

Substance Use Policy

Introduction:

Scope of Policy:

The policy applies to all Teaching and Non-Teaching staff (including contract and occasional workers), Students, Parents/Guardians and all other users of the school campus, during any school related activity and situations which reflect on the school community.

Relationship to School's Mission Statement:

This Policy contributes to the care and welfare of the School Community in active partnership with the whole community, as outlined in the Mission Statement:

- Recognising the worth of each individual
- Educating our students in a caring environment
- Promoting our cultural heritage
- Preparing the student for a meaningful and spiritual life
- Contributing to the life of the community

Rationale for Substance Use Policy:

1. In the present climate of social change and rising use and misuse of both legal and illegal substances, the school has a significant role to play. This role focuses on both creating an awareness and in educating the student and the wider community in the dangers involved in both the use and misuse of substances and their effect on the individual and the community. This is in order to create a safer environment for all who are served by the school.
2. In the event of a substance use incident, it is important that there are clear and consistent guidelines and procedures for all members of the school community.
3. Schools are now obliged to have a Substance Use Policy by the National Drug Strategy, 2001-2008.

Consultation Process:

The following were represented on the Committee that drafted this Policy:

Students
Staff
Parents Association
Board of Management
S.P.H.E. Support Services

Every effort was made to ensure that all partners had a genuine input into the content of this policy.

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Objectives:

- To formalise a drug education programme for students.
- Provide clear management procedures for dealing with drug related incidents to support both students and staff.
- Ensure that the students are informed of the risks associated with substance use and misuse so that they can make informed decisions around these issues.
- Offer assistance to students and other members of the school who require assistance.
- To provide staff with the necessary training to support and implement this policy.
- To comply with legislation governing use and misuse of substances.
- To ensure that issues are addressed in an appropriate manner, i.e. prevention and intervention.

For the purpose of this policy, substances refer to tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs (all illegal drugs, together with the improper use of substances such as medications, solvents and magic mushrooms. This list is not exhaustive).

Policy Content:

1. Substance Use Education:

Aim:

The aim of our programme is to give young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and relate these to their choices about substances use, both now and in their future lives.

Students:

The school will provide an on-going substances use education programme, primarily through Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) to Junior Certificate and it will be reinforced through other curriculum areas. Those receiving S.P.H.E. will have at least four classes devoted to substance use issue.

In Senior Cycle substance use issues will be delivered as part of the Religious Education programme.

Visiting Speakers:

The organising teacher will make visiting speakers aware of the substance use policy and the ethos of the school. When visiting speakers are used, the content of their input should be discussed in full with the organising teacher prior to giving the presentation. The teacher should remain in the class to enable follow-up concerns and questions to be addressed.

Parents/Guardians:

Parents/Guardians have most influence in the lives of their children and are therefore crucial in any prevention strategy. The school recognises that Parents/Guardians have an important role to play in substances use education. Individual Parents/Guardians and the Parents Council are encouraged to liaise with Senior Management when drug awareness is required and every effort will be made to facilitate the request.

2. Management of Substance use related incidents:

At all times the needs and concerns of the individual will be treated with the utmost respect, balanced with the needs and concerns of the wider School Community and also fulfilling any legal obligation which may apply.

The use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit substances is not permitted on the school premises or during any school related activities (with the exceptions as outlined below).

Definition of an incident:

The possession, use, supply, or being present under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs is viewed as unacceptable by this school.

Students *under 18* are not allowed to have cigarettes/tobacco on the premises or to supply them to another student. *Students Eighteen and over are not permitted to supply cigarettes/tobacco to another student.*

The finding of alcohol or illicit substances or items associated with their use is also a drug related incident, as is the voluntary disclosure by a school member of their own problematic drug or alcohol use. However where disclosure is voluntary, and where a breach of policy is not an issue, it will be treated as an approach for help and will not normally be subject to disciplinary procedures. Other provisions such as Confidentiality policy will apply.

Exceptions are:

- The correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum-related materials/ingredients as specified by the staff member involved.
- Alcohol may be provided for adult use at special school events/occasions with the prior consent of Senior Management.

Internal Lines of Reporting:

- All substance use incidents will be reported to Senior Management who will inform the Year Head and other staff members as appropriate.
- Students are also encouraged to alert Senior Management or another member of the teaching staff if they are aware of a substance use incident.
- While on excursions, the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of this policy, however, every effort should be made to contact and seek guidance from the School Principal at the first opportunity.

Records:

Written records are to be retained of all confirmed incidents and stored by the Principal in a confidential file. Records should include any warnings and/or advice given to the student and the consequences of repetition of the behaviour. The student(s) involved will be notified of this.

In the written records, the recording of factual information is preferable. Any opinion must be stated as such.

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Confidentiality:

'The student sometimes requests confidentiality. The teacher must attempt to retain the respect and confidence of the student, while ensuring that the information is acted on, so confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.'

Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, with the parents of those involved, or with the appropriate external agency. However, discretion within these limits will be observed.

Parents/Guardians:

It would be normal practice to notify Parents/Guardians at the earliest opportunity if their son/daughter is involved in a substance use incident, as parent/guardian involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. The parents/guardians will be required to attend the school to discuss what has happened and the course of action to be taken. The students will be informed that their parents/guardians are being notified.

As this can be a distressing time for the students, parents/guardians and other family members, every effort will be made to deal with the matter as discreetly and sensitively as possible within the terms of the School Substance Use Policy.

Gardaí:

The school has a positive working relationship with local Gardaí and together they have the welfare of the individual student, other students and the wider school community to consider.

Garda advice may also be sought about incidents that are illegal and constitute a breach of this policy. The final decision will rest with Senior Management and other key staff members. *In incidents involved the supply of illegal drugs, the school will inform Gardaí.*

The school also asserts their right to inform the Gardaí of any alcohol or illicit substance activity affecting the welfare of the School Community. Where the Gardaí contact the school, the school will endeavour to cooperate fully.

Sanctions/Disciplinary Issues:

As per the School's Code of Behaviour, firm and graded sanctions, from a monetary fine through to suspension and/or exclusion will apply to students in breach of the school substance use policy restrictions regarding alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances. Staff breaches will be dealt with under existing Employer/Employee procedures. Breaches as defined in the scope of the Policy will be dealt with on a case by case basis. *In all cases of repeated breaches of the policy and in the case of supply of illegal drugs, expulsion will be recommended to the Board of Management.*

Care and Counselling:

With regard to students and the whole school community's health, happiness and general well being, every possible support will be offered.

Due to the potentially insidious nature of substance use for the person, the school community and our desire to aid the resolution of the difficulty for all involved, students directly involved in incidents relating to alcohol and illicit substances must

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agree to avail of the school counselling service or where appropriate, an external agency nominated by the school.

The school endeavours to support parents/guardians and any staff member and work with them in the resolution of all difficulties relating to their son/daughter (or in the case of a member of staff, their own personal difficulties).

Procedure for Disposal:

If an illegal substance (or suspected illegal substance) is found on school property or during school activity, it should be brought to the attention of Senior Management. It should be stored securely in the presence of at least two staff members while Gardaí are informed and until they come to collect it. The substance should be handled as little as possible in the interim, and no attempt should be made to analyse it.

Search:

Under the 1977 Misuse of Drugs Act – Section 19, the school is legally obliged to keep its school and property drug free. This includes school lockers. The students will be given the option to hand over the substance voluntarily prior to search. If a search is necessary, two staff members must be present.

If the search is resisted in the case of student(s), Parents/Guardians will be notified and the Gardaí may be called (in the case of a suspected illegal substance). Search refers to Locker, Bag, Coat and Pocket search only.

Where there is reasonable cause to believe a student has on their person (including clothes actually being worn) a drug in breach of this policy, they will be asked to volunteer the drug. If they refuse the Gardaí may be called in to conduct the search. An attempt will be made to notify a minor student's parent / guardian prior to a Garda search.

Health and Safety:

In accordance with the Health and Safety Policy of the School, all materials of a dangerous nature will be stored securely in a safe area where they will be unobtainable by anyone other than those who use them in the course of their work duties. These include cleaning agents and solvents.

The possession and use of solvent-based correction fluid is prohibited for students due to its solvent properties.

The use of non-aerosol personal hygiene products is encouraged from the point of view of the environmental and health aspects in terms of abuse and respiratory problems, e.g. asthma.

Medical

On enrolment to the school, parents are required to notify the school authorities of any medical problems relating to their child and of any medication prescribed or otherwise being taken by their child, e.g. epilepsy, asthma sufferers and their inhalers. This information is relayed to the Year Head.

The school authorities/staff will not issue the students with any medication. *An arrangement will be entered into with Parents / Guardians whereby the Centre will facilitate the issue of such medication by Parent / Guardian.* Contact will be made with parents/guardians should a student need to go home because of sickness, or where there is a need to take a student to a doctor.

3. Provision for Staff Training and Development:

Any training needs arising out of the implementation of this policy will be met. Staff are invited to monitor their training needs on an ongoing basis and bring to the attention of Senior Management.

It is the recommendation of this Policy Development Committee that staff training should include Basic First Aid for all teachers and ancillary staff.

Media:

In the event of an incident relating to substance use, Senior Management only, will be responsible for dealing with the Media.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation:

1. The monitoring, review and evaluation processes set out below will focus mainly on whether provision of this policy has been implemented and whether they have been deemed appropriate and effective by those involved.
2. The School Substance Use Policy will be reviewed and evaluated in line with the Whole School Development Planning.

Dissemination:

Students Present Students and Parents will be informed by post during Summer 2004. Thereafter, Parents and incoming Students will be given a copy of the Policy prior to accepting a place in the school.

Staff: The Policy will be circulated to existing Staff members, thereafter, it will be included in the Staff Handbook.

Implementation Date:

August 2004

** SENIOR MANAGEMENT refers to Principal / Deputy Principal or Person(s) acting on their behalf