

School policy on substance abuse

Introduction

This policy applies to the entire school community; including staff, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building.

This policy is part of a general pastoral approach adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment.

The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.

The school recognises and accepts various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and in particular, drug misuse.

The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001 – 2008.

School Policy

The school; does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school or during any school related activity.

An exception is made for the use of properly prescribed drugs. The parents of students taking prescribed medication should inform the school in writing of the fact.

Education Programmes

The school, within the resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all of its students.

The programme of education will be age appropriate and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes already being taught in the school – SPHE, RE, PE, CSPE, Science etc.

Parents are asked to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse.
- Assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

Procedures for Managing Incidents

In the event of an abuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

The school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a complete investigation of the incident

The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate any alleged abuse incident and will take whatever time is necessary to do this.

The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.

In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.

The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.

The school, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.

If the circumstances merit and the investigation are continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents.

The student will have a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response made and any relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case...

The school will inform the student and his parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of

or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the sanctions that it intends to impose.

In related to a verified and investigated incident may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions up to an including expulsion from the school.

The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take into account of mitigating circumstances that it considers should be taken into account.

The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.

The school will ensure that pastoral supports are available to those affected by an incident of substance abuse.

The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation

The principal, or his delegate, is responsible for all matters relating to this area. He/she may nominate the Deputy Principal or Year Head or other nominated staff to act on his/her behalf in the investigating of a substance abuse incident.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (or his nominee) in this regard include the following:

- The Principal is responsible for abuse incidents arising at the school.
- All reports of suspected abuse incidents must be reported to the principal.
- The Principal ensures that the specified procedures are followed throughout the investigation.
- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
- The Principal is responsible for taken possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.

The school may wish to contact the parents of a student for a variety of reasons regarding a suspected abuse incident.

In such an event the school will immediately inform parents, particularly when there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a child, and share any available information that may help parents in attending to their child's health and well being. Such actions will undertaken without prejudice to thee school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage an abuse incident.

The school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved and managing an abuse incident and it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident.

The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any student when they come in contact with a suspected abuse incident.

The school may be required in a given situation to contact such authorities as the Gardai, Health Board, Probation service or Officers of the Court.

The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.

The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident under statute, regulations or DES guidelines.

The school will not comment publicly on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policies and procedures for managing incidents.

Training and Development

The school will endeavour to provide training to Staff, Board of Management, Parents and Students.

The school will offer all students programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug education within the contexts of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes.

Specific week long programmes will also be organised at various times.

Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practises.