

## Substance Misuse Policy

### ***Scope***

This Policy applies to the entire school community, including students, teachers, parents/guardians and all users of the school and its environs at all times. It also applies to students, teachers, parents/guardians during school related activities including all tours and outings.

For the purpose of the 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 and heroin. Prohibited substances include all mood-altering substances such as solvents and inhalants.

### ***Rationale***

This policy aims to develop the full potential of all in the school community and to make explicit the schools expectations of all members of the school community regarding substance misuse. It aims to promote a collective and individual responsibility and shared ownership of a drug free environment amongst pupils, school staff, parents/guardians and all users of the school.

- The Education Act provides that school should promote the social and personal development of students and provide for their health education.
- The National Drugs strategy, which is now Government policy, requires schools to have a policy on substance misuse in place.
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and 1984
- Tobacco Regulations 1995 and Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002.
- All future relevant legislation.

### ***Goals***

To work in a pro-active health promoting partnership to maintain the school as a drugs free zone.

To help students make informed and positive choices in their lives and to be drug free- by supporting the development of core life skills

To prevent substance misuse

To provide education regarding the harmful effects of substance misuse.

To deal with substance related incidents.

### ***Policy Content:***

#### **Education concerning substance misuse.**

The school is a health promoting school. It seeks deliberately to promote the physical, psychological, emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual welfare of all its pupils, staff, parents/guardians and education partners. The school will provide education for pupils and In-service training for staff in areas relating to healthy living and substance misuse. The school will maintain appropriate contact with support agencies including the local Health Board.

#### **Management of substance Misuse allegations/incidents**

***Harmful substances are banned:*** The school is a Drug Free Zone. It is forbidden to possess, offer for sale, use or encourage the use of alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs or other harmful substances. The school is committed to working with Staff,

parents/guardians, pupils and community groups in making the school a Drug Free Zone and in seeking to achieve the ideals of a health promoting school.

**Communications:** At the time of enrolment, and later as required by the school, parents/guardians shall supply all relevant information regarding a pupil's prescribed medication to the school on the Application Form. The school will inform parents of its Substance Misuse Policy, which contains reference to the sanctions for misuse.

**Reporting of suspicions/incidents:** Any person who has information or a reasonable suspicion (See Appendix 2 Table 1) that another person or group of persons is engaged in any of the forbidden activities outlined above should bring that information or suspicion to the attention of the deputy principal(s) or principal who will take appropriate action. Any information given to the school regarding the use of illegal drugs will be handled sensitively. It will be considered a very serious offence to deliberately mislead the school authorities.

**Allegation against a student or minor visitor:** Any reasonable suspicion that a pupil is in possession of or involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated and brought to the attention of their parents/guardians. Any reasonable suspicion that a minor visitor is in the possession of or involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated and brought to the attention of the adults supervising the visitor and/or their parents/guardians.

**Allegations against a member of staff, parent/guardian, or adult visitor:** Any reasonable suspicion that a member of staff, a parent/guardian or a adult visitor is in possession of or involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated by the school and/or brought to the attention of the Gardai for investigation by them, at the discretion of the Board. The fact that such an allegation has been made and is being investigated shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Management as soon as practicable. Due process and fair procedures will apply. Appropriate in-school industrial relations agreements and policies will be followed and relevant sanctions applied as appropriate.

**Pastoral Approach:** The approach to tackling the issue is based on the fundamental principle that the school acts in loco parentis – that the primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all the pupils in our charge. The school will adopt a pastoral approach and will require pupils to submit to counselling and/or regular drug tests. However, fines may also be imposed, banned substances will be confiscated and other sanctions will apply.

Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a person is engaged in the misuse of drugs or is dealing in illegal drugs that suspicion will be communicated to the Gardai.

The school will liaise with other outside agencies such as Social Workers as appropriate.

**Sanctions:** A distinction is made between cigarettes and other harmful substances. Sanctions for possession of or smoking cigarettes are as follows: a thirty euro fine and detention for a first offence. For subsequent offences the fine is increased by ten

euro and detention also applies. Failure to pay the fine or attend detention will lead to suspension until the parents/guardians meet with the Principal.

Sanctions for possession or use of, or dealing in, illegal drugs or harmful substances may range from short/long term suspension to expulsion from school. Sanctions will be at the discretion of the Board of Management. When an incident involving possession or use of, or dealing in, illegal drugs or harmful substances occur in the school, the matter should be reported immediately to the Principal. As in the case of any other serious disciplinary matter, the student(s) concerned may be immediately suspended from class/school until parents/guardians meet with the Principal to discuss the incident. Subsequently, the offending party and her parents/guardians will meet with the Board of Management where appropriate sanctions may be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the offence, and if the Board determines that an offence has been committed. Repeated incidents of use or possession of, and any incident of dealing in illegal drugs or harmful substances, will attract very serious sanction. Expulsion as an option will always be available to the Board.

The Board reserves the right to request parents/guardians to have their daughter tested for the presence of illegal drugs in her system.

Furthermore, when a student has been involved in an incident involving the possession, use or dealing of illegal drugs or harmful substances the Board will recommend that the parents/guardians ensure that their daughter undergoes an appropriate programme of counselling.

**Reporting Procedures:** Teachers will note and date for themselves any evidence indicating possible drug use or possession of drugs such as comments made by a pupil in class, comments of other pupils, behaviour, graffiti advocating drug use etc.

Appendix 2 contains a list of warning signs.

Parents/Guardians, pupils and other users of the school facilities and grounds will be encouraged to bring any reasonable suspicion to the attention of teachers, the deputy principal(s) or principal as appropriate.

**Investigating Procedures:** The Principal, Deputy Principal(s) or other person nominated by the Principal, will investigate all allegations of possession or use of, or dealing in, illegal drugs and harmful substances and will follow the agreed procedures for the Management of Substance Misuse allegations/incidents. As part of any investigation students may be required to supply a written account of their knowledge of a particular incident.

#### **For Roles and Responsibilities – see Appendix 1 Implementation/Action Plan:**

- Inform parents/guardians/students on Substance Misuse Policy.
- Declaration of the school as a Drug-Free Zone, vis-à-vis current legislation, particularly the Tobacco Act 2004. (all buildings and grounds as a smoke-free zone)

**Success Criteria:**

- School is a drug free zone
- Students are aware of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle
- Parents/Guardians and students and staff are satisfied with the effectiveness of the policy.

**Monitoring Procedures:**

- Principal, Deputy Principals, Year Heads, will review the policy annually following discussion with Pastoral Care Tutors.
- Time will be given to review policy at one staff meeting every year.
- Principal will report to the Board of Management once a year.

**Review Procedures:**

- The Policy will be reviewed every 3 years by a group appointed by the principal.
- This group will seek the views and experiences of staff, students and parents/guardians.
- Management of critical incidents over previous 3 years will be reviewed, to ascertain best practice.

**Appendix 1:****Roles and Responsibilities in developing and implementing this policy.****Role of the Board of Management**

To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed.

To provide for appropriate Staff Development so that all staff are provided with up-to-date factual information about the signs and symptoms of drugs use and about drugs and their effects. To support staff in the implementation of this policy. To decide on appeals by parents/guardians and or pupils with respect to decisions made by the principal.

To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

**Role of Principal/Deputy Principals**

To formulate draft policy in consultation with the teaching staff, students, parents/guardians, Board and Trustees to monitor its implementation and to ensure that it is reviewed by the review date.

To investigate all referrals or cause to have them investigated in accordance with this policy and the school's Disciplinary Policy.

To liaise with parents/guardians and all outside agencies including the Gardai.

To implement the policy and to support other teaching staff in their implementation of the policy

To arrange appropriate Staff Development (see above under Board of Management).

To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

### **Role of Teaching Staff**

To advocate positive and healthy lifestyles and decisions.

To treat the threat of possible drug use as a serious threat to the welfare of pupils and the school community. To inform themselves regarding the signs and symptoms of drug use and about drugs and their effects. To be alert to disclosure by pupils regarding their own or others' involvement in drug possession or taking activity. To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.

To implement this policy

To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

### **Role of the Guidance Counsellors**

To offer advice and support to any student who may be involved in drugs misuse.

To advise their parents/guardians where further support and information may be found.

To offer counselling as appropriate.

To liaise with outside agencies concerning counselling and related support.

### **Role of Students**

To co-operate fully with the school in the implementation of the policy.

To bring any relevant information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.

### **Role of Parents/Guardians**

To support the policy and to co-operate fully with the school in its implementation.

To bring to the attention of the school authorities any concern or information they may have in relation to substance misuse.

To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

## **Appendix 2**

### **Drug or Solvent Misuse: Recognising the Signs**

**(Reproduced from MISUSE OF DRUGS: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS (DENI))**

The signs listed in Tables 1 and 2 may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing drugs. Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of drug or solvent misuse: many of them are a normal part of adolescence, but the presence of several signs together may point to a need for greater vigilance. Table 3 lists equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

**Table 1: Warning Signs in Individuals**

- Changes in attendance, and being unwilling to take part in school activities
- Decline in performance in school work
- Unusual outbreaks of temper, marked swings of mood, restlessness or instability
- Reports from Parents/Guardians that more time is being spent away from home, possibly with new friends or with friends in older age group.
- Excessive spending or borrowing of money
- Stealing money or goods
- No interest in physical appearance
- Sores or rashes especially on the mouth or nose
- Lack of appetite
- Heavy use of scents, colognes etc to disguise the smell of drugs
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils)

**Table 2: Warning Signs in Groups**

- Regular absence on certain days (e.g. the day young people receive state benefit)
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground or sports field)
- Being the subject of rumours about drug taking
- Talking to strangers on or near the premises
- Stealing which appears to be the work of several individuals rather than one person (e.g. perhaps to shoplift solvents)
- Use of drug takers' slang
- Exchanging money or other objects in unusual circumstances
- Associating briefly with one person who is much older and not normally part of the peer group.

**Table 3: Objects that may indicate Drug Misuse**

- Foil containers or cup shapes made from silver foil, perhaps discoloured by heat
- Metal containers/boxes
- Spoons discoloured by heat.
- Pill boxes
- Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrappers
- Small plastic or glass phials or bottles
- Twists of paper
- Straws
- Sugar lumps
- Syringes and needles (rare)
- Cigarette papers and lighters
- Spent matches
- Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse)
- Cardboard or other tubes (heroin –rare)
- Stamps, stickers, transfers or similar items
- Shredded cigarettes, home-rolled cigarettes and pipes (cannabis)
- Paper (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (heroin-rare).