

SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

To be read in conjunction with the Health and Safety Policy and Code of Discipline Policy

Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to all pupils, staff, parents/guardians and other users of the school premises. It applies during school time, including breaks, and to all school related activities, for example, school tours, etc.

Relationship to Schools Ethos and Mission Statement

The substance use policy reflects the school ethos in that it will help towards the provision of a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are addressed. Also, it will help to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community and instil in the pupils respect for people, and property and encourage in them the idea of being responsible.

Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their pupils in this area and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

- The Education Act (1998) obliges schools to promote the social and personal development of pupils and to provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, in context of the ethos of the school.
- The National Drugs Strategy (interim), 2009-2016 requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- Action 21 of the National Drugs Strategy (interim), 2009-2016 mandates the Department of Education and Skills to monitor the implementation of substance use policies in schools through the whole school evaluation process as operated by the Inspectorate. It is also mandated to ensure that best practice is disseminated to all schools.
- The Social Personal and Health Education curriculum, of which substance misuse prevention education is an integral part, is a mandatory subject on the primary curriculum and must be taught to all primary pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth class (DES Circular 022/2010).
- The 2003 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (E.S.P.A.D.) report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among 16 year

olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 34 E.S.P.A.D. countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland, with girls ranking higher than boys in terms of regular alcohol use. In terms of drug use in Ireland, there was a notable increase in lifetime use of any illicit drug between 1999 (32%) and 2003 (40%), up eight per cent.

Definition of a Drug

A drug is any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally. This description includes many substances we normally think of as drugs as well as substances we might not usually consider to be drugs such as coffee, tea, alcohol, solvents and tobacco (Corrigan, 2003 cited in Best Practice Guidelines in Substance Misuse Prevention Education, 2010).

Goals/Objectives

To set out in writing the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use.

1. To reflect the unique ethos of our school.
2. To develop a shared understanding of the term "drugs"
3. To gain an understanding of why children and young people use drugs
4. To influence people towards healthier activities and away from the need to use drugs
5. To help develop sensible attitudes to drugs
6. To help prevent the child from becoming a drug misuser
7. To help the child to develop personal strengths and values that can reduce the likelihood that he/she will become involved in drugs.
8. Develop in the child an awareness of the issues surrounding substance use
9. Through our Social, Personal & Health Education (SPHE) programme, we seek to develop a framework for education concerning substance use in terms of providing information, helping the child develop a common sense approach to alcohol, drugs and everyday substances that can be abused.

Policy Content

The policy content is divided into three sections

- (i) Education concerning substance use*
- (ii) Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents*
- (iii) Provision for training and staff development*

(i) Education concerning substance use

The education of substance misuse prevention education at all class levels is provided within the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme, which is developmental and delivered within the context of a

supportive whole school environment. We believe the "Walk Tall" programme to be of optimum value in addressing these issues across the whole school community in an age-appropriate manner. Particular strands of relevance from the SPHE curriculum are Taking Care of My Body, Safety & Protection and Making Decisions which support teaching around substance misuse.

The use of an outside visitor/speaker (nurse, garda, social worker) to enhance the work done in class may be considered in context of the full SPHE programme and should always be undertaken in the presence of a teacher (Circular 0022/2010).

(ii) Management of tobacco, alcohol and drug-related incidents

Smoking

- The school is a restricted smoking area.
- Pupils are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on the school premises or in any other place during school related activities.
- Staff, pupils, workers and visitors will comply with the restricted smoking policy.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the Principal and parents/guardians will be informed.

Alcohol

- The school is an alcohol free area.
- Pupils will not be allowed bring alcohol into the school.
- Pupils will not be allowed to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a pupil is under the influence of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a pupil comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents/guardians will be called in to take them home.
- In the case where the child is under the influence of alcohol and where the parent/guardian is unable or unwilling to remove the child/children, the local doctor or medical services will be contacted.
- Where a member of staff comes to work or school social event under the influence of alcohol, he/she should be referred to the Principal immediately. In the event of repeated occurrences, the Principal will bring the above to the attention of the Board of Management.
- Where a parent/guardian comes to the school under the influence of alcohol, staff should immediately refer the matter to the Principal.
- If alcohol is required for a school function, permission shall be sought from the B.O.M.

Illicit Drugs, Paraphernalia and Solvents

- Pupils are forbidden from being in possession of or using illicit drugs or misusing solvents on the school premises.
- Staff are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time.

- In the case of suspected or actual possession or use of illegal drugs on the school premises or on a school-related activity, every effort will be made to locate the offending substance and/or associated paraphernalia and remove same to locked secure location, subject to normal safeguards.
- The following parties will be informed immediately:
 - Chairperson of Board of Management
 - Gardaí
 - Parents/Guardians will be contacted and requested to present themselves at the school or location of the school related activity where they will be informed of the incident.
- In the case where the child is under the influence of drugs, and where the parent/guardian is unwilling to remove the child/children in question, **the local doctor or medical services will be contacted.**
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a pupil is under the influence of illicit drugs or misusing solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out. Parents/guardians of any pupil involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer who is attached to Greystones Garda Station will be sought.
- The Board of Management will expect parents/guardians to inform the Principal or class teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking.

Other Considerations

Staff should immediately report any tobacco, alcohol and drug related incidents and/or any concerns regarding substance misuse to the Principal.

The school will endeavour to respond to incidents involving tobacco, alcohol and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be taken in deciding on the nature of the response i.e. pastoral or disciplinary. Disciplinary procedures will be addressed in line with the school's Code of Discipline Policy. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco or drug use may include referral to a support agency. Parents/guardians will be informed of the incident and where deemed necessary, the HSE and Gardaí also.

Where a member of staff requires support, the school may consider facilitating links with an Employee Assistance Scheme. Incidents relating to substance misuse, as outlined above will be recorded factually by the relevant staff member(s) in consultation with the Principal. Confidentiality will be maintained is so far as is practicable.

The Principal is designated to respond to the media in relation to “*drug related incidents*” they may be enquiring about. At local level, the following support agencies to which pupils involved in substance misuse might be referred to are the HSE, Wicklow.

(iii) Provision for training and staff development

Teachers have already undergone training in the Substance Misuse Prevention (Walk Tall) programme and the SPHE curriculum. An effective policy needs to be supported by an on-going commitment from the Board of Management to training and staff development. At present primary schools are assisted in this area by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). The HSE also provide a wide range of support and services for schools.

Procedures are adopted in the school in relation to the administration of medicines in the school and staff are informed of same – see *Health and Safety policy*.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) has recently revised the “Walk Tall” programme and we shall endeavour to engage in staff training when it becomes available. All staff will be made aware of this revised Substance Use Policy and it will be available on the school’s computer network (P:\ drive) and also when ratified on the school’s website.

Roles & Responsibilities

The school wishes to make clear that the primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with the parents/guardians.

The Teacher’s Role

The role of the teacher in the active learning environment is like that of a facilitator. This may initially involve planning and setting up the structures for an active learning approach by initiating ground rules for discussions/debates. Important considerations are the building of trust, respect and positive regard for all, developing and maintaining good relationships between teacher and pupils, and among the pupils themselves. Also, having clear goals, expectations and learning objectives.

The teacher as facilitator encourages children to share ideas and opinions, ask questions, and as appropriate, devolve responsibility to the group for answers and outcomes. The value of discussion during or after an activity should not be underestimated as it can deepen understanding leading to better learning for all. However, the teacher is also a leader and the entire process is one of leading children towards valuing what is good.

Success Criteria

Substance Misuse Prevention is a complex and demanding task, which needs to be approached in the context of increasing drug use among young people. No one group holds the key to prevention rather a co-operative approach is required. The importance of schools in the context of an overall prevention strategy is acknowledged in the development of school-based programmes such as “Walk Tall”. The success of any programme will be influenced greatly by what is happening both inside and outside school to support young people to make healthy lifestyle choices.

References

- Circular 0022/2010 - Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) – Best Practice Guidelines for Primary Schools
- Education Act (1998)
- The National Strategy (interim), 2009-2016
- Best Practice Guidelines in Substance Misuse Prevention Education (2010), Department of Education & Skills
- Walk Tall, Programme for Prevention and Substance Misuse, Department of Education & Science

This Policy will be reviewed regularly.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date of next review: _____