

Drumacruttin National School

Substance Use Policy

Scope of Policy

This Policy applies to all students, teachers, parents and other users of the school premises. It applies during school time, including breaks, and to all school related activities.

Policy Formation

This Policy was formulated as a result of a consultative process in the school year '07/'08. A local S.P.H.E. Cuiditheoir visited the school in November '07 and discussed the formulation of a Substance Use Policy with the Principal. The R.S.E. Committee agreed to assist in the policy formation process and met on Monday 28th January '08 when a draft Substance Use Policy was agreed upon. This policy was circulated to all parents for comment at a meeting of the PTA on Wednesday 27th February 2008. The policy was then presented to the Board of Management on 3rd March 2008 for ratification. This policy was reviewed by the RSE committee in November 2009 and again in March 2014.

Relationship to Schools Ethos and Mission Statement.

The substance use policy reflects the school ethos in that it will help towards the provision of a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are addressed. Also it will help to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community and imbue in the pupils respect for people and property and encourage in them the idea of being responsible.

Rationale:

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drug is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their students in this area and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

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- The National Drugs Strategy, "Building on Experience", is now Government Policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- The recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled "Drug Use Prevention" (Nov. 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.
- The 2003 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (E.S.P.A.D.) report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among 16 year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 34 E.S.P.A.D. countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland, with girls ranking higher than boys in terms of regular alcohol use. In terms of drug use in Ireland, there was a notable increase in lifetime use of any illicit drug between 1999 (32%) and 2003 (40%), up eight per cent.

Definition of a Drug

A drug can be defined as a chemical, which causes changes in the way the human body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. For the purpose of this policy we are concerned with drugs which have the power to change a previous mood and the way a person thinks about things and drugs or which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent.

Aims:

1. To set out in writing the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use.
2. Through our S.P.H.E. (Social, Personal & Health Education) Programme we seek to develop a framework for education concerning substance use in terms of providing information helping the child developing a common sense approach to alcohol, drugs and everyday substances that can be abused.
3. To provide a framework for the management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents
4. To provide for training and staff development, and the planned use of outside expertise to support the staff and students.

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Policy Content:

The policy content is divided into 3 sections

1. Education concerning substance use
2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents
3. Provision for training and staff development

(i) Education concerning substance use:

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is provided within the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.) programme which is developmental and delivered within the context of a supportive whole school environment. We believe the "WALK TALL" programme to be of optimum value in addressing these issues across the whole school community in an age-appropriate manner.

The use of an outside visitor/speaker (nurse, Garda, social worker, Dept of Education facilitator) to enhance the work done in class may be considered in context of the full SPHE programme. The Principal will check that all content is appropriate to the age group.

(ii) Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents;

Smoking

School Policy

- The school is a no smoking area.
- Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on the school premises or in any other place during school related activities.
- Visitors will comply with the no smoking policy.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the Principal and parents will be informed.

Alcohol

School Policy:

- The school is an alcohol free area at all times.
- Pupils will not be allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities.

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- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home.
- In the case where the child is under the influence of alcohol and where the parent/guardian is unable or unwilling to remove the child/children the local doctor or medical services will be contacted.

Illicit Drugs, Paraphernalia and Solvents

School Policy:

- Students are forbidden from being in possession of or using illicit drugs or misusing solvents in the school premises.
- In the case of suspected or actual possession or use of illegal drugs on the school premises or on a school related activity, every effort will be made to locate the offending substance and/or associated paraphernalia and remove same to locked secure location.
- The following Parties will be informed immediately:
 - o Gardaí
 - o Chairperson of Board of Management
 - o Parents/Guardians will be contacted and requested to present themselves at the school or location of the school related activity where they will be informed of the incident.
- In the case where the child is under the influence of drugs, and where the parent/guardian is unwilling to remove the child/children in question, the local doctor or medical services will be contacted.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illicit drugs or misusing solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out. Parents of any student involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer will be sought.
- The school B.O.M. will expect parents to inform the Principal or teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking.

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The school will endeavour to respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be taken in deciding on the nature of the response i.e. pastoral or disciplinary. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco or drug use may include referral to a support agency. Expulsion is the ultimate sanction and it is stressed that this measure is only used as a last resort as it can have the effect of alienating a student from mainstream sources of help and may result in this student becoming more involved in the culture of drugs abuse. Where a member of staff requires support, schools may consider facilitating links with a support agency. The school policy will seek to inform teachers about issues relating to confidentiality and appropriate reporting procedures.

(iii) Provision for Training and Staff Development

Teachers have already undergone training in the Walk Tall and S.P.H.E. Programmes.

An effective policy needs to be supported by an on-going commitment from the Board of Management to training and staff development. At present primary schools are assisted in this area by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and Walk Tall Support Office (for Local Drugs Task Force Area Primary Schools) The HSE also provide a wide range of support for schools including Health Education and Health Promotion, Smoking Cessation Support and Adolescent Counselling Service.

Roles & Responsibilities

The school wishes to make clear that the primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with the parents.

The Principal's Role:

The role of the Principal will be to ensure the implementation of the SPHE Programme and to fully support teachers, parents and pupils.

The Principal will be familiar with the Substance Use policy and ensure its implementation in the event of a substance use related incident.

The Principal will ensure that staff are provided with opportunities for professional development in the area of substance use education when opportunities arise.

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The Teacher's Role:

The role of the teacher in the active learning environment is like that of a facilitator. This may initially involve planning and setting up the structures for an active learning approach by initiating ground rules for discussions/debates.

- Listen when someone else is talking
- Put-downs are not allowed
- No one is named in a negative way

However as important as what is done is how it is done. Important considerations are the building of trust, respect and positive regard for all, developing and maintaining good relationships between teacher and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, and having clear goals, expectations and learning objectives. The teacher as facilitator encourages children to share ideas and opinions, ask questions, and, as appropriate, devolve responsibility to the group for answers and outcomes. The value of discussion during or after an activity should not be underestimated as it can deepen understanding leading to better learning for all. However the teacher is also a leader and the entire process is one of leading children towards valuing what is good.

Success Criteria:

Substance Misuse Prevention is a complex and demanding task which needs to be approached in the context of increasing drug use among young people. No one group holds the key to prevention; rather a co-operative approach is required. The importance of schools in the context of an overall prevention strategy is acknowledged in the development of school-based programmes such as Walk Tall. The success of any programme will be influenced greatly by what is happening both inside and outside school to support young people to make healthy lifestyle choices.

Review

This Policy will be reviewed in accordance with the School Development Plan.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by Board of Management on 1st April 2014.

Signed: Canon Ian Berry Chairperson, Board of Management