

St. Mary's C.B.S. Substance use Policy

This policy was piloted for a year before its final adoption.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

This policy was drawn up through consultation with Principal, School Manager, Staff, Parents and Students. For a description of the consultative process and the methodology used see Appendix 1.

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

Rationale

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 Manager recognizes and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and, in particular, alcohol misuse.

The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02.

The school is also fully committed to section 43 of the Education Act ('98) which provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

Mission Statement:

The school community values, educates and prepares all its students for a responsible, meaningful and productive life.

As a Catholic school we strive to provide a safe and healthy environment for all our students. We also wish to promote an awareness of health and the development of a positive attitude towards health issues.

The Policy is designed primarily to educate and protect and is part of a general pastoral effort by the school to ensure the well-being and Christian formation of the students.

The school asserts its right to protect and promote its ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

Definition:

A comprehensive list of definitions can be found in Appendix 2

SECTION TWO: SCHOOL POLICY

The school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited drugs or alcohol by any student in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school related activity. The school does not accept or tolerate smoking by any student in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school related activity.

The only exception is the use of properly prescribed drugs. In these instances the school insists that parents inform the school in writing of the student's particular situation.

If a prescribed drug has to be stored in the school it will be stored in a secure cabinet. Arrangements for distribution or administration of the prescribed drug will be agreed between parents of the individual student and the Principal.

SECTION THREE: PROGRAMMES FOR DRUG EDUCATION

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

This 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, Science, PE, CSPE etc

Parents are asked / expected to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes.
- Recognize 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 school will

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

SECTION FOUR: PROCEDURES FOR MANAGEMENT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE INCIDENT

Management and investigation of an incident:

In the event of an abuse incident the school will strive 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.

Confidentiality

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 inform parents - particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a student - and share any available information that may help parents in attending to their child's health and wellbeing. The student will be kept informed about what is happening and why. Such actions will be undertaken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.

The school recognizes the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident. It is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, students and their parents must accept that

1. The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident.
2. The school may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Gardai, Health Board, Probation Service, or Officers of the Courts.
3. The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
4. The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations, or DES guidelines.

Media Queries

If there are media inquiries in the context of an abuse incident, the school

- Will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents.
- In the interests of the school's reputation, the School Manager may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

Procedures

1. The school reserves the right to suspend any student involved in a suspected misuse incident pending a complete investigation of that incident.
2. An Abuse Incident Report Form will be completed.
3. 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.
4. The school will seek statements from all students involved in, concerned with or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
5. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident.
6. Parents of students involved may be informed unless there is a child protection issue.
7. Relevant teachers will be informed
8. The school, at its own discretion, may liaise with and inform any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance i.e gárdai, health board etc
9. If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
 - a. Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his parents—at the discretion of the school—in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
 - b. The school will allow the student concerned and his parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - c. The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the students has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
10. In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management/School Manager may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, and expulsion.
11. The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.

12. The School recognises that these incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a counsellor, chaplain etc may be offered to those involved.

SECTION FIVE: THE INVOLVMENT AND ROLES OF VARIOUS PARTIES IN AN INCIDENT INVESTIGATION

School Manager

1. Approval and adoption of the Policy;
2. Delegation of the implementation of the policy to the Principal;
3. Recommendation, approval and authorisation of suitable sanctions where necessary.

Principal

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal include the following:

1. The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school
2. All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the principal
3. The Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of an incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation
4. The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments
5. The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident
6. The principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.

Deputy Principal – as delegated to by the Principal. The Principal may nominate the Deputy Principal to act on his behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident.

S.P.H.E. Teachers : Help to raise awareness of the dangers of substance misuse.

Guidance Counsellor : Help parents and/or students through

- (a) Counselling
- (b) Mediation
- (c) Providing information

General teachers :

- a) Report any incidents that they are aware of to the Principal
- b) Provision of Education programmes to students
- c) Dissemination of the policy among students

School Chaplain : support for parents and students

Visiting Counsellor : counselling service for students.

Home/School/Community Liaison teacher : support parents and inform them of relevant agencies to seek help.

Ancillary Staff : Report incidents to the Principal

Students: Report incidents to Principal or other teachers and support other students if needed.

Parents : - Report incidents

- Support the school discipline system.
- Support their child and get appropriate help.

SECTION SIX: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The school will provide training for staff, School Manager, Parents and Students

In relation to staff, the school

- Will deliver training in delivering education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
- Will provide training in recognising the symptoms of substance use.
- Encourage teachers to avail of courses on Substance misuse in local education centre and through SEHB drugs education officer

In relation to Parents & the School Manager the school

- Will provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and the Policy.
- Will provide appropriate information, guidance, and support to the School Manager regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

In relation to the students the school will

- Offer all students programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco, and drug education within the context of the School's S.P.H.E. programme

- Reinforce substance education in the R.E. classes
- Promote healthy attitudes e.g. through poster displays etc.

SECTION SEVEN: 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 practices.

The Policy will be piloted for one year. It will be externally reviewed by a solicitor. A general review of policy in three years time.

The S.P.H.E. co-ordinator will monitor the S.P.H.E. programme on an ongoing basis to ensure that the educational aims of the policy are being implemented. The co-ordinator will report to the Principal on an ongoing basis and at the end of each year.

Dissemination

The Policy will be presented to all parents and students at the beginning of the school year. The policy will be explained to all students by their S.P.H.E. teachers.

Appendix 1

Process of drawing up the Policy

A steering committee was set up. This committee contained a cross-section of members. There was representation from parents, students, teachers and school management.

The Education Officer from the South Eastern Health Board provided assistance and advice at all stages.

A survey was drawn up in stages as a result of a consultative process. Students, parents, teachers and the School Manager decided on the questions to be included in the survey.

When deciding on questions to be included in the survey we worked under guidelines received from the South Eastern Health Board.

We were given a sample survey. The questions to be included were discussed. The questions chosen reflected the particular needs of our school. They indicate the stage we are at as a school in relation to A Substance Use Policy. Particular emphasis was placed on simplicity of wording. As the survey was to be circulated to a wide catchment we believed that this was necessary.

How the Survey was distributed

The survey was given out to students randomly across the year groups. Two senior students administered the survey. Students' responses were kept confidential. Fifty parents were randomly chosen. The survey was mailed out. Stamped addressed envelopes were enclosed to facilitate return. A follow up phone call was made to find out if the survey was sent back. Parents' responses were kept confidential. All teachers completed the survey. All teachers returned the survey to three designated members of staff. Teachers' responses were kept confidential.

Compiling the results

The surveys were collected.
They were divided equally among committee members.
They were counted and collated.
Trends were identified.

Conclusion

There was a remarkable similarity in response across the three targeted groups.

Appendix two

The aim of the section is to provide definitions for specific and technical phrases that appear throughout the policy document so that these do not have to be defined within the body of the policy.

The School

The “School” includes school buildings, grounds, play areas, public areas where students congregate coming to and going from school.

Banned or prohibitive substances

Drug

Often illegal sometimes addictive substance that causes changes in behaviour and perception and is taken for the effects. We may define a drug as “any chemical which alters how the body works, or how a person behaves or feels”.

Drug misuse: Deliberate use of an illegal drug or misuse of a prescribed drug.

Main groups of drugs

Alcohol
Tobacco
Cannabis
Prescription Drugs
Cocaine
Heroin
Solvents

This list may not be exhaustive.

Drug Paraphernalia

Any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances, and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

Abuse Incident

Any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occurs in the School or during school functions or outings or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned, to other students, or to the Policy or reputation of the School. The school reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the Policy.

The following are examples of an Abuse Incident but are not exhaustive.

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication / unusual behaviour
- Suspicion / rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants
- Possession of Tippex thinners, petrol, lighters, or any other solvent
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

Parents

For the purposes of this policy, Parents are defined as natural parents, foster parents, step parents, or guardian of the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in loco parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of an abuse incident.

Principal

In this Policy, reference to the Principal should be taken to mean the principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the deputy principal where the principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the deputy principal.