



Substance Misuse Policy

Definitions:

- For the purposes of this policy, drugs shall be taken to mean all non-prescribed drugs whose use, by school children, is prohibited by law – e.g. alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs including cannabis, cocaine, heroin and include all mood-altering substances including solvents and inhalants.
- A reasonable suspicion is a suspicion backed by evidence such as: statements made by pupils, comments made by a pupil (in class or elsewhere), comments of other pupils, graffiti advocating drug use, unusual or bizarre behaviour consistent with drug use.

Scope:

- This School does not accept the possession, use of, or supply of Banned or Prohibited Substance(s) or of Drug Paraphernalia either in the School, during school breaks or lunchtime, or on School trips or during any school related activity by any student(s) of the school.
- This policy applies to all persons or groups (including parents, visitors and staff) using or on school facilities (including the school grounds).
- This policy also applies to any student who is known to have any of the above involvement with drugs outside of school.
- Sanctions for possession, supply, sale or use of banned substances as described above may range from suspension to expulsion from the school.
- Incidents of drug dealing or repeated use will attract very serious sanction – expulsion will always be considered in such circumstances.

Relationship to school's Mission/Vision/Aims:

The school's Mission Statement sees the work of the school as the holistic integrated development of each person in the school community. The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being and the school seeks to prepare them for these challenges in the light of our ethos. This policy is complementary to other school policies including the Code of Behaviour.

Rationale:

The Education Act provides that schools shall use its available resources to “promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents”. The National Drugs Strategy, which is now Government policy, requires schools to have a policy on substance abuse in place. Drugs and their misuse is an area of concern for pupils, parents and teachers.

The majority of young people do not take drugs. Nonetheless many pupils are likely to find themselves in situations where they may be offered drugs. It is important to reassure and support the majority of young people who choose not to have drugs in their life, to reassure them that their choice is responsible and positive and to support them in choosing a healthy and health-sustaining lifestyle.

Goals:

- To ensure that the characteristic spirit of the school is protected and not undermined by inappropriate, harmful, destructive habits of drug or substance abuse.
- To safeguard the health and safety of all in the school community.
- To encourage young people to make informed & positive life choices and to adopt a drug-free lifestyle by providing appropriate modules in health education.
- To promote a collective and individual responsibility and shared ownership amongst pupils, school staff and parents to maintain the school free of drugs .
- To make explicit the school’s expectations regarding substance misuse and the procedures for dealing with any breach of those expectations.

Policy content:

Education Concerning Substance Abuse:

The school is a health promoting school. It seeks deliberately to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents. The school will provide education for students and in-service for staff in areas relating to healthy living and substance abuse. The school will also arrange relevant talks for parents from time to time. Outside speakers with appropriate knowledge and experience in the area will be invited to address groups of students from time to time, normally in the presence of their teacher(s).

The school is also committed to training for staff in related areas. Teachers of SPHE & RSE are supported by the SPHE Support Service – they will be asked to identify their training needs from time to time and the school, through the Co-ordinator of the SPHE Programme, will take steps to provide for same. Whole-staff training will also be provided from time to time. The school will liaise with support agencies including the local Health Board as appropriate.

Management of substance abuse allegations/incidents:

Harmful Substances are banned:

It is forbidden to possess, supply, offer for sale, use or encourage the use of alcohol, illegal drugs or other harmful substances including all mood-altering substances such as solvents and inhalants. Smoking is forbidden in the school, on school grounds or on school outings.

Reporting Suspicions/Incidents:

The school is committed to working with staff, parents, pupils and community groups in keeping the school free of drugs. Any person who has information or a reasonable suspicion that another person or group of persons is engaged in any of the forbidden activities outlined above should bring that information or suspicion to the attention of the deputy principal or principal who will take appropriate action. Any information given to the school regarding the use of illegal drugs will be handled sensitively. It will be considered a very serious offence to deliberately mislead the school authorities.

Teachers will note and date for themselves any evidence indicating possible drug use such as comments made by a pupil in class, comments of other pupils, behaviour, graffiti advocating drug use etc. Appendix 1 contains a list of warning signs.

Investigation Procedures:

The Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head or other person nominated by the Principal will investigate all allegations of drug misuse and will implement an appropriate sanction as approved by the Principal. As part of any investigation students may be requested to supply a written account of their knowledge of any incident(s). The school will note the allegation and the outcome of the investigation in accordance with its record-keeping procedures.

Pastoral Approach:

The approach to tackling this issue is based on the fundamental principle that the school acts **in loco parentis** – that the primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all the pupils in our charge. The school will adopt a pastoral approach in the first instance of drug misuse and may require pupils to attend counselling and/or submit the results of regular drug tests. However, banned substances will be confiscated and other sanctions may apply depending on the circumstances. Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a person has engaged in the misuse of drugs or is dealing in illegal drugs that suspicion will be communicated to the Gardai. The school will liaise with other outside agencies such as Social Workers as deemed appropriate.

Allegation against a member of staff, parent or adult visitor:

Any reasonable suspicion that a member of staff, a parent or an adult visitor is involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated by the school and/or brought to the attention of the Gardai for investigation by them, at the discretion of the Board. The fact that such an allegation has been made and is being investigated shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Management as soon as practicable. Due process and fair procedures will apply. Appropriate in-school industrial relations agreements and policies will be followed and relevant sanctions applied as appropriate.

Allegation against a student or a young visitor:

Any reasonable suspicion that a pupil is involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated and brought to the attention of their parents or guardians. Any reasonable suspicion that a young visitor is involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated and brought to the attention of the adults supervising the visitor and/or their parents or guardians.

Sanctions:

Sanctions for possession, supply, sale or use of banned substances (see above) may range from suspension to expulsion from the school. Incidents of drug dealing or repeated use will attract very serious sanction – expulsion will always be considered in such circumstances.

Communications:

At the time of enrolment and later as required by the school parents shall supply all relevant information regarding a pupil's prescribed medication to the school on the Application Form. In addition, parents will be informed of this policy, which contains reference to the sanctions for misuse.

Success Criteria:

That the school is free of drugs and drug abuse; that incidents and reasonable suspicions are reported and acted upon.

Monitoring Procedures:

Monitoring takes into account the fact that, with the exception of tobacco smoking, there is little known evidence of drug or substance abuse among students while attending this school. Monitoring requires vigilance on the part of everybody, teachers, parents, students and other staff or visitors to the school. Monitoring also requires that any concerns or reasonable suspicions be reported immediately to the principal or deputy principal or year head.

Review Procedures:

This Policy shall be reviewed at regular intervals by staff, by the Parents' Council and by the Students' Council

Ratified by the Board of Management

Chairperson Board of Management

Date

Review Date - _____

Appendix 1:

Roles and Responsibilities in developing and implementing this policy

Role of Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and, is implemented and that it is reviewed.
- To provide for appropriate Staff Development so that all staff are provided with up-to-date factual information about the signs and symptoms of drugs use and about drugs and their effects.
- To support staff in the implementation of this policy.
- To decide on appeals by parents and or pupils with respect to decisions made by the principal.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Principal/Deputy Principal

- To formulate draft policy in consultation with the teaching staff, students, parents, Board and Trustees
- To monitor its implementation and to ensure that it is reviewed by the review date
- To investigate all referrals or cause to have them investigated in accordance with this policy and the school's Disciplinary Policy
- To liaise with parents and all outside agencies including the Gardai
- To implement the policy and to support other teaching staff in their implementation of the policy
- To arrange appropriate Staff Development (see above under Board of Management).
- To ensure that appropriate education programmes for students (about substance abuse) are in place
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of teaching staff

- To advocate positive and healthy lifestyle and decisions.
- To treat the threat of possible drug use as a serious threat to the welfare of pupils and the school community.
- To inform themselves regarding the signs and symptoms of drug use and about drugs and their effects.
- To be alert to disclosure by pupils regarding their own or others' involvement in drug taking activity
- To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.
- To implement this policy.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Guidance Counsellor

- To offer advice and support to any student who may be involved in drugs misuse
- To advise their parent(s) or guardian(s) where further support and information may be found
- To offer counselling as appropriate
- To liaise with outside agencies concerning counselling and related support

Role of students

- To co-operate fully with the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.

Role of parents

- To educate their children about substance abuse
- To support the policy and to co-operate fully with the school in its implementation
- To bring to the attention of the school authorities any concern or information they may have in relation to substance misuse.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.
- Information related to prescribed medication to be taken by students must be provided to the Principal. Any such medication to be stored in the Principal's office or other agreed safe location.

Appendix 2:

DRUG OR SOLVENT MISUSE: RECOGNISING THE SIGN

- The signs listed in Tables 1 and 2 may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing drugs.
- Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of drug or solvent misuse: many of them are a normal part of adolescence, but the presence of several signs together may point to a need for greater vigilance.
- Table 3 lists equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

Table 1: Warning Signs in Individuals

- Changes in attendance, and being unwilling to take part in school activities
- Decline in performance in school work.
- Unusual outbreaks of temper, marked swings of mood, restlessness or irritability.
- Reports from parents that more time is being spent away from home, possibly with new friends or with
- Friends in older age groups.
- Excessive spending or borrowing of money.
- Stealing money or goods.
- Excessive tiredness without obvious cause.
- No interest in physical appearance.
- Sores or rashes especially on the mouth or nose.

- Lack of appetite.
- Heavy use of scents, colognes etc. to disguise the smell of drugs.
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils).

Table 2: Warning Signs in Groups

- Regular absence on certain days (e.g. the day young people receive state benefit).
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground or sports field).
- Being the subject of rumours about drug taking.
- Talking to strangers on or near the premises.
- Stealing which appears to be the work of several individuals rather than one person (e.g. perhaps to
- Shoplift solvents).
- Use of drug takers' slang.
- Exchanging money or other objects in unusual circumstances.
- Associating briefly with one person who is much older and not normally part of the peer group.

Table 3: Objects that may indicate Drug Misuse

- Foil containers or cup shapes made from silver foil, perhaps discoloured by heat.
- Metal containers/boxes.
- Spoons discoloured by heat.
- Pill boxes.
- Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrappers.
- Small plastic or glass phials or bottles.
- Twists of paper.
- Straws.
- Sugar lumps.
- Syringes and needles (rare).
- Cigarette papers and lighters.
- Spent matches.
- Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse).
- Cardboard or other tubes (heroin - rare).
- Stamps, stickers, transfers or similar items.
- Shredded cigarettes, home-rolled cigarettes and pipes (cannabis).
- Paper (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (heroin - rare).