

Tummery Primary School, Dromore



DRUGS POLICY

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RATIONALE

Why do we need a drugs policy?

- It is a statutory requirement for every school to have a drugs education policy and to publish details of it.
- Every school must teach drugs education as part of the Health Education cross-curricular theme.
- The school must inform the police where they believe or suspect a child to be 'In possession of a controlled drug'.

As well as fulfilling our legal requirements, and in keeping with our school policy of maximising the potential of each child, and recognising our responsibility to care for each pupil's physical and emotional well-being, we must express our concern about the misuse of drugs in present day society.

We therefore feel it is our duty to:

- explain what a drug is - a substance which, when taken, has the effect of altering the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.
- to emphasise that while all medicines are drugs not all drugs are medicines and that the improper use of drugs can have serious consequences.
- to begin to equip our pupils with the necessary life-skills and information to prevent and protect them from the dangers attached to the misuse of drugs.

The drugs education programme will be delivered mainly through health education and the science curriculum. It will be appropriate to the needs and the experience of the children in our school.

In formulating this drugs education policy we believe that in addressing the drugs issue we are being a responsible school.

We wish to deal with drugs education in a manner which does not condone any drug use.

Above all our primary concern is the welfare, care and protection of our children.

OUR SCHOOL CONDEMNS DRUG MISUSE

AIMS

- To promote abstinence
- To delay the onset of experimentation
- To dissuade from use of drugs
- To begin to enable and equip children to make informed responsible decisions about drug use.

OBJECTIVES

- To equip children with the social competencies necessary for coping with peer pressure to begin using drugs.
- To enhance children self-awareness and self-esteem.
- To increase children knowledge of the harmful consequences of drug misuse.

THE ORGANISATION AND MANAGEMENT OF THE DRUGS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Principal, Mr Meenagh, will be responsible for the organisation and management of the drugs education programme. The programme will be drawn up as a result of consultation with the different class teachers. All members of staff will endeavour to apply the programme consistently.

Drugs education will be taught in a cross-curricular manner within the overall provision of Health Education and Northern Ireland Learning Areas, particularly in the areas of Personal Development and Mutual Understanding, The World Around Us (Science & Technology), Religious Education and Language and Literacy.

One of the main objectives is that children should develop their knowledge and understanding of the use, misuse, risks and effects of drugs and other potentially harmful substances and that they should develop a critical awareness of the relevant personal, social and economic implications.

This must be an important part of our drugs education programme.

We will adopt a "life skills" approach - giving our children appropriate information at the level they require, equipping them with the necessary skills and strategies to make informed decisions about drug use and to help them withstand peer pressure.

We will cover the following areas of drug abuse - alcohol, tobacco, solvent and controlled drugs. Outside agencies such as Breakthru, the Police, and the Health Promotion Agency may be called upon to support

staff in the delivery of the drugs education programme.

CHILDREN 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; they may be more at risk than others. We will endeavour to take into account their individual needs and abilities as we Interpret the drugs education programme.

SUPPORTS AND STRUCTURES

Roles and responsibilities of all staff

The Principal is the designated member of staff with responsibility for drug Issues. He will also co-ordinate the implementation of the drugs education programme throughout the school in compliance with the statutory requirements.

He also has responsibility for co-ordination of the school's procedures for handling instances of suspected drug misuse and acting as a contact point, as necessary, for outside agencies who may have to work with the school or with the child or children concerned.

All members of staff will work together as a team in order to deliver the drugs education programme as effectively as possible.

SUPPORT MECHANISMS

If a teacher suspects that a child may have a problem with drug misuse this information should be brought to the attention of the Principal, Mr Meenagh, and the Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Mrs P Donnelly. The situation will be investigated and, if necessary, arrangements will be made to counsel the child/children in school. The parents will be informed.

It is our duty to act on the fundamental principle that we are "in loco parentis" - our primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all the children in our charge.

The principal will contact the relevant agencies, Breakthru, PSNI, who will investigate the allegations. In addition, the education welfare service and local health and social services may be called upon to support the school. Such incidents should be handled with the utmost discretion - with only those people who "have the right to know" being given access to the information.

However, where a child discloses to a teacher or other member of staff that he or she is taking drugs, the staff member should make It clear to the child that he or she can offer no guarantee of confidentiality given the seriousness of drug misuse.

SAFETY IN SCHOOL

All substances which constitute a hazard to the safety of the children, including materials used to clean the school such as bleach and polish, must be securely stored at all times. Out of reach does not necessarily mean out of harm. All members of staff must carefully monitor the use in class by children of volatile substances, such as glue. Children are not allowed to have gas lighter fuel, cigarette lighters or correcting fluid (Tippex or similar products) in their possession. The use of aerosol sprays should be discouraged. The school will follow the guidelines issued by the Education Authority on the administration of medication in schools with which all members of staff should become familiar.

FOLLOW UP ACTION WHEN RESPONDING TO ILLNESS AS A RESULT OF SUSPECTED DRUG MISUSE

Mrs P Donnelly, the Designated Teacher for Child Protection will investigate and write a report on the incident which should be brief and factual and include such details as dates, times, location and witnesses. In the light of the report, the Principal will take further action in line with the school's Discipline policy. As part of this process the school may make referral to outside agencies who can support the child and their family. The Chairman of the Board of Governors will be informed. The Principal will contact the local PSNI Juvenile Liaison Officer.

PROCEDURES FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF DRUGS RELATED INCIDENTS ON SCHOOL PREMISES

For all those involved in dealing with incidents of drug misuse, the experience is likely to be traumatic. This will be true not only for the Principal, Teachers, other members of Staff and Governors of the school but also for the children involved in the incident, their parents and other children in the school.

Dealing with suspected incidents of drug misuse will require extreme sensitivity on the part of all those involved. Fundamental to dealing with such incidents is the principle of "In loco parentis" - the school must take steps to safeguard the well-being and safety of the pupils in its charge.

SANCTIONS AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The Principal retains the responsibility for deciding how to respond to particular incidents, taking account of factors such as the age of the pupil concerned, whether the incident involved one child or a group of children, and whether there has been evidence of particular peer pressure. The fact that certain behaviour could constitute a violation of criminal law should not, in itself, be taken as automatically leading to the exclusion of the child.

In cases where it is clear that a child is selling illegal drugs and the health and safety of other pupils is at risk, the Principal may decide that a child should be suspended or excluded from the school.

Confidentiality

Careful consideration must be given to the response of members of staff approached by a child for individual advice on drug misuse. If a child discloses to a teacher or other member of staff that he or she is taking drugs, the member of staff must make it clear that no guarantee of confidentiality can be offered.

Counselling

Where a child has been identified by the school as having experimented with illegal drugs, or as being at risk of doing so, he or she will be offered appropriate counselling and support within the school's general arrangements for the pastoral care of its pupils. The parents will be informed.

The school is aware of the specialised agencies, support and counselling services available in the area which may be in a position to support a pupil at risk. In addition, the education welfare service, local health and social services, and the local police all have a role to play in supporting the school's efforts.

Handling the Media

If the school receives an enquiry from the media, the caller should be referred only to the Principal. No comment should be made by another other person.

When responding to the media, it is recommended that:

- the privacy of any child and his/her family should be respected
- a checklist of appropriate key facts is prepared by the principal
- statements are short, factual and without elaboration
- positive statements are made
- concluding statements are reassuring, and restate that the incident has been managed effectively
- if asked for further statements the school should restrict itself to its original statement.

The Law and the Local Police

All staff should be aware of their responsibilities under the law. They should be aware of the legal implications of discovering a child in possession of a controlled drug and how they are expected to deal with such an event.

The local Juvenile Liaison Officer will be informed in every case where a child is found to have, or is suspected of having, controlled drugs in his or her possession, either on his or her person or in his or her belongings, or where drugs are found on the school premises.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION

The primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all the children in our charge. Every effort will be made to ensure that staff are well informed about the misuse of drugs, the necessity of having a drugs education programme and of being familiar with the school's procedures when a pupil is suspected either of being in possession of drugs or being under the influence of alcohol.

The Board of Governors will be involved in the development of the school's Drugs Policy and procedures.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Many parents are concerned about drugs in our community. They may be anxious to know that the school is addressing the issue, the manner in which it is done and the information supplied.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of our drugs education policy and encourage them to find out how we are tackling these issues. We must do our best to stress that all teaching will be done in the wider context of health education and carefully matched to the age and maturity of the pupils concerned.

MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF POLICY

Our Drugs Policy will be regularly reviewed and evaluated. The policy and associated programmes will also be revised to take account of changing trends and circumstances.