

SCHOOL POLICY ON SUBSTANCE MISUSE

Aims and Objectives:

The aims of the school include:

- To create a community which promotes good relationships and mutual respect and which encourages personal development
- To develop the school's role within the wider community and to prepare our young people for a constructive role in society
- To enable pupils to make healthy and informed choices.
- To provide a clear framework for all staff for dealing with incidents of substance misuse in school.

Curriculum Objectives.

- To provide opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding about the dangers of drug misuse and the effects of solvents, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on body functions.
- To understand the importance of feeling positive about oneself and others, be able to express feelings confidently.
- To develop responsible attitudes towards the use of drugs.
- To develop decision-making skills and know about factors, which influence the process of making decisions, including choosing between alternatives and considering long and short-term consequences of decisions for one-self and others.
- To help pupils appreciate ways in which they can control aspects of their own behaviour and resist peer pressure.
- To make pupils aware of the law relating to the use of drugs.
- To provide knowledge about how to use the support agencies.

Procedural Objectives

- To set out **clear procedures** to be followed by staff who suspect that substance misuse is taking place or that controlled substances are being brought onto school premises.
- To provide an agreed framework for liaison with outside agencies including the Gardaí and press.
- To set out a clear statement of the disciplinary measures which will be applied to drugs related incidents.
- To set out the support and counselling which will be part of the response to drugs related offences in school.
- To ensure that all members of the school community understand the very serious view which the school takes of all instances of possession, use or supply of illegal drugs.
- To ensure that all staff are aware of the agreed procedures.
- To ensure that all staff involved in specific drugs education have an adequate level of training.

Individuals who have a high level of self-esteem and who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to make thoughtful decisions about their behaviour will be best equipped to take their place in the adult world.

The School's Stance on Substance Misuse

- The school is committed to the health and safety of all its members.
- The school does not condone the misuse of drugs or alcohol by members of the school, nor the illegal supply of these substances.
- The school will seek to educate pupils about the dangers connected with the misuse of substances.
- The school recognises that it has a duty to inform and educate young people on the consequences of drug use and misuse and will take a proactive stance on the matter believing that such Health Education is a vital element of the Personal and Social Education of every pupil.
- Fundamental to our school's values and practice is the principle of sharing the responsibility for education of young people with parents by keeping them informed of any significant, known involvement by a pupil with illegal substances. Co-operation and communication between parents, students and school is essential for the effective implementation of this policy.
- Whilst it is noted that the number of young people who misuse substances appears to be rising, it is important to recognise that the majority of young people choose not to do so. We need to continue to support the differing needs of young people on this issue.

The Roles of the Principal and Board of Management

- The Principal takes overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with Board of Management, parents, VEC and appropriate outside agencies. **The Health Education co-ordinator** will have oversight of the curriculum aspects of the policy. The Principal will ensure that all staff dealing with substance abuse issues are adequately trained and supported.

The Role of School Staff

- Staff in whom pupils confide need to consider their responsibilities carefully. They may need to warn pupils that certain information cannot be kept secret by a teacher (e.g. details of a pupil who may be supplying drugs to other pupils). However staff will want to be sensitive to the needs of individuals to speak and gain advice from adults they trust. In so doing students may confess to some drugs involvement. This may require referral to the Principal depending on the seriousness of the involvement and its location. In all cases where drug misuse is known to have occurred on the school premises (or on a school journey) the facts must be reported to the Principal. Detailed procedures are set out below.

The School's Response to Drugs Related Incidents

Cases involving substance misuse or supply on the premises are considered to be very serious infringements of school regulations. In all such cases the Principal will discuss the matter with the Chair of the Board of Management. Permanent exclusion may be considered as an appropriate response. Unless there are exceptional circumstances parents will be informed in any case where their child is involved in an incident of substance misuse. Pupils will be made aware that the use of illegal drugs on the premises will lead to an immediate suspension and could lead to permanent exclusion. Pupils involved in serious drugs related incidents may, following a period of suspension, be readmitted to the school subject to the following provisos:

- That they undertake a punitive period of community service within the school
- That they agree to meet with an appropriate person from a specialist agency to discuss the support available to persons involved with drug misuse.

Although each incident will be considered individually, and it is recognised that a variety of responses will be required to deal with different incidents, there are certain minimum requirements related to specific situations, which may occur:

Response to Specific Incidents

No pupil may smoke on school premises, while in school uniform, or on school visits. If a pupil is found smoking he/she will be given a one-day suspension, which may be lifted on the payment of a fine.

In each of the following cases the incident to be reported in the first instance to the Principal who will take the required action, which may include suspension if deemed appropriate

- **If any pupil is found intoxicated on school premises, the parents will be informed immediately and requested to remove the pupil.**
- **Alcohol, cigarettes or tobacco found on school premises will be confiscated. The parents will be informed and given the opportunity to redeem such items.**
- **If any pupil is found intoxicated through substance abuse, urgent medical attention should be given (via the hospital) and the substance will be confiscated. In this regard, it is important that legitimate solvents such as petrol, and cleaning/laboratory fluids are not easily accessible to pupils.**
- **Controlled drugs found on school premises will be confiscated and immediately handed over to the Gardaí.**
- **A member of staff, having good reason for believing that a pupil may be in possession of an Illegal/controlled substance, may ask that pupil to empty his/her pockets or bag. If the pupil refuses the matter should immediately be referred to a senior member of staff who will repeat the request. In the event of another refusal, the parents should be contacted to obtain their permission. When there is good reason for pursuing this course of action, the Gardaí may be called.**

- **If any pupil or any other person is found supplying or offering to supply a controlled substance, the Principal must be informed immediately. He/she will inform the Gardaí, the ETB, the Chair of Board of Management and the parents with a view to permanent exclusion.**
- **Any equipment involved in drug misuse found on school premises will be disposed of with due regard to Health & Safety regulations. Needles and syringes, which present a considerable health hazard, must be handled with extreme care and stored in a suitable container until disposed of. Any member of staff involved in dealing with drugs related incidents must keep detailed written records.**

Drugs Education Programme

The programme for drugs related education is partially cross-curricular but is drawn together mainly by work in the SPHE, RE and Social Education areas as well as the school's own Pastoral Care/Tutorial Programme. The class tutors, under the direction of the Yearhead, mainly deliver this programme. Assemblies are also used to reinforce the school's policy on substance abuse.

Links with the Parents and the wider Community

Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the helping agencies are available in school. These are brought to the pupils' attention at appropriate times during the health education programme.

Help and support for any pupil who is influenced by drug misuse in any way is provided through the pastoral systems in place within the school. The Educational Welfare Officer will be consulted and Social Services will be informed if it is considered that the child may be at risk.

Ratified by BOM on _____

Signed _____ Chairperson