Coláiste
Bhaile Chláir

SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
15 November 2017

APPROVED BY GALWAY & ROSCOMMON EDUCATION & TRAINING BOARD (GRETB)
13 FEBRUARY 2018

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE GUIDELINES PRODUCED BY THE NATIONAL EDUCATION WELFARE BOARD AS PER THE EDUCATION WELFARE ACT 2000 SECTION 23

THIS POLICY HAS BEEN PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH PARENTS, STUDENTS, STAFF, THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND GRETB

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/Nicotine 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 (including vapes)) and nicotine pouches are 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. In addition, students are banned from smoking while on school activities both within and outside the school day. They are also not permitted to smoke, use vapes or nicotine pouches during school hours and while under the care of the school or while in school uniform
- We do not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or unprescribed drugs and/or drug paraphernalia, alcohol, vapes, nicotine pouches 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)

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 hours and to all school related activities both inside and outside school hours and while under the care of the school or while in school uniform.

THE POLICY IS FOCUSED ON THREE KEY AREAS:

1. Alcohol, Tobacco, Nicotine, Vapes and Substance Education Programmes
2. Managing Substance Use Related Incidents
3. Training and Development for School Community

ALCOHOL, TOBACCO AND SUBSTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

Coláiste Bhaile Chláir is committed to providing an age appropriate substance use education programme for all students which is incorporated into the Social, Personal & Health Education Programme, 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.

MANAGING SUBSTANCE USE RELATED INCIDENTS

Coláiste Bhaile Chláir 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, Coláiste Bhaile Chláir 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.

All incidents involving illegal Substance Use are of a criminal nature and are automatically referred to An Garda 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, with date and time written on the outside and stored in a secure place until An Garda 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 Garda Síochána. Where visiting adults are suspected of being in possession of /using illegal drugs anywhere on/near the school property, An Garda Síochána will be contacted immediately.

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:
As it is not possible to plan for all eventualities 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 investigation of the incident.
- 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.
- 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 except where a student has been expelled from school. Such support where expulsion is warranted 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 Coláiste Bhaile Chláir, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been concluded.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Coláiste Bhaile Chláir 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.

REVIEW AND EVALUATION OF THIS POLICY

The implementation, monitoring and review of this policy will be a done by senior management in conjunction with the staff, parents and the board of management on an ongoing

basis. It is envisaged that the policy would be reviewed on a formal basis two-years after the date of adoption by the board of management.

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.

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 multi-strand 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)