

St. Fergal's National School

Substance Use Policy



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Substance Use Policy**

This policy addresses the education of children in relation to alcohol, tobacco, solvents and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

A drug can be defined as a chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels.

Rationale

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. Our school needs to reflect on how we might provide for the needs of our pupils and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues. The central objective of our policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

St. Fergal's N.S. acknowledges that it has an important role to play in drugs education particularly in terms of prevention. We believe that the entire school community needs to work together and that cooperation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of this policy. This policy links in with other policies in our school which include our Child Protection Policy, Health and Safety Policy, Code of Behaviour Policy and Anti-Bullying Policy.

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, parents/guardians, Board of Management (B.O.M.), all school personnel, members of the community using the school building and school visitors. It applies during school time, including breaks and to all school related activities, for example, school tours etc.

School Ethos

The school believes that the personal and social development of each member of the school community is important. Good relationships are fostered, people feel valued and respected and there is genuine tolerance, fairness and support for those in difficulty.

As a health promoting school we have an important role in enabling students to increase control over and improve their health.

The wellbeing of students is enhanced by:

- providing a safe and healthy environment
- promoting positive attitude towards health
- increasing knowledge about health
- actively promoting self-esteem and self-awareness
- working in partnership with the parents/guardians and pupils

In response to the emerging drug culture in our society we feel the need to implement a policy to address the problem of substance use should it arise.

The Aims of this Policy are:

- To ensure that the school complies with legislative requirements and principles of good practice
- To equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way
- To protect the rights of students and staff by providing a safe and healthy environment
- To foster in students a sense of responsibility for their own health and the health of others
- To promote skills and attitudes that enable students to cope with the dangers of drugs in society and minimise these dangers.
- To provide outlets for creativity and sport through in-school and extra-curricular activities
- To educate students and parents about the dangers of substance abuse, smoking and alcohol
- To provide a comprehensive programme of prevention education for all pupils as well as information on drugs and their dangers through;
 1. Curricular programmes SPHE /Walk Tall Programmes
 2. Modular Programmes – Bray Drug Awareness Programme / The Garda Schools Programme
 3. Information Leaflets
 4. Posters
 5. No Smoking Signs
 6. Projects
 7. Staff Development on the area of health promotion

This document should read with the Code of Behaviour / Anti-Bullying Policy of the school.

Education about the use of substances, prescription and over the counter drugs, alcohol, tobacco, solvents is best carried out by teachers through the inclusion of SPHE in the curriculum. Parents also have a pivotal role to play in this regard.

Content of the Policy:

1. Education concerning substance use.
2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents.
3. Provision for training and staff development.

1. Education Concerning Substance Use

Substance misuse prevention education will be taught throughout the school in the overall context of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. The core programme for substance misuse prevention education will be the Walk Tall Programme. It will be supported by the Stay Safe, RSE and Grow In Love programmes.

The Walk Tall Programme hopes to give children the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices. Social, Personal and Health Education is time-tabled into the curriculum and taught for 30 minutes per week by the class teacher. The methodologies used include discussion, art work, co-operative games, circle work, stories, poems, songs and rhymes, role play and mime, visualisations, group work, project work, brainstorming and movement.

Parents are informed that substance misuse prevention education is taught throughout the school as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme and are notified when outside agencies deliver programmes or presentations to support substance misuse prevention education.

Parents of Junior Infants receive a Welcome Pack which includes information on all aspects of SPHE.

Best Practice Guidelines:

- Class teacher has the primary role in the delivery of substance misuse prevention education in the school setting
- Substance misuse prevention education must be delivered in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
- Scare tactics are ineffective
- People's drug use must not be normalised
- Information must be age, developmentally, culturally and environmentally appropriate
- An active learning approach is recommended
- Consistent implementation is crucial to effectiveness.
- Supplementary education must compliment and not replace or duplicate the school curriculum.
- The use of outside visitor/speaker (nurse, garda) to enhance the work done in class may be considered in context of the full SPHE programme and should always be undertaken in the presence of the teacher
- The teacher must be present and actively involved at all times.
- Expectations of school based programmes need to be realistic.
- The Bray Drug Forum delivers The Drug Awareness Programme to the 6th classes every year. This is a six week programme with a refresher course at the end of 6th class.

2. Management of Substance Related Incidents

Legally held substances include:

- alcohol and tobacco
- over the-counter medicines e.g. Paracetamol, cough sweets, etc.
- prescribed drugs e.g. Antibiotics, inhalers, etc.
- volatile substances such as glues, correction fluids/thinners, lighter fuel, aerosols and petrol's.

Note: If a pupil needs to take medication in school (e.g. Inhaler, allergy injection etc.), please see our policy on the Administration of Medicines for advice

Procedures to be followed on the misuse of substances may include some or all of the following:

- Assess the situation.
- Seek medical help if necessary.
- Any adult displaying signs of substance abuse will be asked to leave the premises.
- The following should be informed:
 - Principal/Deputy Principal
 - Parents (Parents should be informed sensitively and support offered to them)
 - Relevant Agencies e.g. counsellors, Juvenile Liaison Officer, Community Guard
- All incidents will be recorded and retained by the Principal and remain confidential.(The Report for recording Incidents involving Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug use.)
- The Principal/ Deputy Principal will handle all media enquiries .They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.
- If a parent/student refuses to accept sanction the matter will be referred to the Board of Management
- It is mandatory to contact Gardai if an illegal substance is found on the premises.
- Sanctions (See Code of Behaviour).
- Report (Refer to Child Protection Guidelines)

A record should be kept of any incident which occurs. The DLP or the DDLP will keep the record in a Special Incident Book.

Confidentiality:

- People will be informed on a 'need to know' basis. Parents/guardians will be involved unless reporting would pose a threat to the child. In the case of illegal drugs the Gardai will be informed by the Principal

In the case of suspected drug taking by a pupil outside school hours, the DLP will be informed immediately. Those who report incidents to the school will be encouraged to contact the Gardai to pass on this information. Parents will be informed.

Follow-Up Procedures:

Guidance and support will be given to pupils and parents on the availability of specialist advice from relevant support agencies.

A combined pastoral/disciplinary approach will be taken. Each incident will be dealt with on its own merits. Repeated incidents will be dealt with in a different manner.

Management of tobacco, alcohol and drug related incidents

Smoking – School Policy

- Visitors, staff and parents will comply with the national non-smoking policy
- Pupils are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on school premises or in any other place during school related activities. Pupils found in possession of tobacco products on school premises will be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal and his/her parents will be informed
- Adults who have in their possession tobacco products for their **own** use, must keep them in their possession at all times and out of sight and reach of children.
- A record should be kept of any incident which occurs. The DLP or the DDLP will keep the record in a Special Incident Book.

Alcohol – School Policy

The school is an alcohol free zone

- Pupils and staff are not allowed to bring alcohol into the school. Pupils are not allowed to consume alcohol on the school premises or during any school activities.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, she/he will immediately inform the DLP or DDLP and consult on what action should be taken. Where a pupil comes into school under the influence of alcohol, their parents /guardians will be notified. In such an instance, our Child Protection Policy will be consulted
- In the case where the child is under the influence of alcohol and where the parent/guardian is unable or unwilling to remove the child /children or where there is a risk to the child / children, the local doctor or medical services will be contacted.
- If a staff member comes to school under the influence of alcohol, he/she will be referred to the DLP / DDLP immediately who will act in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy. Section 24 of the Education Act will be consulted accordingly. In the event of repeated

occurrences, the DLP / DDLP will bring the above to the attention of The Board Of Management

- If an adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol when coming to collect a child, it must be reported to the DLP / DDLP immediately. The child's safety is paramount. The Child Protection policy will be consulted accordingly.
- If alcohol is required for an adult only school function, permission shall be sought from the B.O.M.

Illegal Drug Use – School Policy

- Students, staff, parents and visitors are forbidden from being in possession of or using illegal drugs or solvents in the school premises.
- Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time.
- In the case of suspected or actual possession or use of illegal drugs on the school premises or on a school related activity, every effort will be made to locate the offending substance and/or associated paraphernalia and remove same to locked secure location, subject to normal safeguards.
- The following parties will be informed immediately:
 - Chairperson of The Board of Management
 - Gardai
 - Parents/Guardians will be contacted and requested to present themselves at the school or location of the school related activity where they will be informed of the incident.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illegal drugs or solvents, he/she will immediately inform the Principal or Deputy Principal and consult on what action should be taken. Parents will be notified. The school's Child Protection Policy will be consulted.
- In the case where a child is under the influence of drugs and where the parent/ guardian is unwilling to remove the child/children in question, the local doctor or medical services will be contacted.
- If a staff member appears to be under the influence of a substance, it will be reported to the Principal who will act in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy. Section 24 of the Education Act will be consulted accordingly.
- If an adult appears to be under the influence of a substance when coming to collect a child, it must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal immediately. The child's safety is paramount. The Child Protection policy will be consulted accordingly.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out. Parents/Guardians of any pupil involved will be informed. The advice and the assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer who is attached to Bray Garda station will be sought.
- The Board of Management will expect parents/guardians to inform the Principal or class teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking.
- A record should be kept of any incident which occurs.

Administration of Medicines

- Specific school policy exists and medicines will be administered in accordance with same.
- Trained First -Aid Personnel are on hand.
- Storage- Substances which may be misused will be securely stored in line with Health and Safety Statement

Other Considerations

- Staff should immediately report any tobacco, alcohol and drug related incidents and/or any concerns regarding substance misuse to the DLP / DDLP.

3. Provision For Training and Staff Development

- An effective policy needs to be supported by an ongoing commitment from the Board of Management and School Trustees to training and staff development.
At present primary schools are assisted in this area by the Professional Development service for Teachers (PDST).
The HSE also provide a wide range of support and services for schools.
Relevant courses by the Department of Education and Science, will be offered to staff, where and when available.
First Aid Training will be made available to staff on a regular basis.
- Procedures are adopted in the school in relation to administration of medicines in the school and staff are informed of the same – see Health and Safety Policy
- Staff members have been made sufficiently aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse.
- New staff in particular, will be briefed on the Substance Use Policy of the school

Parental Involvement

All parents have access to this policy document on our website and other related policies including Health and Safety, Child Protection, Administration of Medicines, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying. A hard copy of this policy is available in the Office.

Parents are encouraged to support the school's efforts to educate pupils in substance misuse prevention and to manage substance use incidents.

Success Criteria

Substance Misuse Prevention is a complex and demanding task ,which needs to be approached in the context of increasing drug use among young people. No one group holds the key to prevention rather a co-operative approach is required. The importance of schools in the context of an overall prevention strategy is acknowledged in the development of school-based programmes such as Walk Tall. The success of any programme will be influenced greatly by what is happening both inside and outside school to support young people to make healthy choices.

- Feedback from all parties:
- Effectiveness of policy in dealing with incidents

Roles and Responsibilities

The School wishes to make clear that the primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with parents/guardians.

The entire school staff are responsible for implementation of this policy

- **Principal and Deputy Principal:**

- o Have overall responsibility or ensuring policy is followed
- o Keep records of incidents
- o Deal appropriately with each individual case
- o Inform relevant persons and agencies
- o Follow up to monitor outcomes
- **Teachers:**
 - o Awareness of school policy on Substance Use
 - o Teaching of S.P.H.E. Programme
 - o Report to the Principal incidents of substance abuse which come to their attention
 - o Provide the relevant age appropriate information and materials as per curriculum
 - o Act in a supportive capacity as necessary
 - o Ancillary Staff
 - o Report incidents to Principal/Deputy Principal
- **Parents/Student**
 - o The school has role of informing parents regarding the dangers and signs of substance abuse.
 - o Parents/Students will be made aware of the specifics of the school policy and will be expected to support the school's goals to educate pupils in substance misuse prevention
 - o The school will support the parents in ensuring the child gets the relevant help
 - o Parents Association along with the HSCL will organise talks for parents in relation to substance use/abuse
- **Board of Management**
 - o The Board of Management are responsible for supporting implementation of the policy through staff training and resource provision.

Review

- The Principal has the overall responsibility for implementing the policy
- The Principal will ensure that the policy is updated and its effectiveness monitored
- The policy will be reviewed in two years or earlier in the light of any new legislation or if an incident requires so.

This policy was adopted by the B.O.M on: 03/10/2022

Signed: Joe Behan
Chairperson B.O.M.

Date: 03/10/2022

Signed: Tom Sargent
Principal

Date: 03/10/2022

Date of next review: _____