Substance Abuse Policy

St. Paul's Community College is a state school run by the Education Training Board of Ireland (ETBI). Our school is run under the ethos of the ETB and the core values underpinning its characteristic spirit. St Paul's is a state, co-educational, multidenominational school underpinned by the core values of the Ethos of excellence in Education, Care, Equality, Community and Respect.

Introduction

St. Paul's Community College is committed to the health and safety of its members and will take action to safeguard their wellbeing. As a result, St. Paul's Community College sees the need for the formulation and implementation of a structured and comprehensive substance abuse policy. This policy applies to pupils, teachers, parents, ancillary staff and all users of the school grounds. It is applicable any time the school is in operation and to all school related activities. It is vital that parents/guardians actively work with the school to implement this policy to ensure their children's health and safety.

This policy has been formulated by representatives of the whole school community in accordance with guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills and the National Drugs Strategy 2001 – 2008, and National Drugs Strategy (Interim) 2009 – 2016.

Definition

For the purposes of this policy, drugs shall be taken to mean all non-prescribed drugs whose use, by school children, is prohibited by law - alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs including cannabis, cocaine, heroin and include all mood-altering substances including solvents and inhalants. The college reserves the right to act on any information it may receive regarding the use, possession or distribution of illegal/prohibited substances. Prescribed medication may be taken in the college if approved by the Principal and on receipt of consent from parents/guardians

The School Ethos

As stated in the School's mission statement, St. Paul's Community College is committed to enabling students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical potential. It is also committed to fostering the development of personal responsibility.

- The School does not accept the possession, use or supply of alcohol or tobacco in the school or on school activities by any student.
- The School does not accept the abuse of solvent based substances. Students may have prescribed or "over the counter" medicines for legitimate personal use only.
- Students who have in their possession and take medical drugs in school long term must inform the Principal.
- The School must be informed if a student has a medical condition and relevant teachers, e.g. P.E. teacher must be informed also.
- A student or teacher may not give another student any prescribed or "over the counter "medicine unless in prior agreement with parent/guardian.
- Chemicals in school laboratories will be held under lock and key. Students will handle and use such substances only under their teacher's supervision.

Confidentiality

A limited number of people are involved in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents. People will be informed on a "need to know" basis. All written records will be held confidentially by the Principal or Deputy Principal. Parents/Guardians will be involved. They will be informed sensitively, and support offered to them. In the case of illegal drugs, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact Gardaí - Juvenile Liaison Officer, and any drugs will be dealt with by Gardaí. In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.

If a student has a problem, then referral will be recommended. Parents/Guardians, staff and other students involved in the incident will be offered support. Confidentiality is a complex issue. It is important that the limits of confidentiality are discussed with students before any disclosure is made. The wellbeing and welfare of the student and teacher must be a primary focus.

The policy is focused in four key areas:

Prevention Education and Strategies.

Managing Drug Related Incidents.

Training and Staff Development.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.

1. Prevention Education and Strategies

The School is committed to providing an Alcohol, Tobacco/e-cigarette and Drug Education Programme for all students. Our educational aims are:

- To increase the self esteem and confidence of our students.
- To equip our students with personal and social skills.
- To enable our students to make informed, healthy and responsible decisions.
- To provide clear and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimise the harm caused by drug abuse by offering supportive interventions.

These aims will be achieved by:

Offering teachers Drug Awareness training, SPHE training or any relevant training through regular in-service training.

Outside speakers are used where appropriate to reinforce the work done in class.

Parents/Guardians will be consulted on the need for drug education and will be informed of what is happening in the School.

Parents are asked / expected 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.

To assist the parents in their role the college will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the college regarding education programmes (e.g. SPHE etc).
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available, resources in community to support the school in its programmes and policy implementation.

Student Drug Education will be age-appropriate and will be achieved through:

  - SPHE Programme
  - Science
  - Outside speakers where appropriate.
  - PE
  - Religion
  - CSPE

2. Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, e-cigarettes, Drug Related or Substance Abuse Incidents

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community, the reputation of the school and legal considerations.

- All suspected incidents shall be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal by any member of the school community.
- The college will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a substance abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- Parent (s)/Guardian(s) shall be informed by the Principal/Deputy Principal of the incident.
- In the event of a medical emergency the school will seek appropriate medical assistance. Parent (s)/Guardian(s) will be contacted and informed that medical assistance has been sought.
- The Principal shall investigate, or instigate an investigation into, any suspected substance abuse incident. The Principal may contact other agencies and seek their assistance. Statements will be sought from all those involved, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident. These statements will be recorded and may be passed to the Gardaí.
- The college authorities reserve the right to suspend from the college any student(s) involved or suspected to be involved in a substance abuse incident while an investigation is being carried out.
- Those involved, or suspected to be involved, will be given the opportunity to respond to any allegations made against them.
- In the event that the investigation concludes, that a student or students are in breach of the Substance Abuse Policy or Code of Positive Behaviour sanctions will be put in place. The following college disciplinary actions or sanctions may be implemented including: warning, suspension and exclusion.
- The school will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident.
- The Principal in conjunction with WWETB will handle all media enquiries. They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.
- The school will endeavour to provide pastoral supports to the student(s) and parent(s) affected by an incident of substance abuse.

3. Training & Development

Staff

The School will facilitate training for staff involved in the SPHE programmes.

Staff will be offered drug information and awareness training .

First Aid training will be made available to all staff regularly.

Parents/Guardians

The School will provide opportunities for parents to attend drug workshops and information sessions.

Students

The School will offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE classes.

4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

This policy will be implemented by the Board of Management.

This policy will be monitored on an on-going basis and reviewed and amended as the need arises.

Ratification

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 15th February 2022

Cllr. Joe Kelly

Chairperson of the Board of Management