

Misuse of Substances/ Drugs Education Policy



Policy adopted by Board of Governors: March 2019
Policy review date: March 2021

Signed: _____ (Principal)

_____ (Chair of Board of Governors)

Misuse of Substances/Drugs Education Policy

Rationale

In today's society many young people are exposed to glamorous and unrealistic messages in relation to drugs and their effects. This often leads to misuse and abuse by impressionable young people. Whilst we recognize that parents are the primary educators of their children, we realize that our school is well placed to provide strong support and care in the area of substance misuse. As such we encourage all pupils to develop personal and social skills that will enable them to make informed decisions regarding substance misuse. We recognize that an asserted approach for supporting young people in substance education is to create an ethos within the school which provides individual empowerment and values, such as tolerance, openness, honesty, respect and caring for oneself and others.

Aims

- To establish abstinence/prevention as the main approach to substance misuse
- To establish an environment free from the misuse of all substances
- To provide guidance on the protocols to be used in suspected or real substance misuse

Objectives

- To provide factual information and knowledge about substances/drugs
- To establish and develop personal, social and moral skills that will enable a young person to make positive informed decisions

Legislation

It is a statutory requirement for every school to have a drugs education policy and to publish details of it (*The Misuse of Drugs Act (1971) et al*)

Every school must teach drugs education as part of PDMU (*Personal Development and Mutual Understanding*)

The school must inform the PSNI where they believe or suspect a child to be in possession of a controlled drug.

Whole-school Approach

The principal will be responsible for the organisation and management of the Drugs Education Programme. The programme will be drawn up as a result of consultation with the Foundation/KS1 teacher and other staff. All members of staff will endeavour to apply the programme consistently. It should not be taught in isolation but rather as an integral part of our PDMU programme, The World Around Us, Religious Education and Language and Literacy.

This involves developing a set of values and skills that will aid in producing rounded “whole” pupils – physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. The aims stated above are fulfilled through pupils’ experiences in the taught curriculum and through opportunities in extra-curricular activities.

We will cover the following areas of drug abuse – alcohol, tobacco, solvent and controlled drugs.

Outside agencies such as the Health Promotion Agency may be called upon to support the staff in the delivery of the Drugs Education Programme.

Children with Special Educational Needs

Children with learning difficulties may need more help than others in understanding what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable and desirable, and with developing the confidence and skills to resist drugs; they may be more at risk than others. We will endeavour to take into account their individual needs and abilities as we interpret the Drugs Education Programme.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal is the designated member of staff with responsibility for drug issues. She will also co-ordinate the implementation of the Drugs Education Programme throughout the school in compliance with the statutory requirements. She also has the responsibility for co-ordination of the school's procedures for handling instances of suspected drug misuse and acting as a contact point, if necessary, for outside agencies that may have to work with the school or the child/children concerned. The Board of Governors and **all** members of staff will work together as a team to deliver the Drugs Education Programme as effectively as possible.

Support Mechanisms

If a teacher suspects that a child may have a problem with drug misuse, this information should be brought to the attention of the Principal. The situation will be investigated and if necessary, arrangements will be made to counsel the child/children in school. The parents will be informed.

It is our duty to act on the fundamental principle that we are "in loco parentis" – our primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all children in our charge. The Principal will contact the relevant agencies e.g. PSNI, who will investigate the allegations. In addition, the education welfare service and local health and social services may be called on to support the school. Such incidents should be handled with utmost discretion – with only those people who "have the right to know" being given access to information. However, where a child discloses to a teacher or other member of staff that he or she is taking drugs, the staff member should make it clear to the child that he or she can offer no guarantee of confidentiality given the seriousness of drug misuse.

Safety in the School

The school has a qualified First Aider (Miss Kelly Marie Mc Rory) who is known to staff and is easily accessible.

All substances which constitute a hazard to the safety of children, including materials used to clean the school such as bleach and polish, must be securely stored at all times. Out of reach does not necessarily mean out of harm.

All members of staff must carefully monitor the use in class by children of volatile substances, such as glue.

Children are not permitted to have gas lighter fuel, cigarette lighter or correcting fluid in their possession. The use of aerosol sprays will be discouraged.

Policies and procedures are in place to communicate with parents regarding the safe storage and administration of prescribed and over-the-counter medication during school hours. The school will follow the guidelines issued by the EA on the administration of medication in schools with which all members of staff should become familiar.

First Aid Procedures

Minor first aid procedures, such as dealing with cuts and bruises, will be dealt with in school. In the event of a more serious injury, but where it has not been deemed necessary to contact a doctor, the parents of the pupil concerned will be informed.

A record will be kept of all first aid procedures.

Emergency First Aid

(Appendices C, D, E and F)

If a serious medical emergency occurs it is important to keep calm. The Principal and First Aider should be informed immediately and appropriate steps taken. In suspected cases of drug misuse where a child is drowsy or unconscious, it is important to know what to do.

It is necessary to:-

- Make sure the subject has a clear passage and fresh air
- Turn them on their side and do not leave them unless completely necessary
- Dial 999 and ask for an ambulance
- If any powders, tablets or anything else is found that may suggest drug taking, give them to the ambulance personnel
- It is essential to remain calm and not to panic the subject

Follow-up action when responding to illness as a result of suspected misuse:-

- The Principal will investigate and write a report of the incident, which should be brief, factual and include such details as dates, times, location and witnesses
- In the light of the report, the Principal will take further action in line with the school's Behaviour Management Policy/ Safeguarding Policy.
- As part of the process the school will make referral to outside agencies who can support the child and their family
- The Chair of the Board of Governors will be informed
- The principal will contact the local PSNI Juvenile Liaison Officer

Staff Development

We regularly update and train our staff regarding issues surrounding drugs/substance misuse. The Board of Governors will be involved in the development of the school's drug education policy and procedures.

Procedures for the Management of Drugs Related Incidents on School Premises

For all those involved in dealing with incidents of drug misuse, the experience is likely to be traumatic. This will be true not only for the Principal, teachers, other members of staff and school Governors, but also for the child/children involved in the incident, their parents and other children in the school. Dealing with suspected incidents of drug misuse will require extreme sensitivity on the part of all those involved. Fundamental to dealing with such incidents is the principle of "in loco parentis" – the school must take steps to safeguard the well-being and safety of the pupils in its charge.

Sanctions and Disciplinary Procedures

The Principal retains the responsibility for deciding how to respond to particular incidents, taking account of factors such as the age of the pupils concerned, whether the incident involves one child or a group of children, and whether there has been evidence of peer pressure. The fact that certain behaviour could constitute a violation of criminal law should not, in itself, be taken as automatically leading to the exclusion of the child.

In cases where it is clear that a child is selling illegal drugs, and the health and safety of other pupils is at risk, the Principal may decide that a child should be suspended or excluded from school.

Confidentiality

Careful consideration must be given to the response of members of staff approached by a child for individual advice on drug misuse. If a child discloses to a teacher or other member of staff that he or she is taking drugs, the member of staff must make it clear that no guarantee of confidentiality can be offered.

Counselling

Where a child has been identified by the school as having experimented with illegal drugs, or as being at risk of doing so, he or she will be offered appropriated counselling and support within the school's general arrangement for the pastoral care of its pupils. The parents will be informed.

The school is aware of the specialised agencies, support and counselling services available in the area, which may be in a position to support the pupil at risk. In addition, the education welfare service, local health and social services, and the local police all have a role to play in supporting the school's efforts.

Handling the Media

If the school receives an enquiry from the media, the caller should be referred only to the Principal. No other person should make a comment.

When responding to the media, it is recommended that:-

- The privacy of any child and his/her family will be respected
- A checklist of key facts is prepared by the Principal
- Statements are short, factual and without elaboration
- Positive statements are made
- Concluding statements are reassuring, and restate that the incident has been managed effectively

If asked for further statements, the school should restrict itself to its original statement

The Law and Local Police

All staff should be aware of their responsibilities under the law. They should be aware of the legal implications of discovering a child in possession of a controlled drug and how they are expected to deal with such an event.

The local Juvenile liaison Officer will be informed in every case where a child is found to have, or is suspected of having, controlled drugs in his/her possession, either on his/her person on his/her belongings, or where drugs are found on the school premises.

Parental Involvement

Many parents are anxious about drugs in our community. They may be anxious to know that the school is addressing the issue, the manner in which it is done and the information supplied.

The school will ensure that parents are aware of our drugs education policy and encourage them to find out how we are tackling these issues. We must do our best to stress that all teaching will be done in the wider context of health education and carefully matched to the age and maturity of the pupils concerned.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of Policy

Our drugs policy will be regularly reviewed and evaluated. The policy and programmes of study will also be revised to take account of changing trends and circumstances.

To this end we follow the procedures for self-evaluation as outlined in the DE document "Together Towards Improvement"

This policy was reviewed, agreed and adopted by the Board of Governors.