

St. Mary's & St. Gerard's N.S.

Substance Use Policy



Scope of Policy

This policy applies to students, teachers, auxiliary staff members, users of the school premises, visitors, i.e. every person who enters the building and/or grounds. It is applicable during school-time – including breaks and to ALL school related activities. It applies to the school building and grounds and to any area where a school related activity takes place, e.g. school tours, sports events, etc.

Aims of Policy

St. Mary's and St. Gerard's Substance Use policy aims to:

- Prevent substance misuse.
- Protect our pupils from the harmful effects of substance misuse and to try to prevent our pupils from using tobacco, alcohol, solvents and illegal drugs.
- Develop in our pupils' better self-esteem, through providing a positive school climate and atmosphere.
- Give our pupils age appropriate information via educational programmes.

Relationship to our school's Mission, Vision and Aims

This policy reflects the school's mission, vision and aims as:

- It contributes to a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of all pupils are identified and addressed.
- It addresses the self-esteem of everyone in the school community.
- It facilitates the understanding and learning of respect for oneself, for others and for property.

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. As a school community we need to reflect upon how we might provide for the needs of

our student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The National Drugs Strategy (interim), 2009-2016 is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- Action 21 of the National Drugs Strategy (interim), 2009-2016 mandates the Department of Education and Skills to monitor the implementation of substance use policies in schools throughout the whole school evaluation process as operated by the Inspectorate. It is also mandated to ensure that best practice is disseminated to all schools.
- The Social Personal and Health Education curriculum, of which substance misuse prevention education is an integral part, is a mandatory subject on the primary curriculum and must be taught to all primary pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth Class (DES Circular 022/2010).
- The 2003 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (E.S.P.A.D.) report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among 16 year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 34 E.S.P.A.D. countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug misuse in Ireland, with girls ranking higher than boys in terms of regular alcohol use. In terms of drug use in Ireland, there was a notable increase in lifetime use of any illicit drug between 1999 (32%) and 2003 (40%), up eight per cent.

Definition of a Drug

A drug is any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally. This description includes many substances we normally think of as drugs as well as substances we might not usually consider to be drugs such as coffee, tea, alcohol, solvents and tobacco (Corrigan, 2003 cited in Best Practice Guidelines in Substance Misuse Prevention Education, 2010).

Goals/Objectives

- To provide a comprehensive programme of prevention education for all pupils in substance misuse in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- To develop a shared understanding of the term 'drugs'.
- To influence our students towards healthier activities and away from the need to use drugs.
- To help develop a sensible attitude to drugs.
- To help our students to develop personal strengths and values that can reduce the likelihood that they will become involved in drugs.
- To equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

- To manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner.
- To support parents and pupils and staff in understanding and addressing substance misuse.
- To minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within schools/communities.
- Through our S.P.H.E. programme, we seek to develop a framework for education concerning substance use in terms of providing information, helping the students develop a common sense approach to alcohol, drugs and everyday substances that can be abused.

Policy Content 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. The Walk Tall Programme hopes to give students the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices. It will be supported by the Stay Safe, RSE, Grow in Love and Bí Folláin programmes.

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.

The use of outside visitors/speakers (nurse, garda, social worker) 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 a teacher (Circular 0022/2010).

The school has established an excellent rapport with the local Community Garda and invite representatives from the local Garda station to speak with senior pupils.

Best Practice Guidelines

- The 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).
- 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 teacher must be present and actively involved at all times.
- Expectations of school based programmes need to be realistic.

2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents

Smoking

- Visitors, staff and parents will comply with the national non-smoking policy.
- 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 principal or the deputy principal will keep the record in a Special Incident Book.

Alcohol

- Pupils are not allowed to bring alcohol into the school or 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 Principal or Deputy Principal, and consult on what action should be taken. Parents will be notified. In such an instance, our Child Protection Policy will be consulted.
- If a staff member appears to be under the influence of alcohol, it will be reported to the Principal who will act in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy.
- If an adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol when coming to collect a student, it must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The student'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.
- If alcohol is to be a prize in school raffles, it must be delivered to and collected from the school by an adult.

Illicit drugs and solvents

- It is forbidden for any person to be in possession of or to use illicit drugs or solvents in the school or on the school grounds.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, she/he will inform the Principal/Deputy Principal and consult on what action should be taken. Parents will be notified. In such an instance, our Child Protection Policy will be consulted.
- If a staff member appears to be under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, it will be reported to the principal who will act in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy.
- If an adult appears to be under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents when coming to collect a child, it must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The child's safety is paramount. The Child Protection policy will be consulted accordingly.
- In the event of media interest in relation to a 'drug related incident', the matter will be referred to the Board of Management and the Chairperson will issue a prepared statement to the media.

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.

Note: If a pupil needs to take medication in school (e.g. Inhaler, allergy injection etc.) the principal must be informed in writing. 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)

1. Assess the situation.
2. Seek medical help if necessary.
3. Any adult displaying signs of substance abuse will be asked to leave the premises.
4. Contact principal.
5. Contact Parents.
6. All incidents involving Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug misuse will be recorded.
7. Referral to outside agency.
8. Contact Gardaí. It is mandatory to contact Gardaí if an illegal substance is found on the premises.

9. Sanctions (See Code of Behaviour).
10. Report (Refer to Child Protection Guidelines)

A record should be kept of any incident which occurs. The principal or the deputy principal will keep the record.

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 Gardaí will be informed by the principal.

In the case of misuse of illegally held substances, by a pupil steps 1-5 above will be followed PLUS:

1. Illicit drugs must be confiscated and locked away.
2. Principal and/or teacher will consult with the relevant support agencies and authorities e.g. Counsellors, Juvenile Liaison Officer, Community Garda.

In the case of suspected drug taking by a pupil outside school hours, the D.L.P. will be informed immediately. Those who report incidents to the school will be encouraged to contact the Gardaí 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.

At local level the following support agencies are available to which students involved in substance misuse might be referred:

Narcotics Anonymous Ireland

Tusla

Drug and Alcohol Information and Support

HSE Drug and Alcohol helpline **1800 459 459**

Community Gardaí

3. Provision for training and staff development

In-service training for staff is assisted by support from the PDST (*Professional Development Service for Teachers*), HSE, Gardaí and other agencies.

S.P.H.E. Curriculum

S.P.H.E. Teacher Guidelines

Walk Tall

R.S.E. Toolkit

Stay Safe

Grow in Love

Bí Folláin

Mid-Western Health Board

Roles and Responsibilities

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

Role of Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and is implemented and 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 appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Principal/Deputy Principal

- To formulate draft policy in consultation with the teaching staff, parents and Board of Management
- To monitor its implementation and to ensure that it is reviewed by the review date.
- To investigate all referrals in accordance with this policy.
- To liaise with parents and other outside agencies including the Gardaí.
- To implement this policy and to support other teaching staff in its implementation.
- To arrange appropriate staff development
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability (see above under B.O.M.).

Role of Teaching Staff

- To advocate positive healthy lifestyle 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 any disclosure by pupils regarding their own or others involvement in drug taking activity.
- To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the Principal
- To implement this policy.
- To appraise this policy (see above as in role of Principal)

Role of Parents

- To educate their children about substance abuse (age appropriate).
- To support this policy and to co-operate fully with the school in its implementation.
- To bring to the attention of the school authorities any conditions their child/children may suffer from which may require specific medication.
- Parents should advise the school if they suspect that their own child may be involved in substance misuse.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability (see above roles).

Success Criteria

- The students of St. Mary's & St. Gerard's N.S. will have the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices.
- Tobacco, alcohol and/or drug related incidents will be dealt with effectively and reasonable suspicions are reported and acted upon.
- The success of any programme will be influenced by what is happening both inside and outside school to support our students make healthy lifestyle choices.

Monitoring Procedures

This requires vigilance on the part of everybody, teachers, parents, students, other staff or visitors to the school. Monitoring also requires that any concerns or reasonable suspicions be reported immediately to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Review Procedures

This policy will be reviewed by Staff, Board of Management and Parents Representatives two years after its adoption and every second year after that date.

Timeframe

Every two years or as necessary (with literature updated) e.g. should an incident occur in the meantime.

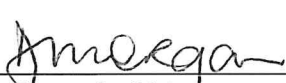
Ratification of Policy

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

This policy has been made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association.

A copy of this policy will be made available to the Department and the patron if requested.

This policy and its implementation will be reviewed by the Board of Management once every two years. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parents' Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the patron and the Department.

Signed:  Signed:  (Chairperson
of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: 14/5/24

Date: 14/5/2024

