

# SCOIL MHUIRE AGUS ÍDE

## SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

This policy is prepared so that the school will be in compliance with:

- ★ The National Drugs Strategy (2001 - 2008), Building on Experience, which is now Government policy and which requires schools to have a Substance Use Policy in place,
- ★ The Education Act, 1998, and the Education Welfare Act, 2000, both of which are concerned with the welfare, care and protection of every young person.

### Rationale for substance use policy

The school accepts that exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of the reality of the world in which we all live and that members of the school community need to be properly educated to deal with this.

In a society where drugs, legal and illegal, are widely available and increasingly used, no school or community can become complacent. Therefore, it is important that we in Scoil Mhuire agus Íde develop policies and procedures in advance of drug related issues coming to our attention.

### Relationship to school vision

This school is one that seeks to promote healthy lifestyles for all in a safe, supportive and non-threatening environment. Our aim is to create a caring environment in which everyone recognises the value of each individual and to encourage an awareness of, and a response to, the needs of others. This vision of a Health Promoting School is promoted and enhanced by the implementation of this agreed policy governing substance use.

### Scope of the policy

The Substance Use Policy of Scoil Mhuire agus Íde applies to all students up to the completion of Senior Cycle education, staff and other users of the school premises, during school time, and during school-related activities (including school tours and excursions).

The school's Code of Discipline states that, 'School authority over its students is not confined to school grounds only. This authority extends to lunchtime, travelling to and from school, on school buses or on occasions such as school outings, trips to games, school tours etc. Once a student is clearly recognisable as a student of the school (e.g. wearing the school uniform) he/she is subject to the authority of the school. The school has a right to safeguard its good name.'

### **Consultation process**

All partners were actively involved in and consulted with in the drafting of this policy. It was drafted by a Committee that consisted of the Principal, two representatives of staff, two members of the Senior Students Council, and two parents representing the Parents Association and the Board of Management.

The group undertook training in drug issues and in policy development prior to writing the draft.

All Staff, Student's Council, Parent's Association, Principal and Board of Management approved the final draft.

### **Purpose/Objectives of Policy**

- ★ To formalise a drug education programme for students
- ★ To provide clear management procedures for dealing with drug related incidents to support both staff and students
- ★ To ensure students are informed of the risks associated with drugs, so they can make informed decisions around the issue
- ★ To offer pastoral support to students and other members of the school who require assistance
- ★ To provide staff with the necessary training to support and implement this policy

### **Definition of 'substance'**

For the purpose of this policy, 'substance' refers to tobacco, alcohol and all illegal and illicit drugs (all illegal drugs together with the improper use of medication, solvents, magic mushrooms. This list is not exhaustive.)

# POLICY CONTENT

## I. Substance Use Education

### **Aim of Student Substance Use Education Programme**

*The aim of our programme is to give young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and relate these to their choices about substance use, both now and in their future lives.*

### **Implementation**

- All Junior Cycle students receive Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) classes, which includes a substance use module. A minimum of 4 periods per year will be dedicated to issues of substance use for these students.
- Staff delivering other subjects where opportunities arise to examine drug-related issues (eg Religion, science subjects, PE, home economics, English, etc.) are invited to use these opportunities to support the drug education programme.
- In Senior Cycle, Religious Education teachers will deliver an agreed drug education module.

### **Visiting Speakers**

- Speakers may be invited to support the programme from time to time.
- These visits should be properly planned as part of the overall programme.
- Teachers should be present under normal circumstances and involved particularly in liaison beforehand with speaker with reference to the content of the presentation and the particular ethos of the school.
- Speakers are expected to work within the confidentiality policy of the school. The organising teacher needs to make them aware of this policy by asking the visiting speaker/s to read and sign the school's Confidentiality Statement.

### **Parents and Drug Education**

The school recognises that parents are the primary carers and educators of their children, and it is essential to support them in any prevention strategy.

The Parents Association are invited to liaise with the Principal and the relevant organising teachers to jointly arrange drug awareness evenings for parents/guardians as the need arises.

## **II Management of Substance Use Incidents**

### **Introductory Statement**

This school will endeavour to handle any alcohol, tobacco or illicit drug incidents in a firm but fair manner, with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individual(s) involved and of other members of the school and to fulfil any legal obligations that apply.

### **Scope of Policy**

- This school strives to be a tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug-free environment, with the exceptions as outlined below.
- These procedures apply to all members of the school community, with the exceptions as outlined below.
- It is in force at all times on school premises, during school time, and during all school-related activities.

### **Definition of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incident**

- The school is a no smoking premises for all school users.
- Students are not permitted to have cigarettes on the premises or to supply them to another student.
- The possession, use or supply of alcohol or illicit drugs are strictly forbidden.
- Presenting under the influence of these substances is also forbidden.
- The finding of drug related paraphernalia also constitutes a substance use incident.
- The finding of illegal drugs is also a drug-related incident, as is the voluntary disclosure by a school member about their own problematic drug or alcohol use. However, where voluntary, such a disclosure will be treated as an approach for help and will not normally be subject to disciplinary procedures (although other provisions, such as confidentiality, will apply). Such students, however, following consultation with their parents/guardians, may be required to seek support from the appropriate agencies.

**Exceptions are:**

- The correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum-related materials/ingredients as specified by the staff member involved.
- Alcohol may be provided for adult use at special school events/occasions with the prior consent of school management.

**Internal lines of reporting and key individuals**

- All alcohol and illicit drug incidents will be reported to the Principal who will inform the Year Head and other staff as appropriate.
- Students themselves are encouraged to inform a member of the teaching staff if they are aware of an incident.
- While on excursions, the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of this policy. However, guidance should be sought from the Principal at the earliest opportunity after a substance use incident occurs.
- Smoking/alcohol incidents will be recorded as per Code of Discipline.
- Where there is a confirmed drug related incident it will be written, recorded and stored by the principal in a separate file. Reference will be made in the student's public file that this file exists. The student will be informed of this. In the case of a suspected incident, any file should remain anonymous until or unless the involvement of the person is confirmed.

**Confidentiality**

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality to individuals in relation to alcohol or illicit drug incidents, including disclosure of their own use.

Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, with the parents/guardians of those involved, or with an appropriate external agency. However, discretion within these limits will be observed.

Students who wish to speak to someone in confidence may ask a member of the Pastoral Care Team to put them in touch with an appropriate external agency.

### **Informing parents**

It will be standard practice to inform parents/guardians if their son/daughter has been involved in an alcohol or illicit drug incident in breach of the policy.

Parent/guardian involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents/guardians will be invited to the school to discuss what has happened and the student will be informed that their parents/guardians are being notified.

Parents/Guardians may ask the Principal or Counsellor to put them in contact with an appropriate external agency if they wish to seek further support for themselves.

### **Informing Gardaí**

This school has a positive working relationship with local Gardaí, and together we have the welfare of the individual student, other students and the wider school community to consider.

Garda advice may be sought about incidents that are illegal and constitute a breach of this policy. This decision will rest with the Principal and other key staff.

The school also assert their right to inform the Gardaí of any alcohol or illicit drug activity affecting the welfare of the school community. Where the Gardaí contact the school, the school will endeavour to cooperate fully.

### **Sanctions/Disciplinary Issues**

- The matter of substance use is already dealt with in the school's Code of Discipline: 'Smoking, alcohol consumption or drug abuse are completely forbidden inside school grounds and premises and on all school related activities. Suspension may apply to breaches of this rule. Expulsion may also follow.'
- As per this Code of Discipline, a graded system of firm and consistent sanctions up to and including exclusion will apply to students involved in alcohol or illicit drug incidents.
- Students may also be required to enter into a behaviour contract guaranteeing compliance with school requirements, if deemed appropriate.

### **Support/Pastoral Issues**

Students directly involved in alcohol or illicit drug incidents will, if necessary, be referred by school management in association with parents/guardians to external agencies for further support.

The school may insist that any student involved in an alcohol or illicit drugs incident engage in a treatment option and/or rehabilitation.

Students or other members of the school who wish to speak to someone about their own misuse of alcohol or illicit drugs, or that of a person about whom they are concerned, are invited to approach the Principal, Deputy Principal or school Counsellor. They will be offered support and information about external services.

### **Staff issues**

Staff breaches will be dealt with in accordance with agreed disciplinary procedures.

Staff dealing with illicit drug incidents may seek support through informal support systems and request information about external agencies if needed.

### **Disposing of illegal drugs**

If an illegal drug (or suspected illegal drug) is found on school property or during a school activity, it should be brought to the attention of the Principal or person in charge. The school is obliged to render illegal drugs beyond further use. Two staff members should always be present in any procedure involving illegal drugs. The substance should be handled as little as possible.

### **Search**

Scoil Mhuire agus Íde retains the right to search any part of school property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy may be contained therein. This includes school lockers. Students will be given the option to hand over the substance voluntarily prior to search.

If they refuse, parents/guardians will be notified and the *Gardaí* may be called (in the case of a suspected illegal drug). Two staff members must be present during any form of a search.

## **Health and Safety**

The Substance Use Policy Committee recommend to the Health and Safety representative and the Principal that procedures regarding the following be reviewed in view of possible substance misuse incidents:

- First Aid procedure
- Storage, use of solvents
- Notification, use and administration of medicines

Students are encouraged not to use aerosols excessively for health, environmental and safety reasons.

## **III Provision for Staff Training and Support**

Staff will receive adequate training to implement the Substance Use Policy. Staff are invited to monitor their training needs on an ongoing basis and bring these to the attention of school management.

## **Success criteria**

The monitoring, review and evaluation processes set out below will focus mainly on whether the provisions of this policy have been implemented, and whether they have been deemed appropriate and effective by those involved.

## **Monitoring, review, evaluation**

The policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Principal and other relevant staff/committee. It will be subject to review and evaluation in keeping with the Whole School Planning Process.

## **Timeframe for implementation**

- The policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 8/02/07.
- Students will be made aware of the policy through both their parents/guardians, and the substance use education programme.
- In the first year, parents/guardians will be sent a copy of the policy and invited to discuss the content with their son/daughter. They are encouraged to contact the Principal, Deputy Principal if they need to clarify any issue addressed.
- A drug awareness evening will also be held for parents/guardians in the first year of policy implementation to support the policy. It will be organised jointly by the Parents Association and by school staff.



- Thereafter, parents/guardians will be made aware of the policy through the list of policies sent to parents of newly enrolling students.
- Staff will also be offered an induction session in the first year, and thereafter the policy will be added to the staff induction pack.

It is in everyone's interest that the policy is supported and implemented by all school members, including students and staff. This Substance Use Policy is owned by the whole school community of Scoil Mhuire agus Íde.