



Coláiste Cois Siúire

Substance Use Policy

Date: 25th April 2007

Considered by staff: 7.9.06

Considered by Parent's Association: 15.2.07

Considered by Management Sub-Committee: 10.5.07

Submitted to VEC : _____

Adopted: _____

Introduction

This policy is formulated in the context of:

- a) The Education Act 1998 which requires schools to promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them
- b) The National Drugs Strategy, 'Building on Experience' is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place
- c) Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2004
- d) Report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs (November 2001)
- e) The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report

Definition of School

For the purpose of this policy the school is defined to include *all the area* within the school boundary

Scope

This document is drawn up to inform students, teachers, other employees, parents and users of school premises/facilities of the school's substance use policy

The policy applies

- During normal school opening hours, including scheduled breaks.
- On occasions when the school is open outside of these times, e.g. on nights when adult night classes are in operation.
- To students, staff and supervisors involved in school related activities, including trips outside of the school, for the duration of the time these activities are taking place

A substance in this policy is defined as any chemical which alters

- How the body works or
- How a person, having taken the substance, behaves or feels

Rationale

Coláiste Cois Siúire, in recognising it's duty of care to the whole school community, has drafted this policy. The policy covers the use by anybody within the school grounds of both legal and illegal substances such as:

- Legal substances, e.g. tobacco, alcohol, solvents, prescription and over the counter drugs
- Illegal substances including, but not restricted to, marijuana, cocaine, L.S.D., methadone, heroin, ecstasy, narcotics, hallucinogens, amphetamines

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the school's substance abuse policy include:

- (i) To create a community which promotes good relationships and mutual respect and which encourages personal development
- (ii) To develop the school's role within the wider community and to prepare young people for a constructive role in society

This policy contributes to the furtherance of these aims and includes the following, more specific aims and objectives:

- (i) To enable pupils to make healthy and informed choices
- (ii) To provide a clear framework for all staff for dealing with incidents of substance use in school

Curriculum Objectives

- To provide opportunities for pupils to acquire knowledge and understanding about drug use and misuse and the effects of solvents, alcohol, tobacco and other drugs on body functions
- To understand the importance of feeling positive about oneself and others, and of being able to express feelings confidently
- To develop responsible attitudes towards the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs
- To develop decision-making skills and knowledge about factors which influence the process of making decisions, including choosing between alternatives and considering long and short-term consequences of decisions for oneself and others

- To increase pupils' understanding of situations in which drugs may be used, both legally and illegally, and to develop skills for remaining in control in such situations
- To help pupils appreciate ways in which they can control aspects of their behaviour and resist peer pressure
- To make pupils aware of the law relating to the use of drugs and the serious consequences which may follow the use of illegal drugs
- To provide knowledge about how to use the support agencies

Procedural Objectives

- To set out clear procedures to be followed by staff who suspect that drug use is taking place or that substances are being brought onto school premises
- To provide an agreed framework for liaison with outside agencies including the Gardaí and Press
- To set out a clear statement of the disciplinary measures which will be applied to drug related incidents
- To set out the support and counselling which will be part of the response to drugs related offences in school
- To ensure that all members of the school community understand the very serious view which the school takes on all instances of possession, use or supply of illegal drugs
- To ensure that all staff are aware of the agreed procedures
- To ensure that all staff involved in specific drugs education have appropriate training

This policy has the theme that individuals who have a high level of self-esteem and who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to make thoughtful decisions about their behaviour will be best equipped to take their place in the adult world.

Coláiste Cois Siúire's Stance on Substance Misuse

- The school does not condone the misuse of drugs, solvents or alcohol by members of the school, or the supply of these substances
- The school is committed to the health and safety of all it's members
- The school will seek to educate pupils about the dangers connected with the misuse of substances
- The school recognises that it has a duty to inform and educate young people on the consequences of drug use and will take a proactive stance on the matter, believing that such Health Education is a vital element of the Personal and Social Education of every pupil. This will be age appropriate and sensitive
- Fundamental to our school's values and practice is the principle of sharing the responsibility for education of young people with parents, by keeping them informed of known involvement by a pupil with illegal substances. Co-operation and communication between parents, students and school is essential for the effective implementation of this policy
- Whilst it is noted that the small number of young people who use substances appears to be rising, it is important to recognise that the majority of young people choose not to do so. We need to continue to support the differing needs of young people on this issue

The Roles of the Principal and Board of Management

The Principal takes overall responsibility for the policy and it's implementation, for liaison with the Board of Management, parents, the VEC and appropriate outside agencies. The Health Education Co-ordinator will have oversight of the curriculum aspects of the policy.

The Role of School Staff

Staff in whom pupils confide need to consider their responsibilities carefully. They may need to warn pupils that certain information cannot be kept secret by a teacher (e.g. details of a pupil who may be supplying drugs to other pupils). However, staff will want to be sensitive to the needs of individuals to speak and gain advice from adults they trust. In so doing, students may confess to some drugs involvement. It is necessary to inform management of all incidents. In all cases where drug misuse is known to have occurred on the school premises (or on a school trip) the facts must be reported to the Principal. Detailed procedures are set out below.

If a student is involved in the use of drugs it will be detailed on their school record. The school's duty of care to its students is paramount.

The School's Response to Drugs Related Incidents

Cases involving substance misuse or supply on the premises are considered to be very serious infringements of school regulations. In all such cases the Principal will discuss the matter with the Chair of the Board of Management. The Board of Management will have a range of sanctions available to it, which could include permanent exclusion from the school. Unless there are exceptional circumstances parents will be informed in all cases where their child is involved in an incident of substance use. Pupils will be made aware that the use of drugs on the premises will lead to an immediate suspension and could lead to permanent exclusion. Each case will be considered on an individual basis. Where a student has been involved in a drugs incident, the parent, in a spirit of co-operation and rehabilitation, will be asked to agree to furnish medical evidence that their child is drugs free and has had access to the relevant agency for help.

Pupils involved in serious drugs related incidents may, following a period of suspension, be readmitted to the school subject to the following provision:

That they agree to meet with an appropriate person from a specialist agency to discuss the support available to persons involved with drug misuse.

Although each incident will be considered individually, and it is recognised that a variety of responses will be required to deal with different incidents, there are certain minimum requirements related to specific situations, which may occur. If a student is found in the possession of an illegal substance, the school will have no alternative but to contact the Gardaí and report the incident to them. The school will also keep a record of the incident on the student's file.

Prescribed Medication

Students who are taking prescribed medication must inform the school authorities if they need to take this medication during school hours. School authorities will not administer prescribed and/or un-prescribed medication to students.

A student who has to use an inhaler whilst at school should have the inhaler clearly labelled with his/her name.

Response to Specific Incidents

No pupil may smoke on school premises, on journeys to and from school or on school trips. If a pupil is known to be smoking, this should be reported to the Class Teacher who will inform the parents and place a note on the pupil's record. In each of the following cases the incident is to be reported in the first instance to the Principal or his/her representative, who will take the required action.

If any pupil is found drunk on the school premises, the parents will be informed immediately and asked to remove the pupil, having firstly ensured the safety of the pupil.

Alcohol and cigarettes found on school premises will be confiscated. The parents will be informed and given the opportunity to redeem such items.

If any pupil is found intoxicated through solvent use, urgent medical attention should be given (via a hospital) and the solvent will be confiscated.

Illegal drugs found on school premises will be confiscated and immediately handed over to Gardaí.

A member of staff, who suspects in his/her best judgement that a pupil may be in possession of an illegal substance, may ask the pupil to empty his/her pockets or bag. If the pupil refuses the matter should immediately be referred to a senior member of staff who will repeat the request. In the event of another refusal, the parents should be contacted to obtain their permission. Where there is good reason for pursuing this course of action, the Gardaí may be called.

If any pupil or any other person is found supplying or offering to supply drugs, tobacco or alcohol, the Principal must be informed immediately. He/She will inform the Gardaí, the VEC, the Chair of the Board of Management and if relevant, the parents.

Any equipment involved in drug use found on the school premises will be disposed of with due regard to Health & Safety regulations. Needles and syringes, which present a considerable health hazard, must be handled with extreme care and stored in a suitable container until disposed of. Any member of staff involved in dealing with drugs related incidents must keep detailed written records.

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Use

- Very often there are no clear signs attached to irregular experimental drug use. It is usually when drug use becomes problematic for the young person that some of the symptoms may manifest themselves
- The signs and symptoms must not replace careful observation, listening to and talking with the young person

- Many of the signs and symptoms listed are normal aspects of growing up, particularly mood swings, being distant, secretive, and changes in appearance

Changes in behaviours, which may indicate drug use:

- Erratic mood swings
- Lying and secretive behaviour
- Changes in appearance. In serious cases, the person may begin to look unwell, mixed with periods of more energetic behaviour
- Changes in eating habits. Regular use of some drugs can lead to a loss of appetite
- Gradual loss of interest in school, hobbies and friends
- Changes in friendship patterns. If a young child is misusing drugs, he/she will tend to mix with older children and drop former friends, but not if their peers are also involved
- Involvement in stealing and ‘bartering’ personal and family possessions for money
- Possessing unusual items and apparatus. Apart from tablets, powders, aerosols, etc. which may be found, some forms of drug taking require equipment, e.g. pieces of foil, syringes, straws, plastic bags, cigarette papers, “Wraps” square folds of paper
- Unusual smells around the child, or on his/her clothing, e.g. smells of solvents and glues, the characteristic smell of cannabis

Drugs Education Programme

The programme for drugs related education is partially cross-curricular but is drawn together by work in the Social, Personal and Health Education class

The following subject areas are identified as being central to implementation of this policy

- Social, Personal and Health Education
- Civic, Social and Political Education
- English and other languages
- The Sciences

- Home Economics
- Religious Education

Links with the parents and the wider community

- Coláiste Cois Siúire will work in partnership with students, parents, Health Boards, Gardaí etc.in dealing with the issue of substance misuse
- Coláiste Cois Siúire expects that parents will co-operate fully with the school in any instances where this co-operation is required
- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the helping agencies are available in the school. These are brought to the pupils' attention at appropriate times during the Health Education programme

This Policy has had input from Students, Parents Association, Staff and Management. It will be evaluated in the light of experience each year.