



## **Substance Use Policy**

This policy addresses the education of children in relation to alcohol, tobacco, solvents and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

***“A drug can be defined as a chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels.”***

### **Rationale**

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. Our school needs to reflect on how we might provide for the needs of our pupils and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues. The central objective of our policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

The Convent Primary School acknowledges that it has an important role to play in drugs education particularly in terms of prevention. We believe that the entire school community needs to work together and that cooperation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of the policy.

This policy links in with other policies in our school which include our Health and Safety and Code of Behaviour Policies.

This policy applies to Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Pupils, Board of Management (B.O.M.), all school personnel, members of the community using the school building and school visitors.

### **School Ethos**

The school believes that the personal and social development of each member of the school community is important. Good relationships are fostered, people feel valued and respected and there is genuine tolerance, fairness and support for those in difficulty.

As a health promoting school we have an important role in enabling students to increase control over and improve their health.

The well being of students is enhanced by:

- providing a safe and healthy environment
- promoting positive attitude towards health
- increasing knowledge about health
- actively promoting self esteem and self-awareness
- working in partnership with the parents/guardians and pupils

In response to the emerging drug culture in our society we feel the need to implement a policy to address the problem of substance use should it arise.

**The Policy focuses on:**

1. Strategies for the prevention of substance use problems, i.e. relevant topics are covered from Walk-Tall, Grow in Love (religion programme), Social Personal and Health education (SPHE), Bi Follain and dealt with in an age appropriate manner. The local Garda Schools Programme/Coordinator and other appropriate resources will be availed of as the need arises.
2. Managing drug related incidents in a planned manner.
3. Guidelines and information for teachers to improve their response to substance use.

***This document should read with the Code of Behaviour Policy of the school.***

Education about the use of substances, prescription and over the counter drugs, alcohol, tobacco, solvents is best carried out by teachers through the inclusion of SPHE in the curriculum. Parents also have a pivotal role to play in this regard.

**Goals/Objectives of the Policy:**

This policy aims to:

- Provide a comprehensive programme of prevention education for all pupils in substance misuse in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in the Primary School.
- To equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.

- To manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner.
- To support parents and pupils and staff in understanding and addressing substance misuse.
- To minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within schools/communities.

**Content of the Policy:**

1. Education concerning substance use.
2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents.
3. Provision for training and staff development.

**Education Concerning Substance Use**

Substance misuse prevention education will be taught throughout the school in the overall context of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. The core programme for substance misuse prevention education will be the Walk Tall programme. It will be supported by the Stay Safe, RSE and Grow in Love programmes.

The Walk Tall Programme hopes to give children the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices. Social, Personal and Health Education is time-tabled into the curriculum and taught for 30 minutes per week by the class teacher. The methodologies used include discussion, art work, co-operative games, circle work, stories, poems, songs and rhymes, role play and mime, visualisations, group work, project work, brainstorming and movement.

Parents are informed that substance misuse prevention education is taught throughout the school as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme and are notified when outside agencies deliver programmes or presentations to support substance misuse prevention education.

**Best Practice Guidelines:**

- Class teacher has the primary role in the delivery of substance misuse prevention education in the school setting
- Substance misuse prevention education must be delivered in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
- Scare tactics are ineffective
- People's drug use must not be normalised

- Information must be age, developmentally, culturally and environmentally appropriate
- An active learning approach is recommended
- Consistent implementation is crucial to effectiveness.
- Supplementary education must compliment and not replace or duplicate the school curriculum.
- The teacher must be present and actively involved at all times.
- Expectations of school based programmes need to be realistic.

## **2. Management of Substance Related Incidents**

Legally held substances include:

- alcohol and tobacco
- over the-counter medicines e.g. Paracetamol, cough sweets, etc.
- prescribed drugs e.g. Antibiotics, inhalers, etc.
- volatile substances such as glues, correction fluids/thinners, lighter fuel, aerosols and petrols.

*Note: If a pupil needs to take medication in school (e.g. Inhaler, allergy injection etc.) the Board of Management must be informed. Please see our policy on the Administration of Medicines for advice*

**Procedures to be followed on the misuse of substances may include some or all of the following:**

- Assess the situation.
- Seek medical help if necessary.
- Any adult displaying signs of substance abuse will be asked to leave the premises.
- Contact principal.
- Contact Parents.
- All incidents will be recorded on the Report Form for recording Incidents involving Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug use.
- Referral to outside agency.
- It is mandatory to contact Gardai if an illegal substance is found on the premises.
- Sanctions (See Code of Behaviour).
- Report (Refer to Child Protection Guidelines)

***A record should be kept of any incident which occurs. The DLP or the DDLP will keep the record in the office.***

**Confidentiality:**

People will be informed on a 'need to know' basis. Parents/guardians will be involved unless reporting would pose a threat to the child. In the case of illegal drugs the Gardai will be informed by the principal.

In the case of misuse of illegally held substances, by a pupil follow steps 1-5 above PLUS:

1. Illicit drugs must be confiscated and locked away
2. Principal teacher will consult with the relevant support agencies and authorities e.g. Counsellors, Juvenile Liason Officer, Community Garda.

In the case of suspected drug taking by a pupil outside school hours, the D.L.P. will be informed immediately. Those who report incidents to the school will be encouraged to contact the Gardaí to pass on this information. Parents will be informed.

### **Follow-Up Procedures:**

Guidance and support will be given to pupils and parents on the availability of specialist advice from relevant support agencies.

A combined pastoral/disciplinary approach will be taken. Each incident will be dealt with on its own merits. Repeated incidents will be dealt with in a different manner.

### **Smoking – School Policy**

- Visitors, staff and parents will comply with the national non smoking policy
- Pupils found in possession of tobacco products on school premises will be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal and her parents will be informed
- Adults who have in their possession tobacco products for their own use, must keep them in their possession at all times and out of sight and reach of children.
- A record should be kept of any incident which occurs. The DLP or the DDLP will keep the record in a Special Incident Book which is kept in the office.

### **Alcohol – School Policy**

- Pupils are not allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol on the school premises or during any school activities.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, she will immediately inform the Principal or Deputy Principal, and consult on what action should be taken. Parents will be notified. In such an instance, our Child Protection Policy/Child Safeguarding Statement will be consulted.
- If a staff member appears to be under the influence of alcohol, it will be reported to the Principal who will act in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy. Section 24 of the Education Act will be consulted accordingly.

- If an adult appears to be under the influence of alcohol when coming to collect a child, it must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The child's safety is paramount. The Child Protection policy/Child Safeguarding Statement will be consulted accordingly.

### **Illegal Drug Use – School Policy**

- Students, staff, parents and visitors are forbidden from being in possession of or using illegal drugs or solvents in the school premises.
- Illegal drugs found on school premises will be locked away and the Gardai contacted to dispose of them. Teachers are advised not to transport illegal substances at any time.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illegal drugs or solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal or Deputy Principal and consult on what action should be taken. Parents will be notified. The school's Child Protection Policy/Child Safeguarding Statement will be consulted.
- If a staff member appears to be under the influence of a substance, it will be reported to the Principal who will act in accordance with the Health and Safety Policy. Section 24 of the Education Act will be consulted accordingly.
- If an adult appears to be under the influence of a substance when coming to collect a child, it must be reported to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The child's safety is paramount. The Child Protection policy/Child Safeguarding Statement will be consulted accordingly.
- A record should be kept of any incident which occurs. The DLP or the DDLP will keep the record in a Special Incident Book which is kept in the office.

### **Provision of Training for staff**

An effective policy needs to be supported by an ongoing commitment from the Board of Management and School Trustees to training and staff development.

Where and when available all staff will be offered drug information and awareness training. Relevant courses, offered by the Department of Education and Science, will be offered to staff. Where and when available, First Aid Training will be made available to staff.

### **Parental Involvement**

All parents have access to this policy document on our website and other related policies including Health and Safety, Child Safeguarding Statement, Administration of Medicines, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying. A hard copy of this policy is available in the Office.

Parents are encouraged to support the school's efforts to educate pupils in substance misuse prevention and to manage substance use incidents.

### **Success Criteria**

- Feedback from all parties:
- Effectiveness of policy in dealing with incidents

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

- The entire school staff are responsible for the implementation of this policy.
- Parents are responsible for supporting the school's goals to educate pupils in substance misuse prevention.
- The Board of Management are responsible for supporting implementation of the policy through staff training and resource provision.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed in January 2022 or if new legislation requires.

### **Ratification**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_

Patrick Sullivan  
(Chairperson)

\_\_\_\_\_

Alison Varley  
(Acting Principal)