



Ashbourne Community School

Substance Use Policy

Introduction

The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, and its successor the (Interim) National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016, set out a programme of action to be implemented by Government Departments and Agencies to combat the very serious problem of substance use in our society. The strategies highlight the important contribution that schools can make in the area of education and prevention. One objective in this area is to create greater societal awareness regarding the dangers and prevalence of drug misuse. Another objective is to equip young people and other vulnerable groups with the skills and supports necessary to make informed choices about their health, personal lives and social development.

The word “substance” refers to any chemical substances, which alters the way the body functions and/or the person behaves. “Substances” include illegal drugs and legally available drugs such as painkillers, alcohol, tobacco and solvents.

Rationale - Why a Policy on Substance Use?

- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social & personal development of students & provide health education for them.
- The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02.
- The Board recognises & accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with Substance Use.
- The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol & drug misuse poses challenges & opportunities for the school community, which acts as an important social partner in providing drug awareness & education.
- **Smoke Free Zone:** The Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 (PHA), Section 47 (as amended by PHA 2004, Section 16) prohibits smoking in a “specified place,” which by definition includes schools. In accordance with this legislation smoking (including e-cigarettes) is prohibited on the school premises and in the school grounds. Every member of the school community has an obligation to uphold the law as it pertains in this situation. Information with regard to the smoking ban is disseminated as follows:
 - Information in school’s education programme
 - Appropriate signage prominently displayed throughout the school

What is a Substance Use Policy and how is it was developed?

A Substance Use Policy sets out, in writing, the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use. It reflects the unique ethos of the school and aims to develop a shared understanding of the term 'substances/drugs'.

A partnership approach based on the 'whole school' model was used for the development of this policy. The policy applies to the entire school community, including staff, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building. This policy builds on the previous policy, which was ratified in October 1998.

Ashbourne Community School does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia, alcohol or tobacco by any student in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school-related activity. The school reserves the right to act on any information it may receive regarding the possession, use, sale or distribution of illegal substances. (Code Of Behaviour, Page 5-7)

Ashbourne Community School acknowledges that the only exception is for the use of properly prescribed drugs and requests that parents/guardians of students taking prescribed medication inform the school in writing of that fact. **(Appendix 2)**

Scope

This Substance Use Policy applies to the entire school community including teachers, supervisors, administration and caretaking and cleaning staff, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building and site. It applies during school time (including break time) and to all school related activities.

Relationship to School Mission Statement

As stated in the School's mission statement, Ashbourne Community School is a partnership of students, staff, parents, Board of Management and our local community. Through positive staff and student relationships and the curriculum, which is offered, we aim to develop in each student a confident, healthy self-image and a sense of responsibility. Our school is a place where we foster such values as respect, inclusion and care and endeavour to help all students realise their potential and this is evident in our school policies and practice. The use of non -prescribed substances, including tobacco and alcohol is illegal and has no place in the healthy environment that school strives to achieve, so that students do not put themselves at risk of suffering damage or causing social harm. This Substance Use policy is part of the general pastoral approach being adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment and is one among many that serves to promote the school's ethos as outlined in the School's Mission Statement. The Board of Management asserts its right to protect and promote the School's ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour & prohibiting certain practices.

The policy is focused on four key areas:

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Substance Education Programmes
2. Managing Substance Use Related Incidents
3. Training and Development for School Community
4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of Policy

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

Ashbourne Community School is committed to providing an age appropriate substance use education programme for all students which is incorporated into the Social & Personal Health Education Programme, Religious Education, Science, C.S.P.E., Home Economics and other relevant subject areas. The Programme is developed & delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. Contributions from parents, local Gardai, other parties with relevant expertise and experience and relevant outside agencies are encouraged and facilitated, provided that such contributions complement the School's approach, values and ethos. Drug Awareness and other relevant programmes/workshops are offered to parents and all school personnel when opportunities to do so arise and the School's resources permit. The school supports staff in the delivery of substance use education by providing resource materials and by facilitating in-service training in group facilitation skills and personal development. The school will endeavour to provide any training necessary for the continued development of the SPHE programme by involving outside agencies to provide appropriate training.

Our educational aims in relation to substance use education are:

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

External Agencies / Outside Speakers

When and where appropriate, outside agencies/ speakers/facilitators will be used to supplement or reinforce the work done in the classroom. The contribution of external agencies to substance use education programme complements the teaching that takes place across the curriculum. Care will be taken to ensure the external agencies / guest speakers meet the school's policy requirements. Students will have pre & post information sessions regarding any outside speaker facilitating substance use education.

Parents/Guardians will be made aware at the start of each curriculum year that their son/daughter may be involved in substance use education programmes throughout the year and are asked to acknowledge the importance of these programmes. The school welcomes consultation with parents/guardians on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

2. Managing Alcohol, Tobacco & other Substance related incidents.

Ashbourne Community School acknowledges that in all situations involving substance use, there needs to be a balance between the needs and welfare of the young person, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school. All staff should be aware of the signs of substance use and be alert for changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumours must not be taken as evidence of substance use.

All reports of substance use incidents or suspected incidents should be reported to the relevant Year Head/ Deputy Principal/ Principal as soon as possible so that these can be investigated immediately.

While every staff member, including teaching, supervision, administration, caretaking and cleaning staff may have a role when an incident involving substance use, discovery or possession occurs, Ashbourne Community School recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing a substance use incident. We aim only to involve those properly concerned with an incident.

It is important that students and parents/guardians accept that:

- The duty of the staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any student when they come in contact with a substance use incident or a suspected substance use incident.
- The school may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities/agencies as the Gardaí, HSE, NEPS etc.
- The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
- 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 DES guidelines.

Parental Involvement

Parents/Guardians are asked/ expected to recognize that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse. They are encouraged to approach the school if they are concerned about any issue related to substance use and their child. The school will refer parents/guardians to other sources of help. They are required to assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

In any incident involving unauthorised substances the school will normally involve the student's parent/guardian and explain how the school intends to respond to the incident and to the pupil's needs. In exceptional circumstances, where the school suspects that to this might put the student's safety at risk or if there is any other cause for concern for the student's safety at home then the school should exercise caution when considering involving parents/guardians. In any situation where a student may need protection from the possibility of abuse, the designated liaison person must be informed and the child protection procedures followed.

An Gardaí Síochána Involvement

All incidents involving illegal Substance Use are of a criminal nature and are automatically referred to An Gardaí Síochána who has responsibility for investigating criminal matters. In the event of substances/ substance use paraphernalia being found on the school's property, the Principal or a designated staff member will contact An Gardaí Síochána. The substance/paraphernalia will be stored in a container/"sin bin", with date and time written on the outside and stored in a secure place until An Gardaí Síochána arrive to remove the container/offending paraphernalia. All incidents involving visiting adults on the school property, suspected of being under the influence of alcohol* /illegal drugs will be brought to the attention of An Gardaí Síochána. Where visiting adults are suspected of being in possession of /using illegal drugs anywhere on/near the school property, An Gardaí Síochána will be contacted immediately.

*(except for designated staff and parent/guardian functions where prior notice is given to the Principal/Deputy Principal)

Pastoral Care/Counselling

For some young people, their involvement with substance use may be masking some underlying difficulties and for others it may be a phase of experimentation, which they will pass through safely. In response to all incidents, the school shall ensure that counselling/ pastoral supports are offered to the student involved, and to students and parents affected by an incident of substance use. If the person has a substance use problem, then referral to external services will be recommended.

Procedures for Managing Substance Use Incidents:

The steps that the school will take in managing & investigating a substance abuse may include the following:

- 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 substance abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
- The completion of a Substance Use Incident Report Form (Appendix 5).
- The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate & assess any Substance Use incident & will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a substance use incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.

- 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 & the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, & the management & outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- The school, at its discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority & seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- If the circumstances merit & the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned & their parents/guardians in the following manner:
 - Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned & to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and their parents/guardians—at the discretion of the school—in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his/her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that s/he would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf.
 - The school will allow the student concerned and her/his parents/guardians reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue.
 - The school will take in to account any response so made & any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and her/ his 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.
- In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
- The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account.
- The school will endeavour to provide pastoral supports to the student / students and parents/guardians affected by an incident of substance use. Such support may be provided by outside agencies.

Media

The school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress, other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. The Principal or a nominated spokesperson will be the designated person for dealing

with the media in such instances. However, in the interest of the reputation of Ashbourne Community School, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been concluded.

3. Training and Development for the School Community

Ashbourne Community School will provide training for Staff, Board of Management, Parents/Guardians and Students.

- Staff will be offered substance use information and awareness training. The school will support the delivery of substance use education by providing relevant and up to date resource materials for the SPHE programme. Detailed and specific training will be made available to key staff in relation to managing substance use incidents.
- Parents/Guardians & the Board of Management will be provided with opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to Substance Use and the Policy.
- The Board of Management will be provided with appropriate information, guidance, and support regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.
- The school will facilitate education relating to substance use within the context of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes for all students.

4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of the Policy

- The policy will be monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is up to date with relevant substance use information, to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.
- Teachers, parents, students and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of the policy when it has been in place for one year and any necessary changes will be incorporated.
- Copies of the policy will be disseminated to the school community. It will be freely available from the school office, the school website and all new staff and parents/guardians of new students will be advised of this availability on their induction to the school. Students will be made aware of the policy as part of their substance use education within the context of the various programmes previously outlined.

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management of Ashbourne Community School at its meeting on 27th May, 2015. (Ref. Meeting Nr. 212)

Date: _____

Chairperson
Board of Management
Ashbourne Community School

Appendix 1: The DES Position

As part of its role as a government agency committed to implementing the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008—Building on Experience, the Department of Education and Science now requires that all schools have a Substance Use policy in place. Research has shown that schools that have a developed strategy for responding to the issue of drug misuse, in all its forms, are best equipped to respond to drug-related incidents as they arise and are most successful in terms of drug prevention and education. Given this fact, the best approach to developing such a strategy is through a formal policy formulated within the context of the school ethos and the framework of the school plan.

Circular 18/02

Circular 18/02 and the Guidelines (October 2002) set down the rationale, objectives and the process to be observed in regard to formulating a policy on Substance Use. *'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' (Guidelines, P1).*

Appendix 2: The Administration of Medicines

While the Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of students when they are engaged in authorised school activities, this does not imply a duty upon staff to personally undertake the administration of medicines.

The Board of Management requests parents/guardians to ensure that Principal/Deputy Principal/relevant Year Head be made aware in writing of any medical condition suffered by any student.

Parents of a student requiring regular medication during school hours should write to the school management towards arranging storage of emergency medication e.g. inhalers.

Written details are required from the parent/guardian giving the name of the student, name and dose of medication, whether the student is responsible for his/her own medication, the circumstances in which medication is to be given to the student by the teacher; and consent for it to be issued; when the parent/guardian is to be notified and when s/he can be contacted.

Where students are suffering from life-threatening conditions, parents/guardians should outline clearly in writing, what can and cannot be done in a particular emergency situation, with particular reference to what may be a risk to the student. In emergency situations qualified medical assistance will be secured at the earliest opportunity.

A student or staff member may not give another student any prescribed or "over the counter" medicine without the prior consent of the parent/guardian.

Appendix 3: Definitions

The aim of the section is to provide definitions for specific and technical phrases that appear throughout the policy document so that these do not have to be defined within the body of the policy. This approach helps make the main document clearer to a reader and easier to formulate for the school. It also conforms to the guidelines for School Development Planning that a policy statement should be “clearly structured, concise and specific, and written in jargon-free language.

Banned or Prohibited Substances

Banned or prohibitive substance includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol, and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. It should also state that the School reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance this includes any substance that compromises the health and safety of a student(s).

Drug Paraphernalia

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

A Substance Use Incident

A substance Use incident is defined as any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occur in the School or during school functions or outings 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 or reputation of the School.

Ashbourne Community School reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes a substance abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the Policy.

The following are examples of Substance Use incidents:

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/Unusual Behaviour
- Suspicion/rumour of substance abuse
- Disclosure by another person
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or an a school related activity /outing.
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs including solvents
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for substance use activity
- Substance Use paraphernalia found on school property

Appendix 4: Relevant Resources, Documents

Walk Tall Programme – a Social, Personal & Health Education programme for the prevention of Substance Misuse- Department of education and Science
Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Primary Schools – Department of Education & Science (2001)

Substance Misuse Prevention Information booklet outlining an multistrand approach for Boards of Management, Teachers, Parents and other Educators - Department of Education 1997

On My Own Two Feet - Educational Resource Materials for Social Personal And Health Education - Department of Education & Skills.

Junior Cycle Post Primary Curriculum and Teacher Guidelines for Social Personal & Health Education - Department of education and Science/NCCA (2001).

Directory of Alcohol, Drugs and related services in the Republic of Ireland – Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children.

Facts about Drug Abuse in Ireland, compiled by Des Corrigan – Health Promotion Unit, Department of health and Children (revised edition 2002)