



Substance Use Policy

Scope

This policy applies to all users of the school buildings and grounds. In this policy, our understanding of 'drugs' is 'A drug is any substance or chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels'.

The Substance Use Policy is applicable to all school related activities and any exceptions to be discussed with the Principal and/or Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Relationship of School's Mission/Vision/Aims

The characteristic spirit of the school (*school ethos*) has been developed and agreed with the partners in education. The substance use policy reflects the school ethos in that it is dedicated to the care of the whole school community and it aims to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

Rationale

Why is the policy necessary?

- 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. 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 'Building of Experience' is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- The recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled 'Drug use prevention' (*November 2001*) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.
- The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (*ESPAD*) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.

For the population as a whole, alcohol consumption per capita in Ireland has increased by 41% in the period 1989 to 1999, while the other EU Member States showed either a decrease or a modest increase. Ireland now has the second highest per capita consumption of alcohol in the EU.

Goals/Objectives

The substance use policy of Muire gan Smál is intended to highlight the clear procedures the staff of the school will follow in the event of a drug related incident and that the School Community will be better informed with regard to Substance Use in all its guises.

Policy Content

The policy content is divided into three sections:

Education Concerning Substance Use

Education concerning substance use in Muire gan Smál will be provided (*within the broad context of the subject of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE)*) by following our two-year plan for SPHE as outlined on our planning grid.

Considerations which inform the selection of content and methodologies include adherence to our planning grid for SPHE in which we follow the same Strand Units in the same two month period to ensure a thematic approach throughout the school. Approaches to co-ordinate, involve teachers and allocate time include adherence to the same strand units in the same two month period.

Active learning strategies are advocated in the SPHE curriculum and will inform our selection of methodology. Our work will be reinforced by project work and the possibility of talks from local Gardaí and Public Health Nurses as long as the content of their talk is in keeping with the school curriculum on the topic.

The use of an outside visitor/speaker to enhance the work done in the class should always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and should be undertaken in the presence of a teacher.

Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Related Incidents

Young people are most at risk in relation to substance use in Muire gan Smál in an array of food and drink consumed in certain instances, use of glues and solvents, interaction with second level students at community sports and entertainment events.

Incidents related to:

(a) Alcohol, (b) tobacco (c) drug use are addressed in the school as follows:

Alcohol

The school is an alcohol free zone and pupils are not allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school related activities as per the scope of this Substance Use policy.

If any member of staff thinks that a student is under the influence of alcohol, the Principal will be informed and action will then be decided.

In general, if a student comes to school in an intoxicated manner or becomes intoxicated in school, they will be withdrawn from the class and parents requested to take them home. Parents of the other children in the class will be written to and requested to monitor their children for any signs of alcohol consumption.

Students found breaking this rule must be cared for and may also need to be referred to the school Code of Discipline if the offence is repeated. Gardaí may be informed especially if the child/children were supplied with alcohol i.e. the alcohol was not stolen from the house as a once-off act of bravado. If the child continuously violates the rule, the school will have no choice to report the matter to the duty social worker of the local Health Authority as this falls under the realm of neglect in the Children First Guidelines – guidelines all teachers must adhere to in relation to child protection.

Members of staff who present themselves for work in an intoxicated manner will be asked to excuse themselves from work for the day and the Chairperson of the Board of Management informed. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will then adhere to the Rules of Primary Schools with regard to this issue.

Parents who collect their children and are clearly under the influence of alcohol and intend driving them home will be advised that the school will seek the other parent/guardian listed on the school enrolment form to perform same.

Tobacco

The school is a no-smoking zone.

Students are not permitted to smoke or possess tobacco products on the school premises or on any school related activity.

Staff may smoke off the school grounds out of view of the pupils. All visitors to the school will be expected to comply with the School policy as outlined and signs informing visitors to the school of this will be displayed.

Pupils found smoking on the school grounds or on a school activity will be asked to hand over all tobacco products and matches/lighters they have and parents informed of the incident.

These products may then be returned to the parents. Gardaí may be informed especially if the child/children were supplied the tobacco products i.e. the tobacco product was not stolen from the house as a once-off act of bravado.

Tobacco products will not be used to prizes in school raffles.

Illegal Drugs/Solvents/Food and Beverages

The school is an area where illicit drugs, non water-based solvents and certain food and beverages which affect the behaviour of children will not be allowed.

The Committee has agreed that the following solvents in particular will not be used in the school.

Correction fluids, aerosols, nail varnish, nail varnish remover and any vapour admitting adhesives.

There will be restricted use of permanent markers and fixatives (*staff only*).

Certain children have a noticeable change in behaviour if certain fizzy drinks are consumed. The parents of the school will be encouraged not to include fizzy drinks in their child's lunch as per the healthy eating policy.

Any illegal drugs found on the school premises will not be disturbed unless leaving them in the location they were found presents an unreasonable risk to pupils. Gardaí will be informed immediately and asked to remove the substances. No members of staff will transport illegal substances at any time. If any member of staff thinks that a pupil is under the influence of an illegal substance, the Principal will be informed immediately and further action will then be decided.

In general, if a student come to school under the influence of an illegal drug or comes under the influence in school, they will be withdrawn from class, supervised and parents requested to take them home. Parents of the other children in the class will be written to and requested to monitor their children for any signs of substance use.

Students found breaking this rule must be cared for and may also need to be referred to the school Code of Discipline in the offence is reported. Gardaí will be informed. If the child continuously violated the rule, the school will have no choice to report the matter to the duty social worker of the local Health Authority as this falls under the realm of neglect in the Children First Guidelines – guidelines all teachers must adhere to in relation to child protection.

If the dealing of illegal drugs is suspected in the school, an investigation will be carried out. Parents of any students involved will be informed and the advice and assistance of the local Juvenile Liaison Officer of the Gardaí will be sought.

Members of staff who present themselves for work under the influence of illegal substances will be asked to excuse themselves from work for the day the Chairperson of the Board of Management informed. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will then decide on action to be taken based on the circumstances and in accordance with the rules of National schools.

Parents who suspect their child is taking illegal substances should inform the school. The school may be able to advise where support is available for that child in consultation with the relevant Health Authorities.

For all school activities, the use of spray deodorants is prohibited and will be taken from the student if they are being used. These products will be returned to the parents of the child.

Students who must take prescribed medication must keep this medication in a secure place and under no circumstances will this medication be given to any other child.

School staff will not administer any medication. If a child has an illness whereby they must receive medication during the course of the day, parents of the child in question must apply in writing to the Board of Management of Muire gan Smál for the issue to be taken further.

Emergency incidents required medical intervention will be dealt with by the pupil's doctor as detailed on the school enrolment form having already informed the parents of the child. If unavailable, the pupil will be treated by the doctor on duty.

All incidents relating to "Substance Use" will be recorded in the "Substance Use Incidents" booklet held in the school.

The School Principal/Chairperson of the Board of Management is designated to respond to the media in relation to 'drug related incidents' they may be enquiring about.

Provision for Training and Staff Development

The shared understanding among the staff regarding the contribution that an SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance misuse is evident through our adherence to the two-year plan for SPHE and the use of the Walk Tall Programme as per the content objectives of the SPHE curriculum.

Staff members are aware of the contribution they can make to the prevention of substance misuse within their own class by developing a supportive class environment and informing the pupils taking the age of the pupils into consideration and local circumstances and events, which may arise.

Staff members will be made sufficiently aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse by asking the Pupils Health Nurse and relevant Garda to inform the staff of same.

Staff members have been made sufficiently aware of laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how they relate to themselves, to the school and the students by having this policy inspected by a legal expert and reading prescribed material as advocated by legal advice sought.

Further training needs we have in relation to the implementation of the substance use policy include revision of the signs and symptoms of Substance Use – training similar to training received by staff on the Walk Tall Programme.

Training can be accessed from the Substance Misuse Prevention Project based in Dublin West Education Centre – at present this training is only available to schools in the Local Drugs Task Force Areas and Claremorris is not of those areas.

New staff, in particular, will be briefed on the substance use policy of the school on commencement of employment in the school.

Parent's education on SPHE and issues relating to substance misuse will be promoted in the school community by holding an information night for parents/guardians informing them of all related issues – this information to be given by an employee of the Health Promotion Unit or a Garda Officer. It is envisaged that the parents will be informed of the school's role in relation to child protection by informing them that the school must adhere to the "Children First Guidelines" and more specifically the Department of Education and Science Guidelines produced in conjunction with the force mentioned "Children First Guidelines".

Roles and Responsibilities

All members of the school community have a role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the policy to ensure the safety and welfare of all students is maintained and we have a safe and secure environment for learning.

Teachers

Policy development:

Policy implementation:

Policy evaluation:

Parents

Policy development:

Policy implementation:

Policy evaluation:

Board of Management

Policy development:

Policy implementation:

Policy evaluation:

Success Criteria

The following indicators will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the substance use policy in Muire gan Smál:

- School Community to be well-informed in relation to Substance Use.
- Clarity regarding procedures to be followed in any drug related incident in the school.

Timeframe and Review

This completed policy is available for inspection in the school from June 1st 2004.

This policy will come into force on the 1st of September 2004.

This policy was ratified by B.O.M. in June 2004 and was reviewed in June 2007.

It will be subject to review every 2/3 years or whenever an incident arises – not covered by the policy at present.

Signed: Gerry Lynch
(Chairperson B.O.M.)

Date: June 2017