

**Coláiste Chiaráin, Leixlip Community School****School Substance Abuse Policy****Definitions:**

- For the purposes of this policy, drugs shall be taken to mean all non-prescribed drugs whose use, by school children, is prohibited by law - alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs including cannabis, cocaine, heroin and include all mood-altering substances including solvents and inhalants.
- A reasonable suspicion is a suspicion backed by evidence such as: statements made by pupils, comments made by a pupil (in class or elsewhere), comments of other pupils, graffiti advocating drug use, unusual or bizarre behaviour consistent with drug use.

**Scope:**

This policy applies to all school related activity including trips and outings and to all persons or groups (including parents, visitors and staff) using or on school facilities (including the school grounds).

The community of the school works in a holistic manner to ensure that dependence is gradually replaced by responsibility for self, society and the world. The dignity of each student, staff member and parent is honoured and reflected in school policies and structures, including this policy. While educational excellence is promoted, it is the needs of the learner that direct the development of the school. Where possible schools are encouraged to engage with alternative approaches to education especially for those who are most disadvantaged. Coláiste Chiaráin is committed to promoting a spirit of service and care within the school community.

The school's Mission Statement sees the work of the school as the holistic integrated development of each person in the school community.

*" Coláiste Chiaráin respects the individual, valuing, understanding and empowering the gifts and differences of each person.*

*This Community School commits itself to educating the whole person in an atmosphere of trust and respect".*

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well being and the school seeks to prepare them for these challenges in the light of our ethos. This policy is complementary to the school's Social Personal and Health Education Programme and Disciplinary Policy (including the school's Code of Behaviour & Sanctions Policy).

The Education Act provides that schools shall use its available resources to "promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents". The National Drugs Strategy, which is now Government policy, requires schools to have a policy on substance abuse in place. Drugs and their misuse is an area of concern for pupils, parents and teachers. Drugs have the potential to undermine good order and discipline in the school and it is essential that appropriate steps are taken to ensure this does not occur.

A broad range of surveys demonstrates that the majority of young people do not take drugs. Nonetheless in the course of their second level education many pupils are likely to find themselves in situations where they may be offered drugs. It is important to reassure and support the majority of young people who choose not to have drugs in their life, to reassure them that their choice is

responsible and positive and to support them in choosing a healthy and health-sustaining lifestyle.

**Goals:**

- To ensure that the characteristic spirit of the school is protected and not undermined by inappropriate, harmful, destructive habits of drug or substance abuse
- To safeguard the health and safety of all in the school community
- To encourage young people to make informed & positive life choices and to adopt a drug-free lifestyle by providing appropriate modules in health education
- To promote a collective and individual responsibility and shared ownership amongst pupils, school staff and parents to maintain the school free of drugs
- To make explicit the school's expectations regarding substance misuse and the procedures for dealing with any breach of those expectations

**Policy content:**

**Education Concerning Substance Abuse:** The school is a health promoting school. It seeks deliberately to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health, education for them, in consultation with their parents. The school will provide education for students and in-service for staff.

In areas relating to healthy living and substance abuse, the school will also arrange relevant talks for parents from time to time. In particular, the school will introduce and promote the SPHE programme as soon as practicable. The school will provide for appropriate health education modules at senior cycle also. Outside, speakers with appropriate knowledge and experience in the area will be invited to address groups of students from time to time, normally in the presence of their teacher(s).

The school is also committed to training for staff in related areas. Teachers of SPHE are/will be supported by the SPHE Support Service - they will be asked to identify their training needs from time to time and the school, through the Coordinator of the SPHE Programme, will take steps to provide for same. Whole-staff training will also be provided from time to time. The "School will liaise with support agencies including the local Health Board as appropriate.

**Management of substance abuse allegations/incidents:**

**Harmful Substances are banned:** It is forbidden to possess, supply, offer for sale, use or encourages the use of alcohol, illegal drugs or other harmful substances including all mood-altering substances such as solvents and inhalants. Smoking is forbidden in the school or on school outings.

**Reporting Suspicions/Incidents:** The school is committed to working with staff, parents, pupils and community groups in keeping the school free of drugs. Any person who has information or a reasonable suspicion that another person or group of persons is engaged in any of the forbidden activities outlined above should bring that information or suspicion to the attention of the Deputy Principal or Principal who will take appropriate action. Any information given to the school regarding the use of illegal drugs will be handled sensitively. It will be considered a very serious offence to deliberately mislead the school authorities.

Teachers will note and date for themselves any evidence indicating possible drug use such as comments made by a pupil in class, comments of other pupils, behaviour, graffiti advocating drug use etc. (Appendix I contains a list of warning signs).

**Investigation Procedures:** The Principal, Deputy Principal or other person nominated by the Principal will investigate all allegations of drug misuse and will implement an appropriate sanction. As part of any investigation students may be requested to supply a written account of their knowledge of any incident(s). The school will note the allegation and the outcome of the investigation in accordance with its record-keeping policy

**Pastoral Approach:** The approach to tackling this issue is based on the fundamental principle that the school acts in loco parentis - that the primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all the pupils in its charge. The school will adopt a pastoral approach in the first instance of drug misuse and may require pupils to submit to counselling and/or regular drug tests. However, banned substances may be confiscated and other sanctions may apply depending on the circumstances as laid down in the Code of Behaviour.

Where there is a reasonable suspicion that a person has engaged in the misuse of drugs or is dealing in illegal drugs that suspicion will be communicated to the Gardai. The school will liaise with other outside agencies such as Social Workers as appropriate.

**Allegation against a member of staff, parent or adult visitor:** Any reasonable suspicion that a member of staff, a parent or an adult visitor is involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated by the school and/or brought to the attention of the Gardai for investigation by them, at the discretion of the Board. The fact that such an allegation has been made and is being investigated shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Management as soon as practicable. Due process and fair procedures will apply. Appropriate in-school industrial relations agreements and policies will be followed and relevant sanctions applied as appropriate.

**Allegation against a student or a young visitor:** Any reasonable suspicion that a pupil is involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated and brought to the attention of their parents, or guardians. Any reasonable suspicion that a young visitor is involved in the misuse of drugs will be investigated and brought to the attention of the adults supervising the visitor and/or their parents or guardians.

**Sanctions:** Sanctions for possession, supply, sale or use of banned substances (see above) may range from suspension (until parents visit the school to discuss the matter) to longer-term suspension and even to expulsion from the school. Incidents of drug dealing or repeated use will attract very serious sanction - expulsion will always be considered in such circumstances.

**Communications:** At the time of enrolment and later as required by the school, parents shall supply all relevant information regarding a pupil's prescribed medication to the school on the Application Form. In addition, parents will be informed of this policy, which contains reference to the sanctions for misuse.

**Success Criteria:** That the school is free of drugs and drug abuse; that incidents and reasonable suspicions are reported and acted upon.

**Monitoring Procedures:** Monitoring takes into account the fact that, with the exception of tobacco smoking, there is little known evidence of drug or substance abuse among students while attending this school. Monitoring requires vigilance on the part of everybody, teachers, parents, students and other staff or visitors to the school. Monitoring also requires that any concerns or reasonable suspicions be reported immediately to the principal or deputy principal.

**Review Procedures:** This Policy shall be reviewed by staff, by the Parents' Council and by the Students' Council at a regular meeting two years after its adoption and every second year after that date.

In the Programmes of Study for Science, young people consider biological information and health and safety issues. The subject also provides opportunities for young people to make predictions, assess evidence and draw conclusions.

The **Science** Programmes of Study provide young people an opportunity to find out how cigarette smoke affects health, and

- find out the requirements to maintain healthy bodies, and healthy babies during pregnancy, including smoking, alcohol and drugs
- to discuss the effects of alcohol, drug and solvent abuse on society.

**English** can provide opportunities for young people to:

- explore relevant issues through literature;
- develop communication skills, for example, in formulating, clarifying and expressing ideas and arguments;
- develop inter-personal skills through drama or role play;
- make considered use of a range of reference materials.

**Religious Education** can provide opportunities for young people to:

- develop their understanding of moral issues;
- develop the skills to express their own views clearly;
- consider the individual, social and moral consequences of actions.

**Technology and Design** can provide opportunities for young people to:

- develop awareness of safety, hazards and risks (for example, through the safe handling of volatile materials, including solvents and glues);
- take responsibility for the consequences of their actions for themselves and others.

**Physical Education** can provide opportunities for young people to:

- develop positive attitudes towards health;
- develop safety awareness;
- investigate factors which determine personal health and fitness within the context of sport
- develop an awareness of risks attached to using performance enhancing drugs
- and exercise, for example, smoking, alcohol, drugs, peer pressure.

**With older students, the range of complex and frequently conflicting issues, which surround drug use, should be considered. Such topics might include:**

- The conflict between individual responsibility for health choices and enjoyment, risk-taking and social acceptability
- The rights of the individual in terms of non-smoking policies, health care, environmental and economic issues;
- The social mores which currently exist in relation to the acceptability of different drugs, such as alcohol and tobacco when compared with Ecstasy and cannabis;
- The legal/illegal debate and how it relates to the harm evidenced in the population. Health, employment\_ family, economic and environmental issues might be considered;
- The position of government and government policies, for example, the sale of alcohol and tobacco, revenue from taxes, safe limits of alcohol, drink/driving strategies and national campaigns.

**Appendix 1: Roles and Responsibilities in developing and implementing this policy****Role of Board of Management.**

- To ensure that a policy is in place and, is implemented and that it is reviewed.
- To provide for appropriate Staff Development so that all staff are provided with up-to-date factual information about the signs and symptoms of drugs use and about drugs and their effects.
- To support staff in the implementation of this policy.
- To decide on appeals by parents and or pupils with respect to decisions made by the principal.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

**Role of Principal/Deputy Principal**

- To formulate draft policy in consultation with the teaching staff, students, parents, Board and Trustees
- To monitor its implementation and to ensure that it is reviewed by the review date
- To investigate all referrals or cause to have them investigated in accordance with this policy and the school's Disciplinary Policy
- To liaise with parents and all outside agencies including the Gardai
- To implement the policy and to support other teaching staff in their implementation of the policy
- To arrange appropriate Staff Development (see above under Board of Management).
- To ensure that appropriate education programmes for students (about substance abuse) are in place
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate. .

**Role of teaching staff**

- To advocate positive and healthy lifestyle and decisions.
- To treat the threat of possible drug use as a serious threat to the welfare of pupils and the school community.
- To inform themselves regarding the signs and symptoms of drug use and about drugs and their effects.
- To be alert to disclosure by pupils regarding their own or others' involvement in drug taking activity
- To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.
- To implement this policy.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

**Role of Guidance Counsellor**

- To offer advice and support to any student who may be involved in drugs misuse
- To advise to their parent(s) or guardian(s) where further support and information may be found
- To offer counselling as appropriate
- To liaise with outside agencies concerning counselling and related support

**Role of students**

- To co-operate fully with the school in the implementation of the policy.
- To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.

**Role of parents**

- To educate their children about substance abuse
- To support the policy and to co-operate fully with the school in its implementation
- To bring to the attention of the school authorities any concern or information they may have in relation to substance misuse.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

## DRUG OR SOLVENT MISUSE: RECOGNISING THE SIGNS

The signs listed in Tables 1 and 2 may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing drug: Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of drug or solvent misuse: many of them are a normal part of adolescence, but the presence of several signs together may point to a need for greater vigilance. Table 3 lists equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

**Table 1: Warning Signs in Individuals**

- Changes in attendance, and being unwilling to take part in school activities
- Decline in performance in schoolwork.
- Unusual outbreaks of temper, marked swings of mood, restlessness or irritability.
- Reports from parents that more time is being spent away from home, possibly with new friends or with friends in older age groups.
- Excessive spending or borrowing of money.
- Stealing money or goods.
- Excessive tiredness without obvious cause.
- No interest in physical appearance.
- Sores or rashes especially on the mouth or nose.
- Lack of appetite.
- Heavy use of scents, colognes etc to disguise the smell of drugs.
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils).

**Table 2: Warning Signs in Groups.**

- Regular absence on certain days (e.g. the day young people receive state benefit).
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground or sports field).
- Being the subject of rumours about drug taking.
- Talking to strangers on or near the premises.
- Stealing which appears to be the work of several individuals rather than one person (e.g. perhaps to shoplift solvents).
- Use of drug takers' slang.
- Exchanging money or other objects in unusual circumstances.
- Associating briefly with one person who is much older and not normally part of the peer group.

**Table 3: Objects that may indicate Drug Misuse**

- Foil containers or cup shapes made from silver foil, perhaps discoloured by heat. . Metal containers/boxes.
- Spoons discoloured by heat.
- Pill boxes.
- Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrappers.
- Small plastic or glass phials or bottles.
- Twists of paper.
- Straws.
- Sugar lumps.'
- Syringes and needles (rare).
- Cigarette papers and lighters.
- Spent matches.
- Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse).
- Cardboard or other tubes (heroin - rare).
- Stamps, stickers, transfers or similar items.
- Shredded cigarettes, home-rolled cigarettes and pipes (cannabis).
- Paper (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (heroin - rare).



**Tables 1,2 & 3 are adapted from Liverpool Education Authority & TACADE materials**

### **Youth Groups and Drug Education**

Working with groups of young people offers scope for including drugs education within the activities offered. The decision to participate in a youth group rests with the individual. In youth group activities the social aspect is emphasised and the atmosphere is more relaxed than school. Young people might benefit from considering drug-related issues within the more informal and relaxed setting.

Working with youth groups provides opportunities for leaders to:

- Deal directly with the differing needs of specific groups of young people in a focused yet flexible way; involve the young people themselves in both the planning and the implementation of the drugs education programme;
- Use situations as they arise to consider drug-related issues;
- Be involved more closely with the young people with a greater likelihood of collaboration, friendship and trust;
- Help develop the young people's self-esteem by encouraging self-respect and by enabling them to become more confident through success;
- Help young people to develop the skills needed to handle personal and social relationships;
- Help young people to explore the range of attitudes and values, often conflicting, which exist towards drugs and consider their own viewpoint;
- Ensure that young people experience a range of alternative activities which might provide sufficient excitement or risk-taking to replace the need for drug experimentation;
- Involve local community representatives from support agencies, such as health professionals, the police and parents, in informal discussions and activities;
- Address issues, which are more relevant to older groups of young people, for example, the drug scene and rock music, harm reduction strategies, parents and drug use.