



SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

Meán Scoil Mhuire

Chairperson: Mr. Joe Finnegan

Principal: Mrs. Aoife Mulrennan

Date: 07/02/2018

Introduction

Meán Scoil Mhuire is a Health Promoting School. It is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school community in relation to substance misuse. This policy has been drawn up and accepted by the Principal, Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Board of Management and Students. It is necessary that all work together to implement this policy to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the whole school community.

The term 'substance' in this policy is to be interpreted in the widest possible sense to include alcohol, tobacco, E-cigarettes, solvents, legal/illegal drugs and over the counter/prescribed and other dangerous substances.

Scope

This policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building.

Rationale

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well being, alcohol, tobaccos, and drugs are part of this reality. The school is an important social partner in providing substance/drug awareness and education.
- The B.O.M. recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with substance misuse.
- The Education Act 1998 provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.
- The school policy aims to cooperate fully with Circular 18/02 and the mandatory requirements to put a substance misuse policy in place.

The school policy aims to cooperate fully with the new National Drug and Alcohol Strategy adopted by the government- Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery- A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025.

Legal framework

- Education Act 1998
- Education welfare Act 2000
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1977
- Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Bill 2010

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Méan Scoil Mhuire is committed to the holistic development of each student. As a CEIST school, we pursue excellence in an inclusive, caring and respectful environment.

This Substance Misuse Policy is part of our general pastoral approach to ensure the health and welfare of all students to be educated in a healthy, safe, caring and supportive learning environment. The school asserts its right to protect and promote its particular ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

As a health promoting school we do not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school related activity.

An exception for the use of properly prescribed drugs will be made. Parents/Guardians of students taking prescribed medication **must** inform the school **in writing** of that fact, (see the school policy on The Administration of Medicines Policy for full details.).

This substance misuse policy is focused in four key areas:

1. Alcohol, tobacco and Drug Education
2. Managing Drug Related Incidents
3. Training and Staff Development.
4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.

1. Education Programmes

Meán Scoil Mhuire will, within the resources available, provide an appropriate substance education programme for all students. This programme is incorporated into the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme (S.P.H.E.) currently running in the school. Other programmes that support the substance education undertaken in S.P.H.E. include: Religious Education, Physical Education, Science, Home Economics and Wellbeing. In addition, positive health is high on the agenda as a cross curricular theme in Meán Scoil Mhuire. Students and staff have worked together for many years in organising and running an annual Positive Health Week. This and many other health promoting strategies have resulted in Meán Scoil Mhuire being recognised as a Health Promoting School under the H.S.E. framework.

Education on substance use essentially aims:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of our students.
- To equip students with personal and social skills.
- To enable our students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices.
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on substance use.
- To minimise the harm caused by substance use by offering supportive interventions.

These aims will be met by the following actions:

- All teachers involved in S.P.H.E. will be given the opportunity to avail of training in group facilitation skills and personal development through the Professional Development Service for Teachers (P.D.S.T.).
- Teachers are offered Substance Misuse Training through the P.D.S.T.
- Outside speakers are used where appropriate to reinforce the work done in class.
- Parents will be made aware at the start of each school year that their daughter will be involved in substance/drug use education.
- Drug awareness sessions may be organised for parents/guardians periodically.

2. Managing Substance Misuse Incidents

Substance Misuse Incidents are complex. In situations where the school rules regarding substances are broken, sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence. These will be consistent with school rules (see The Code of Behaviour). In managing such incidences, the school will seek to strike a balance between legal considerations, the needs of the student, the needs and welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

If there is no damage to the student/s it is important to:

- Take time to listen and assess before responding
- Separate fact from rumour
- In situations of confirmed use, possession or supply, all details must be recorded and acted upon according to the procedures outlined below.
- A Substance Misuse Incident Report must be completed. (see Appendix 2)

Procedures:

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school, any student involved in a suspected incident, pending a further complete investigation of the incident.
2. The school will take all steps to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident as efficiently as possible.
3. A Substance Misuse Incident Report Form will be completed.
4. The school will take possession of any banned, prohibited substances and/or drug paraphernalia associated with a misuse incident. All such items will be carefully recorded and retained pending completion of the investigation. Where misuse of suspected/ illegal substances occurs contact with the Gardaí will be made and they will advise on matters from there on.
5. The school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
6. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
7. The school, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
8. If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
 - a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the students and her parents/guardians- at the discretion of the school- in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make her own reply to the

matters at issue and any representation that she would wish to make or have made on her behalf.

- b) The school will allow the student and parents/guardians concerned a stated timeframe within which to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - c) The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and parents/guardians of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
9. In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
 10. The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issuing of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account.
 11. The school will ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the student(s) and parents/guardians affected by the incident of substance abuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and to demonstrate the school's Christian commitment at a time of personal crisis, the services of a Tutor, Year Head, Counsellor, Chaplain will be available.

Trafficking:

Trafficking refers to the supply of and giving of drugs to another, no money need change hands.

- It is essential that school personnel know the signs of drug misuse. (see Appendix 3)
- Remain calm and keep a note of the alleged incident/s, noting date, time, place, any witness present, and the context and nature of the alleged incident.
- Inform the Principal/ Deputy Principal who has the responsibility to investigate the allegation and document where possible all relevant evidence and actions taken to date.
- Inform parents immediately.
- The normal disciplinary procedures will apply including immediate suspension pending further investigation.
- A recommendation of expulsion may follow on confirmation of the trafficking allegation.
- In incidents involving the supply and trafficking of illegal drugs, it is the policy of the school to inform the Gardaí. Garda advice may also be sought about other incidents on a case by case basis. The decision to contact the Gardaí will rest with the Principal and other relevant staff.

The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation

The Principal or her delegate is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area. She may nominate the Deputy Principal, a Year Head or another nominated Staff member to act on her behalf in the investigation of the substance misuse incident.

Duties and Responsibilities -

The Principal: (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or her nominee):

- The Principal is responsible for dealing with incidents of misuse arising at school
- All reports of misuse incident or suspected incident must be reported to the Principal.
- The Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of the incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.
- The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.
- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
- The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.
- The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head and/or School Guidance Counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

Teachers:

- Responsible for making every effort to recognise or identify suspected breaches of this policy
- Refer any suspected breach of this policy to the Principal.

Students:

- To comply with the rules of the school.
- To co-operate with procedures and any investigations in the event of a misuse incident.

Parents/ Guardians:

- To acknowledge the importance of these substance education programmes in school.
- To recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance misuse.
- To assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

Gardaí:

The Principal or designated person in all incidents involving suspected use of illegal substances will inform and liaise with the Gardaí. The Gardaí may also be approached for advice about an incident on a case by case basis.

Media:

- The Principal is the point of contact in relation to all media enquiries.

- The school will not comment on individuals or individual cases whilst an investigation is in progress, other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing such incidents.

Banned Substance Search:

In the interest of the general student body the school reserves the right to search any part of school property if there is any reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy is present. This may include:

- Searching a student's locker
- Searching a student's school bag.
- An instruction to a student to empty her school bag or pockets or locker
- The student/s may be given the opportunity to surrender the substance prior to the search.

The following conditions will apply in such situations:

- Any such search will be authorised by the Principal/ Deputy Principal.
- Any search will be undertaken in the presence of two members of staff.
- The Gardaí may be contacted and asked to conduct the search.
- Every effort will be made to notify the parents/guardians prior to a search being conducted.

Confidentiality:

The school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing a suspected or confirmed case of substance misuse incident. People will be informed on a "need to know" basis. However, students and their parents/guardians must accept that:

1. The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any student when they come in contact with a misuse incident or suspected misuse incident.
2. The school may contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Gardaí and the Midlands Youth Drug and Alcohol Support (MYDAS)
3. The school may need to engage the assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
4. The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations or Department of Education & Skills Guidelines.
5. All written records will be held confidentially by the Principal or Deputy Principal.
6. Parents/Guardians will be involved. They will be informed sensitively and support offered to them.
7. In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.

3. Training & Development

Meán Scoil Mhuire will provide:

Staff

- Training for staff involved in the S.P.H.E. programmes will be facilitated.
- All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training.
- Specific training will be made available to Year Heads and key staff in relation to managing substance misuse incidents.
- Health Promoting School Co-ordinator and Team training
- First Aid training

Parents and the Board of Management

- Opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to substance misuse.
- Will provide appropriate information, guidance, and support regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigation.
- Provide parents/guardians on request, with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes.
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents/ guardians on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

Students

- Offer all students programmes relating to substance misuse.
- Drug Education within the context of the Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Senior Cycle Programmes.
- First Aid training in TY.

4. Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

Dissemination of Policy

Copies of this policy will be distributed to the school community. It will be freely available on the school website. Students will be made aware of the policy within the context of the S.P.H.E. programme.

Appendix 1

Definitions

The School

The “school” includes school buildings, and any/all activities where students represent the school.

Banned or Prohibited Substances - reference *Misuse of Drugs Act (1977)*

This includes any mood altering substances, both legal and illegal that cause changes in the way a person thinks, feels and acts. For the purpose of this policy this includes non validated prescription medication (see Administration of Medicines Policy), all alcohol, tobaccos and E-cigarettes, tippex, aerosol deodorants, all illegal drugs such as, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, cannabis, solvents, barbiturates, tranquillisers etc. This list is not exhaustive. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

Drug Paraphernalia

This includes any banned or prohibited substances defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances, and written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

A Misuse Incident

This is defined as any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occurs in the school or during school functions or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned, to other students, or to the policy for reputation of the school. The school reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the policy.

Parents

For the purposed of the policy, parents are defined to include natural parents, foster parents, grandparents, or guardian of the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in loco parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of an abuse incident.

Principal

Reference to the principal is taken to mean the principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the Deputy Principal where the principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy Principal.

Appendix 2



SUBSTANCE MISUSE REPORT FORM

Date: _____ **Time:** _____ **Referred By:** _____

Student(s) Name(s): _____

Nature of Incident:

Date /Time of Referral to Principal: _____

Names of Parents/Guardians contacted: _____

Further Details/ Actions taken:

Signature: _____

Appendix 3

Signs and Indicators of Substance Misuse

Common features indicative of drug-taking among teenagers

- Unusual loss of interest in school.
- Poor school results.
- Increased truancy.
- Habitual lateness for school.
- Rowdy or unusual giddy behaviour in class after breaks.
- Groups congregating in out of the way places.
- Unexplained loss of consciousness in class.
- Secrecy about activities and whereabouts.
- New and different friends.
- Keeping unusually late hours.
- Losing interest in old friends, sports or hobbies.
- Excessive tiredness or loss of appetite.
- Appearing drunk or stoned.
- Mood swings that cannot be explained.
- Selling prized possessions.
- Stealing.
- Job loss.
- Clashes with the Gardaí
- Information learned from other students

Substance misuse can involve a wide range of different drugs and each drug used will have specific consequences. Among the initial signs which are often noted are:

- Drunkenness
- Hallucinations
- Erratic or Violent behaviour
- Fixed stare, blurred or double vision
- Restlessness, tiredness and lack of energy
- Unusual smells including solvents
- Persistent cough, runny nose and eyes
- Unusual spots, rashes, red marks or unexplained burns on the face area or on the arms
- Nausea, loss of appetite and weight