

St. Paul's S.N.S.



Substance Use / Abuse Policy

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The Board of Management of St. Paul's S.N.S. has adopted this policy on 17/12/24 following consultation with all staff members.

Introduction

The central objective of St. Paul's S.N.S. substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every student in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Our policy seeks to address both education concerning alcohol, nicotine and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances in our school.

Our policy represents an integrated community-based response. It was developed through existing consultation structures within the school and was built on existing school policy, e.g. Code of Behaviour, anti-bullying, RSE. The school's substance use policy covers alcohol, nicotine and drugs.

Context

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, nicotine and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their 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 is Government policy and requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- After consultation with parents, activists in the campaign against drug abuse, (members of the Pioneer Association, teachers, Gardaí, local drugs task force), the government developed the following understanding of the term "drugs."

"A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels."

Scope

This policy applies to students, teachers, auxiliary staff members, users of the school premises, visitors i.e. every person who enters the building. 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. sports matches, School Tour etc.

Aims

This policy aims to:

- Provide a comprehensive programme of prevention education for all pupils in substance misuse in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in the Primary School.
- 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.

Content of the Policy:

1. Education concerning substance use.
2. Management of alcohol, nicotine 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.

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

2. Management of alcohol, nicotine and drug related incidents.

1. Legally held substances include:

- alcohol and tobacco / nicotine products
- over the-counter medicines e.g. Paracetamol, lozenges, 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 Board of Management must be informed. Please see our policy on the Administration of Medicines for advice.

2. 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.
- Contact Principal.

- Contact Parents.
- All incidents will be recorded on the Report for recording Incidents involving Alcohol, Nicotine and Drug use.
- Referral to outside agency.
- It is mandatory to contact Gardaí 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.

3. 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 follow steps 1-5 above PLUS:

- Illicit drugs must be confiscated and locked away
- Principal 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.

4. 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.

Smoking / Vaping - School Policy

- Visitors, staff and parents will comply with the national non-smoking policy
- Pupils found in possession of tobacco / nicotine 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 / nicotine 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

- 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, they 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. Section 24 of the Education Act will be consulted accordingly.
- If an adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol 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.
- If alcohol is required for an adult only school function, permission shall be sought from the B.O.M. *(An exception to this is when donations of alcohol are made by parents for the annual Parent's Association Raffle. These should be stored securely in the HSCL Office.)*
- Teachers who wish to exchange gifts containing alcohol e.g. at Christmas, can do so discreetly in the car park before / after school.

3. Provision for training and staff development.

- An effective policy needs to be supported by an ongoing commitment from the Board of Management to training and staff development.
- All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training.
- Relevant courses, offered by the Department of Education and Science, will be offered to staff.
- First Aid Training will be made available to staff.

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

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

Roles and Responsibilities

- The entire school staff is responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- Parents are responsible for supporting the school's goals to educate pupils in substance misuse prevention.
- The Board of Management are responsible for supporting implementation of the policy through staff training and resource provision.

Adoption by the Board

This policy has been reviewed and updated by the staff of our school and will be available on the school website. The Board of Management reserves the right to amend this policy as needs arise.

Reviewed by staff on: 10/12/24

Signed: A. Cully
(Principal)

Date: 17/12/24

Signed: Rev John Cullen
(Chairperson of Board of Management)

Date: 17/12/24

