

Substance Use Policy of St. Lassara's N.S.

The central objective of the school's Substance Use Policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998.

This policy was reviewed in March/April 2016.

“A drug can be defined as any chemical which alters how the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally, or how the person behaves or feels.”

For the purpose of this policy, these include over the counter medicines, prescribed medicines, nicotine, alcohol, illegal substances, solvents and drinks with high amounts of caffeine eg. Red Bull. These are not permitted (see Healthy Eating Policy)

While the school accepts that it has an important role to play, it wishes to make clear that the primary role in substance use prevention rests with parents.

Introduction and scope of the policy

The policy applies to pupils, teachers, auxiliary staff members, parents, users of the school premises, visitors, i.e. every person who enters building. It is applicable during school-time – including breaks and to ALL school related activities.

It applies 24/7 to the school building and grounds and to any area where a school related activity takes place, e.g. school tour, football match, etc.

Aims

The main aim of the Substance Use Policy of St. Lassara's N.S. is primary prevention.

- We aim, through this policy, to create a healthy working environment for staff and pupils.
- We aim to give pupils information which will help them to make healthy life choices regarding substances, namely tobacco, alcohol, solvents and illegal drugs.
- We also aim to raise awareness among the whole school community of the dangers involved in substance misuse.
- We aim to develop pupils' self-esteem, through providing a positive school climate and atmosphere and through giving our pupils age appropriate information from educational programmes.
- We aim, if and when required, to arrange information talks around this area for parents.

Note that we endeavour to keep up-to-date with current legislation.

Note also that this policy will outline procedures in instances of suspected substance abuse.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of our School

The characteristic spirit of this school has been developed and agreed with our partners in education. The substance use policy reflects the school policy by

- Drawing together teachers, parents and Board of Management members.

- Including reference to substance use in the enrolment policy of our school.
- Including reference to substance use in our Code of Discipline and School Rules

Through the SPHE curriculum, we hope to help each pupil to reach his/her potential and to deliver strategies which will help develop the child's self-confidence. We hope these strategies will in turn help the children to deal with peer pressure.

Rationale

Why is this policy necessary?

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges, which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student cohort 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. 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' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug misused in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.

For the population as a whole, alcohol consumption per capita in Ireland has increased by 41% in the period 1989 to 1999, while the other EU Member States showed either a decrease or a modest increase. Ireland now has the second highest per capita consumption of alcohol in the EU.

The children in our school will face many challenges in the world around them. Exposure to nicotine, alcohol and drugs are just some of these challenges. As part of our SPHE programme, we hope to use the Walk Tall Programme to teach the pupils strategies to help them cope in an increasingly challenging environment.

The Board of Management of St. Lassara's N.S. has a moral and legal obligation to ensure compliance with the criminal.

Policy Content

The content of this policy 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.

Education concerning substance use

A substance misuse prevention programme will be implemented in all class levels in accordance with our Social, Personal and Health Education Primary Curriculum Statement (SPHE) which is generic in approach and spiral in nature delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. This education will be delivered every second year and will address the content objectives in an age appropriate manner four times in primary school. See Content Objectives at the end of this policy.

A visitor may be used to supplement the programme. “Walk Tall” materials will be the primary materials used to deliver the programme. Other suitable materials may also be used to deliver aspects of the programme, once they comply with the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum.

It is at the class teachers’ discretion to modify/differentiate the programme if deemed necessary. Similarly, the Learning Support Teacher may reinforce the content of the programme with weaker/SEN pupils if deemed necessary.

Management of alcohol and drug-related incidents

The Board of Management endeavour, in as far as is reasonably practicable, that pupils and other persons in St. Lassara’s N.S. are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare from persons under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. This includes all school related activities taking place under the supervision of a teacher, both within and away from the school premises.

Rules for Staff, Adults and Pupils

Nicotine

- From January 2004, it is illegal to smoke in a working environment. To this end, teachers, ancillary staff, parents, pupils and visitors are not allowed to smoke in the school grounds.
- Pupils should not have cigarettes/lighters/matches on their person in the school environment.
- Pupils found smoking on the school premises will be reported to the Principal and parents will be informed. A period of suspension may follow. (see Code of Behaviour)

Medicines

- Pupils should not have any medication in school unless the teachers have been made aware of this in writing by parents/guardians. This medication should be handed to the class teacher at the beginning of the day and stored in a safe place. Parents/guardians are asked at the beginning of the school year for such information for school records.
- School staff do not administer medicines in school. The parent must apply in writing to the Board of Management. It is the teacher’s right as a non-medical practitioner to refuse to administer medicine. ***Please refer to Administration of Medicines Policy for additional information.***
- Any medicines on the school premises should be stored in a safe place that is not easily accessible to pupils.

Alcohol

- Alcohol may be kept on the school premises from time to time eg. Christmas raffle. It must be stored in a safe place which is not easily accessible to pupils.
- Pupils are not allowed to bring alcohol into the school or consume alcohol in school or during school activities.
- Pupils, teachers and ancillary staff should not come to school under the influence of alcohol and should not have alcohol on their person when in the school grounds.
- Parents and visitors to the school should not visit the school while under the influence of alcohol.

Illegal Drugs

- The use of illegal drugs on the school grounds is prohibited at all times. Pupils, teachers, ancillary staff, parents and visitors to the school are prohibited from having or using illegal drugs on the school grounds and during school related activities.

Solvents

- Aerosol sprays, including deodorants, are not to be used in school or on school related activities by the pupils eg swimming. Roll-on and stick deodorants are recommended.
- Parents are asked to ensure any markers bought for pupils' use in school are labelled "water-based".
- The school will endeavour to buy water based markers where possible. Other markers will be stored in a safe place.
- All cleaning products will be stored in a safe and secure place. Cleaning products are not to be left in places where pupils will have easy access to them.
- Correction fluids/thinners and like products are forbidden for pupil use. Teachers should keep such products in a safe place. Bottles of nail varnish/nail varnish remover are forbidden.

Suncream: We strongly advise that during good weather, children should have suncream applied before they come to school. This should be sufficient for the school day. However, if you deem it necessary for them to bring suncream to school, it should be sent in to school in a clear plastic bag with your child's name on it. This should be handed to the class teacher in the morning. Teachers will not apply suncream but will supervise its application in the Junior Classes. **NO SPRAY CREAMS OR LOTIONS PLEASE.**

Dealing with incidents

Arrival of a parent/guardian to school obviously under the influence of alcohol or drugs

All reasonable steps will be taken in these incidents to protect the welfare of the pupils.

- If a teacher/member of staff is aware of the condition of the parent/guardian, the parent/guardian will be reminded of the Substance Use Policy of the school.
- The teacher will make all reasonable efforts to retain the child in their care and suggest that someone else collect the child.

- If the parent declines the offer, under the Education Act 1998, the teacher is entitled to phone the Gardaí and report that a parent, under the influence of a substance, has left the school with a pupil in their care.
- If it is a repeated occurrence, then it may also be a cause for concern and need to be reported to the HSE, under the “Children First” Child Protection Guidelines

Person appearing on the school premises intoxicated/under the influence of a substance

- The person will be asked to vacate the premises immediately.
- Gardaí will be informed if the person does not comply.
- In the case where the person is a staff member eg teacher, they will be brought home and Board of Management will be informed.
- Board of Management will be responsible for any further disciplinary action.

Staff in breach of policy

Every school employee should ensure that they are not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

Any member of staff who is in breach of the policy (e.g. smoking on the premises)

- Will be reminded of the policy.
- Will receive a verbal warning.
- This will be followed by a written warning, if necessary.
- Board of Management will be informed and will take further disciplinary action as required.

Pupil coming to school with any of the above prohibited substances

- The substances will be confiscated from the pupil.
- The teacher who has confiscated the substance will inform the Principal.
- Parents/Guardians will be informed.
- The pupil will be disciplined, as is deemed appropriate.
- If the offence is repeated, the Board of Management will be informed of the incident. Any further disciplinary action required will be taken. This may include suspension.

Pupil coming to school obviously under the influence of an intoxicating substance

- If a teacher/member of staff becomes aware of a pupil apparently under the influence, they will check to see if the pupil has anything medically wrong or whether the pupil has taken something. *This will be treated as a medical emergency.*
- The principal will be informed.
- Parents will be notified.
- Medical advice will be sought.
- If it turns out to be a disciplinary matter, the pupil will be dealt with appropriately.
- If this incident re-occurs, the matter will be brought to the Board of Management and, where appropriate, the HSE.

Disclosure about a pupil taking substances

The school will only investigate school related incidents. In reported incidents outside of school, the teacher can at most, pass on information to parents or if deemed appropriate, to the Gardaí.

- The teacher will investigate to see if the allegation is true.
- Any substance the child may have on their person will be confiscated.
- Parents/Guardians will be informed of the incident.
- The child will be disciplined as deemed appropriate.
- *The exception occurs when a child is taking an illegal substance or has an illegal substance on their person. In this case, the Gardaí must be contacted.*

Finding of substances and/or associated paraphernalia on the school grounds

- Any bottles, beer cans, etc. found on the school grounds will be disposed of safely.
- If there are illegal substances found on the grounds, they should be taken to a safe place and the Gardaí should be informed immediately.
- Any incidents involving evidence of use of drugs in the school premises or on the school grounds should be reported to the Gardaí immediately.

Provision for training and staff development

An effective policy needs to be supported by an ongoing commitment from the Board of Management and the School Trustees to training and staff development. At present, schools are supported in this by the Primary Development Support for Teachers (PDST) and the Walk Tall Support Office.

Further education will be sourced when necessary or required from:

- Health Promotion Unit.
- Talks by Gardaí on use of substances in the local area.
- Keeping abreast of current legislation.

Responsibilities

- The Board of Management acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of teachers. An Employee Assistance Service (telephone 1800 411 057 or e-mail eas@vhics.ie) is available to teaching staff. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the teaching staff, the BOM may request such staff member to contact the Employee Assistance Service.
- The Board of Management also acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of all other staff members. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the non-teaching staff, The BOM may request such staff member to seek counselling or other professional intervention.
- All incidents, relating to the presence of persons at school, under the influence of an intoxicant, shall be recorded and reported as soon as possible to the BOM.
- The BOM shall consider all such reports and decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the circumstance of each particular case

Communication of this policy

- This policy will be available to the Board of Management, teachers, staff and to all interested parties and placed on the website.
- Copies of the policy will be made available to parents and guardians on enrolment of their child in the school. Enrolment will be on acceptance of this and other school policy documents by them.
- The policy will be implemented by all members of staff and any adult working within the school.
- The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated where necessary.

Timeframe for implementation and review

Implementation of the revised substance use policy will take effect immediately.

The policy will be monitored as a staff on the whole.

Review and evaluation will take place at the end of the school year 2018 and/or as required, to keep up with changes in legislation.