

# St. Patrick's Comprehensive School

## Substance Misuse Policy

St. Patrick's Comprehensive is a health promoting school and is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to drugs.

We believe that students, teachers, parents and the Board of Management need to work together and that co-operation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of this policy.

For the purposes of this policy a drug is:

**Any substance which changes the way the body functions – mentally, physically or emotionally.**

As well as the whole range of illegal substances this includes over the counter and prescribed medicines, tobacco, alcohol and solvents.

The school acknowledges that it has an important role to play in drugs education especially in terms of prevention. This school also recognises that drugs – both legal and illegal – are available in the local community and that the school being part of this community may have drug incidents. These will be handled in a sensitive and consistent manner with the welfare, care and protection of the students and the school community as its central concern.

This policy applies to students, teachers, parents, the Board of Management and all visitors to the school.

### **The use of drugs in St. Patrick's Comprehensive School**

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school, on school trips or in non-school time by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school has to be informed.

**This policy is focused on four key areas: -**

- 1.) Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes
- 2.) Managing Drug Related Incidents
- 3.) Training and Staff Development
- 4.) Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

## **Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes**

This school is committed to providing a comprehensive and timetabled drug education programme for all students, which at Junior Cycle level will be incorporated into the Social, Personal Health Education Programme (SPHE) and the Civic, Social and Political Education Programme (CSPE) currently running in the school. At Senior Cycle level this will be incorporated into the Religious Education programme until SPHE/CSPE are introduced to all years.

### Our education aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self esteem and confidence of our students.
- To equip our 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 drugs.
- To minimise any harm which might be caused by involvement in a drug incident by offering supportive interventions.

### These aims will be met through the following actions:

- All teachers who wish to be involved with SPHE/CSPE will be actively encouraged to seek appropriate training and will be given the opportunity to avail of it.
- Any teacher teaching any Drug Education Programme will be given the opportunity to avail of training.
- All teachers will be offered Drug Information and Drug Awareness training through regular in-service training.

### **Outside Speakers**

We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out drug education but sometimes it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in class.

### **Managing Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug related incidents.**

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school.

As with all situations, listening, separating fact from myth and support will be the school's initial approach.

Disciplinary procedures detailed below will be invoked if school rules are broken and expulsion will be considered as an option when these have failed. Procedures are in place and outlined below to handle specific drug incidents.

### **Examples of a drug incident include:**

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities

- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants
- Possession of Tippex thinners, petrol, lighters, or any other solvent
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

### **Assessing a Drug Incident**

Where there is an immediate danger a doctor and the emergency services should be contacted without hesitation and the Principal/Deputy Principal informed .

Parents/Guardians should be informed as soon as possible. In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the student/s, it is important to assess the situation thoroughly.

An incident report form should be completed and given to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

### **Confidentiality**

The prime focus in dealing with any incident is the well being of the student, the teacher and the reputation of the school. Teachers can never offer total confidentiality. The need for care in this area is recognised as the student may approach a teacher because they trust her/him and need help. How this situation is handled will have an important bearing on the outcome. Information will remain private and only disclosed strictly on a “need to know” basis. The student will be informed about what is happening and why.

St. Patrick’s Comprehensive recognises that the issue of confidentiality is complex.

### **Recording Procedures**

Insofar as possible staff are always alert to changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour will not be taken as evidence of drug use.

In situations of confirmed possession/use/distribution, all details will be recorded and acted upon. A written recording procedure will be used to ensure that a fair process of challenging the student about behaviour of concern is in place.

### **Managing a Drug Incident**

It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a “Need to Know” basis. The Principal, Deputy Principal, Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal.

### **Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians will always be involved if there is a substance misuse incident in the school. In the case of tobacco the parents/guardians will be involved after a preliminary investigation. In all other cases involvement will be immediate. This will be handled in a sensitive manner and whenever possible support will be offered. In the first instance, this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor or Chaplain.

## **Gardai**

It is agreed that the principal or a designated person will contact the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

## **Counselling and Pastoral Care**

It is a natural reaction when faced with an incident to feel a range of emotions: anger, anxiety, disappointment with those involved etc. It may also appear very urgent to resolve the situation very quickly. The pastoral care of all students, parents/guardians, staff involved with a drug incident must be a primary concern. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered and in some cases referral to a substance misuse counsellor may be required.

## **The Media**

A drug incident in a school can draw adverse media attention. The Principal or his/her representative will act as spokesperson. No comment will be offered on individual cases but clarification where necessary will be given, for example:

*“The school has a policy in place to deal with any substance misuse related incidents and in all cases the appropriate support services will be provided or accessed.”*

## **Disciplinary Procedures**

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding substance misuse are broken, the following sanctions and punishments will be implemented:

- 1.) Any student found smoking or in possession of cigarettes/matches/lighters will be suspended. Any student found selling or offering cigarettes to others will be suspended.
- 2.) Any student found in possession of or under the influence of or selling/offering alcohol will be suspended.
- 3.) Any student found in possession of or under the influence of illicit substances (drugs) will be expelled.

The school may ask that other agencies be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place: i.e. drug testing; counselling; health board; G.P. etc.

## **Administration of Medicines**

An increasing number of students are being prescribed a range of medications during the school day. Common examples are treatments for asthma and diabetes.

On school trips a teacher will be designated as the first aid provider. Paracetamol is not allowed in the school. All medication is kept under lock and key in the school office. All asthma sufferers are expected to be independent inhaler users. Parents/guardians should inform the Principal if their son is ill or receiving any medication.

### **Training**

The Board of Management of St Patrick's Comprehensive School has a strong commitment to ongoing staff training. Up to date information and resources need to be available to the whole school community. We will provide:

### **Staff**

- The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social and Personal Health Education Programmes.
- First-Aid training will be made available to all staff.

### **Parents/Guardians and Board of Management**

- The school will continue to provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to drugs and the school policy. As part of the induction for parents/guardians of students new to the school this policy will be examined in detail.

### **Students**

- We will continue to offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE/CSPE classes and other classes.

## **Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of Substance Misuse Policy**

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring this drug policy is an ongoing process, which will take place on a regular basis. The Principal will monitor the policy once a term to ensure that it is of practical benefit to the school.

### **The three areas are:**

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parent, Staff and Management Training

### **Review**

The policy will be reviewed annually and will involve consultation with the wider school community.

### **Evaluation**

Teachers, Parents, Students and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy. Any changes will be incorporated into the amended policy.

### **Three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:**

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parent, Staff and Management Training and courses offered to the school community.

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Morgan Heaphy  
Principal

