

Drugs Education Policy

RATIONALE

For the purpose of this document the term 'drugs' includes tobacco, alcohol, over-the-counter and prescribed medication, volatile substances and controlled drugs. This school does not condone the misuse of drugs but recognises that there has been a considerable increase in the abuse of drugs in recent years in Northern Ireland. Drug misuse appears to be affecting an ever-younger population and the so-called "recreational" use of drugs can lead to a dangerous acceptance of illegal and harmful drug misuse as part of everyday life.

We believe that this school has a vital preventative role to play in combating the misuse of drugs by young people and we therefore include a drugs education programme in our curriculum.

This school sees its role as that of a caring community committed to the physical, mental, social, emotional, moral and spiritual health, safety and well being of our pupils and staff. We want our pupils to make informed and responsible decisions about drugs by increasing their knowledge and by developing in them appropriate values, attitudes and skills. However, we recognise that drug misuse is a whole-community issue and that schools alone cannot solve the drugs problem; the school is only one of a number of groups and agencies which must play a part in the education of young people and we make use of their expertise where possible in the delivery of the programme.

Copies of the guidance on which this policy is based (Drugs: Guidance for schools in Northern Ireland) are available from the Department of Education website www.deni.gov.uk (Circular 2004/09).

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this document and in line with the guidance issued to all schools by the Department of Education (2004/09) **drugs will include any substance which, when taken, has the effect of altering the way the body works or the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.**

As well as everyday substances such as tea and coffee, drugs include:

- alcohol and tobacco;
- "over-the-counter" medicines, such as paracetamol;
- prescribed drugs, such as antibiotics, tranquillisers, inhalers and Ritalin;
- volatile substances, such as correcting fluids/thinners, gas lighter fuel, aerosols, glues and petrol;
- controlled drugs, such as cannabis, LSD, Ecstasy, amphetamine sulphate (speed), magic mushrooms (processed), heroin and cocaine; and
- other substances such as amyl/butyl nitrite ('poppers') and unprocessed magic mushrooms.

ETHOS

In response to our shared concerns as Catholic educators, we wish to state that as part of our care for the welfare of our pupils, this school believes that it has a duty to inform and educate both adults and pupils in our school on the consequence of drug use/misuse. Our school takes a proactive stance on this matter, believing that health education is a vital part of the personal and social education of every pupil/adult.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To have a clear and agreed understanding amongst everyone in the school community about the implications and possible consequences of drug use/misuse.
- To provide all staff (teaching and support staff) with adequate training and support to enable them to deal effectively and confidently with incidents of suspected drug misuse, and to ensure that the agreed procedures are consistently and sensitively applied in all situations.
- To empower teaching staff through appropriate training and support to develop and deliver an effective drug education programme.
- To provide a drug education programme which
 - develops pupils' self esteem and promotes positive attitudes in their relationships with others;
 - gives pupils' opportunities to develop the values, skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to make informed and responsible decisions about the use/misuse of drugs including tobacco, alcohol and volatile substances, within the context of a healthy lifestyle; and
 - helps pupils' develop the skills necessary to assert themselves confidently and resist negative pressures and influences.
- To provide appropriate support and assistance for those pupils affected by drug-related issues.
- To inform parents of the content of this policy and the procedures to be implemented in the management of incidents of suspected drug misuse.
- To establish an environment in which the school is free from the misuse of all drugs.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Pupils

Be aware of and adhere to school rules in relation to drug use/misuse, including tobacco, alcohol, over-the-counter and prescribed medication, volatile substances and controlled drugs. Alcohol is not available at school events or on social occasions and this is always carefully monitored by a member of staff.

Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

- Drugs education is just as necessary for pupils with special educational needs. Children with learning difficulties may need more help than others in understanding what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable and desirable, and in developing the confidence and skills to resist drugs. For these young people, it will be particularly important that schools take into account their individual needs and abilities in interpreting the advice given.
- For those pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties, alcohol or substance misuse may be among a number of symptoms. The Northern Ireland Code of Practice for the identification and assessment of pupils with special educational needs refers to the need for

Education Authority to take account of any clear, recorded evidence of such misuse in considering whether the pupil may need statutory assessment.

Parents/Guardians

- Support the school in the development and implementation of this policy, including the school's procedures for handling incidents of suspected drug misuse and the drug education programme.
- Support your daughter if they have become involved with drugs.

All staff (teaching and support staff)

- Actively promote the aims and objectives of this policy
- Be alert to the possibility of drug use/misuse.
- Be familiar with the school's procedures in the handling of suspected drug-related incidents.
- It is not the responsibility of the individual staff member to investigate the circumstances surrounding an incident, however he/she should deal with any emergency procedures if necessary.
- Any information, substance or paraphernalia received should be forwarded to the designated teacher for drugs who may have to take immediate action.
- Any incident of staff or visitor abuse will be notified to the Principal or designated deputy immediately.

Teachers delivering the Drug Education Programme

In addition to the above:

- Deliver the school's drug education programme.
- Try to create an atmosphere in the classroom in which pupils can freely contribute to discussion, safe in the knowledge that the comments, ideas and feelings of the group are valued.
- Support pupils in their class if necessary.
- Liaise with the designated teacher for drugs regarding any aspect of the programme/policy, as necessary.

Pastoral Vice Principal

- Ensure that all staff and parents are aware of and have access to a copy of the policy.
- Have oversight and co-ordination of the planning of curricular provision in compliance with the statutory requirements including periodic update and review of the policy.
- Liaise with other staff responsible for pastoral care in co-ordinating the delivery of the drug education programme.
- Be responsible for co-ordinating the school's procedures for dealing with incidents of suspected drug misuse.
- Co-ordinate training and induction of all staff in the procedures for dealing with incidents of suspected drug misuse.
- Determine the circumstances surrounding any suspected drug-related incident.
- Complete a suspected incident report form and forward to the Principal.
- Ensure the engagement and active participation of parents in all aspects of drug education.
- Act as the point of contact for outside agencies working with the school.

The Principal

- Ensure that members of the Board of Governors have been consulted on and ratified the policy.
- In the case of incidents of suspected drug misuse:
- Ensure the welfare and well being of the pupil(s) involved in the incident and the rest of the school community.
- Ensure that the following people are informed (where relevant):
 - Parents/guardians
 - PSNI – preferably the Community and Schools Involvement Officer (CSIO)
 - Board of Governors
 - Designated Officer in Education Authority/CCMS
 - Members of staff
 - Other pupils and parents informed within the confines of confidentiality
- Agree, in consultation with the Board of Governors, appropriate pastoral and disciplinary responses in relation to the incident, including counselling services/support.
- Retain written records of the incident and ensure a copy of the report is submitted to Board of Governors and E.A./CCMS as appropriate.
- Review procedures and amend as appropriate.

The Board of Governors

- Examine and approve the completed policy and education programme, prior to their implementation in the school.
- Ensure the policy is published in the school prospectus and that it is reviewed at regular intervals.
- Be fully aware of and adequately trained to deal with suspected incidents of drug misuse, including tobacco and alcohol, and their appropriate disciplinary response.
- Agree in consultation with the principal appropriate pastoral and disciplinary responses in relation to suspected drug related incidents.

The Caretakers/Cleaning Staff

- Be vigilant around and conduct regular checks of the school grounds for drug-related paraphernalia, and inform the designated teacher for drugs as appropriate.
- Ensure the safe storage, handling and disposal of potentially harmful substances such as solvents and cleaning fluids.

Visitors and Hiring of Premises

The College prohibits the use or sale of any alcoholic beverages / cigarettes and the possession or consumption in any form in the school.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION

All staff (teaching and non-teaching) and Governors will be provided with training to support the full implementation of this policy including the delivery of the drug education programme during staff briefing sessions and BOG meetings. Information awareness sessions/drug awareness evening will be offered to parents/guardians at a parent's information evening.

THE DRUGS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The drug education programme in this school is just one part of the whole school response to drug use/misuse. The programme provides opportunities for pupils to:

- acquire knowledge and understanding in relation to drug use/misuse;
- identify values and attitudes in relation to drug use/misuse;
- develop skills to enable them to consider the effects of drugs on themselves and others; and
- make informed and responsible choices within the context of a healthy lifestyle.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED DRUG RELATED INCIDENTS:

Changes in a young person's behaviour are a feature of growing up and not an indication of drug use or misuse. Fundamental to dealing with incidents of suspected drug misuse is the principle of *'in loco parentis'*, and the school will always take the steps that would reasonably be expected of any parent to safeguard the well being and safety of all the pupils in their charge. No judgement will be made until the circumstances have been fully investigated.

CHECKLIST FOR HANDLING SUSPECTED DRUG RELATED INCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS

This is a guide on the key procedures to undertake when a drug-related incident occurs in schools.

1. **Ensure the safety of the individual pupil involved, of other pupils, yourself and other staff. On finding a situation with a suspected substance: -**
 - Get help immediately from another adult.
 - Assess situation, to see if this is a life-threatening situation or not.

If an emergency: -

 - If necessary contact an ambulance.
 - Put person under the influence of the drugs in the recovery position.
 - Ensure airways are cleared.
 - Remove any other bystanders from the immediate vicinity.

Then in all cases: -

 - Carefully gather up any drugs / paraphernalia / evidence lying around and keep safely.
 - Ascertain which substances / drugs have been taken and how much.
 - Secure all drugs and paraphernalia and give to the Principal / designated teacher for drugs immediately, and lock them away.
 - Contact the parents/guardians as soon as possible.

2. **Ensure all incidents are properly investigated and recorded: -**
 - Never accuse pupils of drug dealing/possession; these are alleged illicit substances until substantiated by the PSNI.
 - Conduct search procedures according to school policy. (**Never search personal belongings without permission.** It is okay to search school property such as lockers, cupboards or desks).
 - Ensure all drugs are safely and securely stored or destroyed, making sure that this is witnessed by another adult and recorded.
 - Gather details and data from all the eyewitnesses at the scene.
 - All statements and phone calls should be recorded, signed and dated.
 - Record all information on official incident form and sign and date, or ensure accurate details are given to whoever is writing the form and co-sign.
 - Ensure an incident form is filled in and forwarded to the EA/CCMS, as appropriate.
 - Ensure that you follow all the procedures in your School's Drugs Policy.

3. **Ensure appropriate individuals and agencies are informed and contacted as needed: -**
 - Principal and designated teacher for drugs
 - Parents / guardians
 - PSNI (CSIO)
 - EA/CCMS as appropriate
 - Chairperson initially and subsequently the Board of Governors
 - The Education Welfare Officer
 - No media statements, only the Principal should do this
 - Other pupils, parents and staff are only told on a need-to-know basis

A pastoral/disciplinary response needs to be made by the school, balancing the need for compassion and the pupil's welfare with the need to send a clear message about illegal actions and behaviour and the impact on the school community.

The school will at all times give careful consideration as to how any information relating to an incident of suspected/confirmed drug use/misuse is communicated to staff, pupils and parents/guardians.

The parents/guardians of the pupil(s) directly involved in an incident of suspected drug use/misuse will be informed of the incident recognising that the future of a child or adult can be adversely affected. Confidentiality is of paramount importance in drug related incidents and subsequent outcomes.

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

If the school receives an enquiry from the media the caller will only be referred to the principal or, in the absence of the principal, a designated nominee.

When responding to the media the privacy of the pupil(s), her family and/or any staff members will be respected at all times.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The policy will be reviewed every 2 years by the Designated Teacher and other relevant personnel, or following a drug-related incident.

The school will ensure that procedures are put in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of this policy. Information will be regularly collected from pupils and staff as part of the monitoring process, and this will then be evaluated against the aims and objectives of the policy at appropriate intervals. The implementation of the policy will be monitored as follows:

- (i) the taught programme – the pastoral team
- (ii) by questionnaires to staff/ pupils and parents

The designated teacher will have responsibility to collate the questionnaires and report the findings.

