight. For example, a mixture of heroin and glucose is regarded as being all heroin for the purpose of determining an indictable quantity.

Any attempt to represent and sell a substance as a drug renders the seller liable to prosecution for supplying the drug itself, even if the substance was falsely represented. This is true whether they have made a genuine mistake or were attempting to cheat the other person.

Searches - bags, desks and lockers
A search of student’s belongings should only occur when the principal has reasonable grounds to believe that the student is in possession of a dangerous or illegal item.

The school has no legal right to search personal property such as bags and lockers for which students have paid a fee unless this has been made a condition of enrolment or of hiring a locker. It is strongly advised that schools include this condition within the school’s own drug issues policy and make parents aware of this condition at the time of enrolment.

In the first instance, the student should be asked to open his or her locker, bag or desk. If the student refuses, the principal or the principal’s representative should ensure that both the student and another witnessing staff member are present when the locker, bag or desk is searched.
Personal searches
The school cannot make searches of a student’s person – ie body searches – a condition of enrolment. To attempt a body search without the consent of the student would be to commit an assault. Teachers can ask students to empty their pockets, but only police should undertake a body search if this is considered necessary.

An exception to these legal restraints would exist if a principal or the principal’s representative had good reason to believe that a student was concealing a dangerous weapon, presenting a real and immediate threat to the safety of self and others.

Confiscated substances
When any substance believed to be an illegal drug is discovered in the possession of a student it should be confiscated, sealed, signed and dated, and temporarily stored in a secure location. If initial inquiries indicate that a serious offence has occurred, the police should be asked to collect the substance as soon as possible. If initial inquiries indicate a lesser offence, the principal may exercise discretion about whether to report. The principal must also decide whether to destroy the substance or to ask police to collect it. The decision and consequent action should be made promptly, preferably within 48 hours of discovery. If the decision is taken to destroy the substance, this disposal should be witnessed and noted in the records of the incident.

Records of incidents
As with any other disciplinary matter, a factual record should be maintained in the school.

Rights of students
Each student facing an allegation about involvement with illegal drugs is entitled to a fair hearing, including the opportunity to present his or her case. The student also has the right to an unbiased decision made on the basis of relevant evidence. These guidelines recognize that such a student has the right to be accompanied by their parents, or a delegate, at the meeting at which a decision about the student’s position will be considered.

Rights of parents/guardians
If the school becomes aware of, or suspects, a student’s involvement with illegal drugs, parents have the right to know of this. The principal should inform the parents of such knowledge or suspicion at the stage indicated by the flow chart, regardless of whether the school has conclusive evidence or whether to maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent possible about other students who may be involved, even though their identity may be revealed from other sources.

Informing parents
If the school becomes aware of, or suspects a student’s involvement with illegal drugs, parents have a right to know this. There may be occasional situations where you would not immediately inform parents (eg known violence in the home). The principal should inform the parents of such knowledge or suspicion, whether or not the school has conclusive evidence and regardless of whether disciplinary action is contemplated.

Ideally the parent community would be informed as a matter of course about the strategies used by the school in dealing with the issue of illegal drugs.

When informing parents about their child being involved in drug use:-
- Try to involve the child in the decision making process and encourage them to talk with their parents.
• Realise that some parents will become very alarmed and you can help them to put the matter in perspective.
• Do not inform them in ways that are likely to exacerbate anxieties and cause family rifts. Keep calm and encourage them to be positive about their children and about what can be done.
• Appreciate that parents may have different views about illegal drug use than the ones you hold.
• Be prepared to listen to parents and to provide them with information about illegal drugs and about local helping services.

Interviewing students
It is important that the purpose of the interview be made clear to the student. The initial interview occurs to gather data – ie to find out what has happened – not to make decisions about disciplinary or other consequences. Justice demands that the student is not pre-judged.

Where there is suspicion which cannot be supported from evidence, it may be preferable to avoid seeking/acquiring evidence and to counsel the student. Professional judgment and knowledge of the student need to be used here. It is noteworthy that about 70% of the young people who come before children’s courts on drug-related charges do not re-offend. It may be sufficient to deal with a matter at school level, placing a student on a contract if relevant.

If there is sufficient evidence for the principal to conclude that an offence has been committed about which police must be informed, that step must be taken. Further investigation should only be undertaken by the school after approval from the police officers involved.

If there is evidence only of a lesser offence, but one which might nevertheless result in suspension, transfer or expulsion, the principal should conduct the data-gathering interview under the following conditions:
1. To protect the integrity of the process, students to be interviewed should be kept separated and under observation by a staff member until each has been interviewed.
2. The venue and arrangements for the interview should be as discreet as possible to protect the dignity of all involved.
3. The purpose of the interview should be made clear.
4. A second staff member should be present at the interview to take notes. The student must know that this will be happening.
5. The student should be offered the opportunity to nominate a staff member to be present at the interview as a support person, but reminded that no decisions will be made at this stage.
6. The student should be asked to write down his or her account of the events which have led to the interview.
7. The student must have the opportunity to present his or her version of what happened and to answer any allegation made. Sufficient time should be allowed for this to occur.
8. Interviews should not last longer than necessary to establish what happened and to allow the student to be fully heard. A student should be allowed appropriate breaks during an extended interview.
9. The next step in the process should be explained to the student at the end of the interview.
10. A ‘cooling off’ time should be allowed after the interview. The student should then be given an opportunity to correct any misrepresentations or misunderstandings.
11. At this point, wherever possible, a support person able to recognize signs of potential suicide or self harm should be available to the student and should carry out a risk assessment. The student should not be left unsupervised, and parents should be requested to arrange supervised travel home.
Flow chart for school response to an incident

Drug Allegation/suspicion comes to the attention of a staff member

Staff member notifies principal (or assistant principal if principal is not readily available)

Ensure the safety of any endangered students (do not leave a drug effected student unattended). Ensure student is supervised and, wherever possible, a trained support person available.

Principal takes appropriate initial steps to determine authenticity/seriousness of the allegation

No grounds for allegation

A

Grounds for suspicion of an offence for which notification of police is discretionary

B

Grounds for suspicion of an offence which requires police notification

C
A

Document the allegation but take no further action

B

Conduct data-gathering interview (if column C offence emerges stop and follow steps for column C)

Conduct bag and/or locker search if necessary

Inform parents, CSO and police if deemed appropriate

Hold meeting to determine outcome

If no further action is deemed necessary, document finding and inform CSO

If disciplinary action is decided on, document this, inform CSO and parents. Inform pastor if student’s place is in jeopardy

Ensure pastoral support is made available for student and family

Follow system policy where suspension, transfer or expulsion are considered.

C

Contact police and parents immediately and inform the CSO

Pastoral support is made available to student and family

Student suspended while investigation occurs (record as leave if subsequently exonerated)

After police investigation, follow middle column

© Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Wagga Wagga
Confidentiality and communication
In order to protect the dignity of students, families and others, it is essential that data-gathering and determination processes occur as confidentially as possible. While the school community does have a right to know that school rules are being upheld and to be given accurate information about events which may impact upon members of that community, there will be many occasions when a principal’s judgment needs to be exercised to determine whether, and what, information should be released, and to whom. Each student’s reputation and good name must always be of paramount concern. As well, pending legal action may limit what can be communicated.

Not all incidents require a statement to the school community. Any statements which are made to the school community should be confined to factual information in an attempt to avoid compounding the difficulties faced by those directly involved.

Where, as is often the case, rumor and exaggeration of the events is already widespread, it may be appropriate to provide information in order to place the events in perspective for the benefit of those involved and the school community.

Communication with staff
It is important that, wherever possible, staff working closely with affected students are informed about incidents involving illegal drugs. While in many cases the amount of detail which can be passed on to the general staff may be very limited, staff will be better able to deal with student reactions and behaviors if they are informed of the existence of an incident. Particular staff members will also be in a position of offer support to students experiencing ongoing problems when they have been appropriately briefed.

When informing staff of either specific incidents or of problems faced by particular students, principals need to be very explicit about what information can be shared with other parties, other staff, students or parents, and what cannot. Staff should be clearly directed not to speak to the media about any incident which involves the school. The principal is the spokesperson for the school.

Handling the media
Many schools worry that if they have a drug incident, it will be mis-reported or sensationalized by the local media. Some tips to minimize the possibility of this happening are:-

- If you are approached by the media about an incident do not respond straight away. Tell them that you will get back to them and meanwhile check the facts. Contact the Director of Schools and discuss the matter before making a public statement.
- Write out a brief statement about the situation and do get back to them. Put the matter in context and emphasize the positive steps that the school is taking.
- If necessary, get some support from people who are used to working with the media and writing press statements.
- Rather than waiting for an incident, consider ways you can be proactive and positive with the media over the illegal drugs issue. You might provide pieces on the positive things you are doing such as drug education for students or workshops for parents.

Information about illegal drugs
Classification of psychoactive drugs
A substance is a drug when it is used to produce a psychological, physiological or biochemical change in the body. Psychoactive drugs impact on the central nervous system to produce changes in the user’s feelings, mood, cognition and, consequently behavior.
## Illegal drugs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depressants</th>
<th>Stimulants</th>
<th>Hallucinogens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narcotic Analgesics</strong></td>
<td>Amphetamines (speed)</td>
<td>Bromo DMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>Cocaine (crack)</td>
<td>bufotenine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opium</td>
<td></td>
<td>DMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cannabis</strong></td>
<td>Smack</td>
<td>LSD (acid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cannabis has characteristics of both depressants and hallucinogens)</td>
<td>MDMA (Ecstasy)</td>
<td>Psilocin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marijuana, hash, hash oil</td>
<td></td>
<td>Psilocybin (magic mushrooms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Phencyclidine (angel dust)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mescaline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>DOM (STP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Cannabis</strong></td>
<td>Marijuana, hash, hash oil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Legal Drugs
**but in many cases limited to use according to prescription only**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Depressants</th>
<th>Stimulants</th>
<th>Hallucinogens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sedative – hypnotics</td>
<td>Nicotine</td>
<td>None are legal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benzodiazepines</strong></td>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librium, Serepax, Valium,</td>
<td>Caffeine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modadon, Rohypnol</td>
<td>Coffee, tea, cola drinks,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chocolate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Barbiturates</strong></td>
<td>Amphetamines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amaytal, Nembutal, Soneryl</td>
<td>Dexedrine, Ritalin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Barbiturates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doriden, Dormel, Mandrax</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narcotic Analgesics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codeine, Morphine, Pethidine,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methadone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Narcotic Analgesics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asprin, Paracetamol,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenacetin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Anaesthetics</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ether, nitrous oxide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Recognition of illegal substances
Recognition can be difficult. These substances often look no different from ‘legal’ substances – for example, plain white powder or tablets.

- **Amphetamine** is usually a white powder (in a drug related context, any bag of white powder could be regarded as suspicious); occasionally white tablets.
- **Hash** looks like plasticine, gold to dark brown; has a pungent odour.
- **Ecstasy** comes in the form of tiny white tablets; may be stamped with a logo – eg Superman or Batman.
• LSD is usually sold as a small (about 1.5 x 1.5cm) square of paper impregnated with the drug; the paper may be stamped with a picture or logo eg lightning bolt, pirate, Super Mario, Buddha.
• Marijuana looks like dried grass; may be mixed with tobacco; when smoked it has a strong sweet odour.
• Heroin is either injected with a syringe or ‘smoked’ (inhaled from a piece of foil – known as ‘smoking the dragon’s tail’)

Recognising signs of possible drug use
Any marked change from a student’s usual behaviour/appearance could be an initial indicator of drug influence (although of course there could be many other reasons for such a change.) Some general signs may be:
• Bloodshot eyes
• Slurred speech
• Extreme mood swings
• Irritability
• Laziness
• Apathy
• Borrowing (or stealing) money
• Changing friends
• Staying in his/her room more than usual

Some indications occurring in a school playground may be:
• Group scattering on the approach of a teacher
• Something being put away quickly
• A ‘cockatoo’ keeping watch

Some common effects of specific drugs include:
• Excessive animation, even hysteria – possibly amphetamine, ‘speed’
• Unable to bear light or keep eyes open – possibly heroin
• Very laid back, even spaced out behavior – possibly marijuana
• Paranoid behavior – possibly withdrawal from marijuana

Children’s use of medicine in schools
Parents and children should be informed that pupils should not bring medicines to school unless it is essential.

Each school in the Diocese should have a Dispensing of Medication Policy which should be made available to parents where it is essential for children to take medicine.

When prescribed medication is to be administered over a long period of time a Deed of Indemnity form should be signed by parents and returned to school before medication is distributed. If given for a short period of time, parents are to write a note to the school listing the name of the drug, dosage, frequency of administration and the prescribing doctor’s name.

All medicine should be supplied by the parents in the original container (the appropriate information listed on the container) as well as the equipment required to administer the appropriate dosage. All medication should be stored in the office with the medication register to be completed by the appropriate member of staff. Pupils must go to the office to receive their dose.

All schools should also have an appropriate Asthma Management Plan.

Disposing of injecting equipment
If you find injecting equipment on the school premises it should be disposed of carefully because of the risk of someone injuring themselves with the needles and contracting diseases such as HIV or hepatitis C.

Syringes should be disposed of by either:-

- Using a hands free technique using tools such as a brush and pan, or tongs, or
- Using sturdy puncture resistant gloves, picking the syringe up carefully by the barrel so as to avoid handling the needle. Hold it so that the needle points away from you and take care not to stick anyone else, then
- Placing it in a wide mouthed container, sealing it tightly and putting it in a garbage bin.

If your school has an ongoing problem in this area it may be possible to obtain a “sharps box”, which is designed especially for disposal of syringes. This should be available through your local area Health Service, Dept of Health or hospital.

Since it may be students who discover this potentially dangerous material in the school surrounds, it is essential that all students know what to do in such situations:-

- Do not touch
- Do not allow others to touch
- Inform the teacher on duty

**Key principles to guide drug education in schools**

(Taken from “Drug Education in Schools: CEC NSW Statement of Principles and Direction” 28 April 1999)

- Drug education programs in catholic schools must recognize the dignity values of faith, forgiveness, hope, compassion and justice. The key aim is the acceptance of responsibility for self and others.
- Drug education programs should involve both the child and his or her family. Such programs must recognize that some families will require particular support if drug abuse is to be effectively addressed. This support will require interagency cooperation – that is, assistance from government and non-government health, social welfare and juvenile justice agencies.
- Drug education programs, in combination with other pastoral care initiatives, need to work towards increasing the self-esteem, sense of purpose and hope of each child and young person. All children need to be given a sense of self-worth and connectedness with society.
- Drug education program in catholic schools needs to offer support to all students commencing with the early years of schooling. In particular, support needs to be provided so as to assist all students to choose not to misuse drugs. Support structures for all students need to be guided by the attitudes of compassion, communication, listening, mutual support, communication, listening, and patience. Students must be helped and encouraged to:
  - make informed responsible personal decisions about drug use;
  - evaluate the use of legal drugs in accordance with community and ethical standards; and
  - avoid the use of illegal drugs
- Drug education in catholic schools must seek to prevent the uptake of harmful drug use and aim at reducing drug use by school students. Christians believe that their bodies are given to them as temples of the Holy Spirit and that freedom and dignity demand that they not abuse their bodies in any way. Drug and alcohol should not be misused but used beneficially (1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Galatians 5:1, Proverbs 91-2 from *Towards Wholeness* 7-10, p 133)
School based drug education should focus on the achievement of educational outcomes for all students including those consistent with broader public health outcomes.

Drug education is best delivered as part of a whole-school approach incorporating a curriculum context, policy and practices, and links to the wider school community. (Refer to Effective Schools Health Promotion – Towards Health Promoting Schools, 1996, NHMRC Health Advancement Committee)

School drug education programs should, wherever possible, engage and involve parents and the wider community in planning and implementing stages. (Parents are the first and foremost decision makers and teachers for their children, The Catholic School, 1998)

Drug education is most effective when taught in a teacher-delivered, sequential, age-appropriate program. (Refer to Review of Health Promotion/Initiatives in Schools, NSW Health Department, 1998)

Drug education must be supported by appropriate government resourced interagency intervention and rehabilitation strategies and programs.

Responding to drug abuse
All responses to student who are misusing drugs must have the core aim of rehabilitation.

When drug abuse is identified, the immediate tasks must be the:

- Prevention of harm to both the drug abuser and others;
- Maintenance of appropriate confidentiality and communication with parents;
- Identification of the chief causes/sources of abuse by the individual;
- Liaison with other relevant intervention and support agencies;
- Application of available resources to address, in conjunction with other relevant agencies, identified harm and the causes/sources of harms; and
- Action, in conjunction with other relevant agencies, to address and manage the needs of people who are drug dependent and the needs of their families.

The CEC, NSW, notes that practical and beneficial interagency intervention consistent with the above-cited response strategies is resource intensive. In order to address and overcome drug abuse, the community, through parliament, must be prepared to resource (fund) workable remedial strategies and programs.

In particular, schools and school systems need to be resourced so that:

- School students can be assisted not to use/and or abuse drugs whether legal drugs or illegal drugs.
- Schools can be assisted to provide, for children and young people who abuse drugs, access to specialist rehabilitation programs in a manner and form consistent with each school’s duty of care to all its students.
- School systems can be assisted to provide special provision for any student who may, at a particular time, constitute a risk to other children and/or a risk to himself or herself.
- Schools and schools systems can develop effective interagency intervention strategies inclusive of health, welfare and juvenile justice services sourced from either or both government and non-government agencies. In particular, schools require access to well-resourced and relevant student and family counseling services.

School development in health education – principles for drug education in Australian schools
The following principles were developed by the University of Canberra as a collaborative initiative of states, territories and the Commonwealth of Australia and co-coordinated by the School Development in Health Education Project. The principles were refined through a national process of broad consultation and presented for comment and critical analysis at the Third International Conference on Drug Abuse Prevention in Schools in Brisbane in 1991. These principles have
been widely trialed by all states and territories and underpin the development and delivery of their drug education programs:

- Drug education is best taught in the context of the school health curriculum.
- Drug education in schools should be conducted by the teacher of the health curriculum.
- Drug education programs should have sequence, progression and continuity over time throughout schooling.
- Drug education messages across the school environment should be consistent and coherent.
- Drug education programs and resources should be selected to complement the role of the classroom teacher, with selected external resources enhancing, not replacing, that role. Approaches to drug education should address the values, attitudes and behaviors of the community and the individual.
- Drug education needs to be based on research, effective curriculum practice and identified student needs.
- Objectives for drug education in schools should be linked with the overall goal of harm minimization.
- Drug education strategies should be related directly to the achievement of the program objectives.
- The emphasis of drug education should be on drug use likely to occur in the target group, and drug use which causes the most harm to the individual and society.
- Effective drug education should reflect an understanding of the characteristics of the individual, the social context, the drug and the interrelationship of these factors.
- Drug education programs should respond to developmental, gender, cultural, language, socioeconomic and lifestyle differences relevant to the level of student use.
- Mechanisms should be developed to involve students, parents and wider community in the school drug education program at both planning and implementation stages.
- The achievement of drug education objectives, processes and outcomes should be evaluated.
- The selection of drug education programs, activities and resources should be made on the basis of an ability to contribute to long-term positive outcomes in the health curriculum and the health environment of the school.

(Taken from Principles for Drug Education in Schools, an initiative of the School Development in Health Education Project, University of Canberra, Faculty of Education, 1994, Ballard et al)

**Drug education and incident management in the school sector**

The Commonwealth Government, in cooperation with state and territory governments and other key stakeholders, has a two-pronged, complementary approach to preventing drug misuse by school students:

- Preventative school drug education programs; and
- Development of national protocols and associated supporting initiatives to help school communities develop better ways of handling drug use in the school community.

The Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs works in close cooperation with the Department of Health and Aged Care in managing the Commonwealth’s approach.

Approximately $7.5 million has been provided over three years for the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs to develop and implement a National School Drug Education Strategy. This strategy is a component of education measures under the National Illicit Drug Strategy.

Subject to budget appropriation in 1999, the Commonwealth Government has flagged a further commitment of $10 million to be allocated to school drug education. The additional funding is intended to target:
• The extension of professional development of teachers and pre-service training for teachers.
• Information and education for parents on drug matters; and
• Projects to establish school and community partnerships, including new ways of delivering drug education and information on healthy lifestyles.

The council of Australian Governments agreed in April 1999 to strengthen its attack on drug pushers and its response to drug use within schools. This was part of a broader agreement on the need for national action involving explicit rejection by governments of the use of illicit drugs and the harm this causes. This cooperative approach will be continued through a new ministerial taskforce to develop the national protocol on management of drug issues and drug-related incidents in schools. The taskforce will comprise commonwealth, state and territory education officials, catholic and independent school sector representatives and parent representatives.

The development of a national protocol and associated supporting material for drugs in schools will complement the activities of the national School Drug Education Strategy. It will also draw on the work already done by states and territories and provide opportunities to enhance these activities, including professional development, resources and other materials.

The protocol will assist in providing a consistent message nationally, especially to parents, about how schools will respond and what help is available if a student does become involved in a drug-related incident at school.