

Substance Abuse Policy

1. Introduction

A drug can be identified as a chemical which causes changes in the way the human body functions either 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 and drugs which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent. It is generally accepted that alcohol and tobacco are the most widely abused drugs, however, substances such as Cannabis, Ecstasy, Magic Mushrooms and Solvents are increasingly becoming a problem in schools.

This school sees itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to increase control over and improve their health. We endeavour to promote the well being of students by:

1. Providing a safe and healthy environment.
2. Promoting positive health behaviours.
3. Increasing Knowledge about health.
4. Promoting the self esteem of students.
5. Working in partnership with the parents and students.

To this end, in response to the encroaching drug culture in our society we feel the need to implement a comprehensive policy in our school to address the problem of substance misuse.

The policy will focus on:

1. Strategies for prevention of substance misuse problems.
2. Procedures for dealing with drug incidences in the school.
3. Guidelines and information for teachers to improve their response to the problem of substance misuse.

2. Implementation Of the School Policy.

Once the school`s policy has been formulated, the Board of Management, The Headmaster, Deputy Principal, Year Heads, Selected Teacher and all the Staff will be given a copy of the Policy. Parents and Guardians will be given a copy of the policy on enrolment of their child in school. Enrolment will be on acceptance of this and other school policy documents by them.

The Headmaster will brief all staff members on the policy and training needs may be identified. Training may be carried out in conjunction with the Health Promotion Department of the North Eastern Health Board.

3. Prevention.

3.1 Education

It is accepted amongst professionals working within this field that education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is best carried out by teachers the pupils know, and within the overall context of a healthy living programme. This school implements a social, Personal and Health Education programme in Form 2 (First Year) and also in Transition Year (appendix 1). The class consists of a 40 minute period once a week. These classes ensure that

1. Students have clear information about the effects of various drugs, (Including Alcohol and Tobacco).
2. Students examine their attitudes to alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances in their lives and in the environment in which they live.
3. Students are equipped with the skills to make informed and healthy decisions about substance abuse.

In addition to this a speaker will address the whole school once a year on this topic of substance abuse.

3.2 Counselling

Substance misuse rarely occurs in a vacuum and where a pupil has been in difficulties because of their use of any drug, it is usually discovered they have been using it to help them cope with or avoid some other problem. By enabling the student to identify more positive sources of support when they need it, we can help prevent the inappropriate use of substances. This also assists them in developing more long term skills to cope with traumas or problems they encounter.

3.3 Parents

To keep parents informed, the school will hold a yearly information evening to help them deal with problem at home. These evenings may be addressed by the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer, the Home School Liaison Service, Local Youth Service, the Drug Outreach/Drug Counsellor from the North Eastern Health Board, or whoever is deemed appropriate by the school.

4. Smoking and Alcohol

1. The school is a smoke free area.
2. You must not bring alcohol or tobacco products onto the school premises.
3. Staff will not permit students to smoke or drink alcohol on school outings.
4. Visitors will comply with the smoking and drinks policy.
5. Pupils found smoking or drinking on the school premises will be reported to the Principal.
6. Smoking or drinking alcohol on school premises or elsewhere when wearing a school uniform or being otherwise clearly identified with the school is strictly forbidden.
7. Students breaking the rules on smoking and drinking alcohol will be dealt with in accordance with the school code of discipline.

5. Illicit Drugs and Solvents

School Policy

Students are prohibited from being in possession of, or using illicit drugs or solvents on the school premises.

Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardai contacted to dispose of them. Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time. An investigation by the Principal/Designated teacher will be made into the origin of illicit drugs found.

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/ Gardai will be sought.

The school management will expect parents to inform the Principal or Relevant school authority if they suspect their child of drug-taking.

Students suspected of taking drugs or solvents outside school will be monitored and every effort will be made to support them and ensure they get the counselling and help they need.

The procedure for dealing with behaviour which leads to suspicion of a substance misuse problem is outlined, step by step below. This is in accordance with the school code of discipline. Any incident of intoxication will be followed-up in this way.

Having observed the behaviours and concern and verified it with others the Principal/Designated teacher will meet with student. Concern will be expressed for the consequences of this behaviour and as much information as possible elicited from the student.

A meeting is then arranged with the parents informing them of the behaviour and of the school's concern. The parents will have the opportunity to voice their own worries and fears.

A referral will usually be made to the appropriate organisation or to a Drug counsellor, for a full assessment of the extent of the problem. Any further incident at school cancels this agreement and parents will be called in.

Where a student has been suspended in line with disciplinary procedure, the Principal may make it a condition that their return to the school will usually be subject to the student receiving external counselling or follow-up.

In the event of parents being unwilling to co-operate with this procedure the school will continue to monitor the behaviour. The relevant organisations will be contacted if the school`s concern warrants it. Parents will be informed before hand and given the opportunity to co-operate with the procedure.

The Principal reserve the right to expel the student where He/She considers it in the best interests of the school, following normal procedures.

6. Monitoring and Reviewing

The Royal School Cavan will monitor, reassess, and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the continuation of best practices.

Appendix 1

S.P.H.E

In form 2 students are introduced to the 3 different types of substance abuse.

1. Smoking.

Reasons people smoke
Effects of smoking on the body
What a cigarette contains
How to say "No"

Resources used

Healthy living programme NWHB
HPU- Leaflets
Work sheets
Smoking questionnaire.

2. Alcohol.

Understanding the term "alcohol abuse"
Effects of alcohol on our body.

Resources used

Healthy living programme NWHB
Work sheets & Discussion.

3. Drugs.

What is a drug?
Naming different illegal drugs
Effects of drug abuse.

Resources used

Distribution of Leaflets from NEHB
Project work , Video

In Transition year Substance abuse is developed further.

1. Smoking

Information sheet devised by the teacher on the history of smoking, passive smoking and trying to quit. Work sheets used from P.S.E.Social Effects of smoking.
Video and worksheet used on tobacco.

2 Alcohol

Alcohol abuse in relation to drink driving is highlighted. Posters from National Safety council are used. Students are informed about different strengths of alcoholic drinks.
Alcoholism and Alcohol related problems are outlined and discussed in class. MEAS – website reiterate the social abuse of alcohol.
"Face up" magazine is used, it contains articles which are photocopied, on why it is "uncool" to overindulge in alcohol and it`s side-effects from abuse,(Crime, Vandalism etc).
Video called "Driving-Know the score" is used –produced by the Cider industry council and the Garda Liaison programme.

2. Drug Abuse

Leaflets on Drug mis-use are used from the Health promotion Unit.
Students do project work on each different type of drug.

A speaker will be invited to address all Transition Year students on "Substance Abuse" during one of the allotted speaker times. This will be organised by the Transition year coordinator.