

SCOIL RUÁIN

SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Dissemination of Policy

Copies of this policy will be available to all in the school community. It will also be freely available from the Principal or school office. Students will be made aware of this policy as part of their drugs education within the context of the SPHE/CSPE Programme.

The Position of Scoil Ruáin

Scoil Ruáin is a health promoting school and is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to drugs.

We believe that students, teachers, parents and the Board of Management need to work together and that co-operation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of this policy.

In drawing up this policy, representatives, randomly chosen, of all the partners in this community were consulted.

For the purposes of this policy a drug is:

Any substance which changes the way the body functions – mentally, physically or emotionally.

As well as the whole range of illegal substances this includes over the counter and prescribed medicines, tobacco, alcohol and solvents.

The school acknowledges that it has an important role to play in drugs education especially in terms of prevention. This school also recognizes that drugs – both legal and illegal – are available in the local community and that the school being part of this community may have drug incidents. These will be handled in a sensitive and consistent manner with the welfare, care and protection of the students and the school community as its central concern.

This policy applies to students, teachers, parents, the Board of Management and all visitors to the school.

THE USE OF DRUGS IN SCOIL RUÁIN

Scoil Ruáin does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school, on school trips or in non-school time by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school has to be informed.

This policy is focused on four key areas: -

- 1.) Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes
- 2.) Managing Drug Related Incidents
- 3.) Training and Staff Development
- 4.) Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

The Position of Scoil Ruáin

This school is committed to providing a comprehensive and timetabled drug education programme for all students, which at Junior Cycle level will be incorporated into the Social, Personal Health Education Programme (SPHE) and the Civic, Social and Political Education Programme (CSPE) currently running in the school. At Senior Cycle level this will be incorporated into the Religious Education programme until SPHE/CSPE are introduced to all years.

Our education aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self esteem and confidence of our students
- To equip our students with personal and social skills
- To enable our students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
- To provide honest and age-appropriate information on drugs
- To minimise any harm which might be caused by involvement in a drug incident by offering supportive interventions

These aims will be met through the following actions:

- All teachers who wish to be involved with SPHE/CSPE will be actively encouraged to seek appropriate training and will be given the opportunity to avail of it
- A Substance Misuse Officer may be appointed from among the teaching staff. In the absence of a Substance Misuse Officer the Principal and/or Deputy Principal will assume this role.
- Any teacher teaching any Drug Education Programme will be given the opportunity to avail of training
- All teachers will be offered Drug Information and Drug Awareness training through regular in-service training

Outside Speakers

We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out drug education but sometimes it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in class.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians who attend the year group meetings will be made aware and informed of what is happening in the school with regard to drug education.

2. Managing Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents

The Approach in Scoil Ruáin

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school.

As with all situations, listening, separating fact from myth and support will be the school's initial approach.

Disciplinary procedures detailed below will be called in if school rules are broken and expulsion will be considered as an option when these have failed. Procedures are in place and outlined below to handle specific drug incidents.

DRUG INCIDENTS: Examples of a drug incident include:

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession, dealing or under the influence of drugs
- Disclosure by another person
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants
- Possession of Tippex thinners, petrol, lighters, or any other solvent
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

ASSESSING A DRUG INCIDENT

Deal only with the facts.

Assess the situation – is acute medical intervention necessary?

Where there is an immediate danger the the **Emergency Services** should be contacted without hesitation and the **Principal/Deputy Principal** informed. **Parents/Guardians** should be informed as soon as possible. In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the student/s, it is important to assess the situation thoroughly.

There is an incident report form which should be completed and given to the Principal/Deputy Principal.

Confidentiality

The prime focus in any incident is the well being of the student, the teacher and the reputation of the school. Teachers can never offer total confidentiality. The need for care in this area is recognised as the student may approach a teacher because they trust her/him and need help. How this situation is handled will have an important bearing on the outcome. Information will remain private and only disclosed strictly on a "need to know" basis. The student will be informed about what is happening and why.

Scoil Ruáin recognises that the issue of confidentiality is complex.

Recording Procedures

All staff will receive training so as to be aware of the signs of drug use. Insofar as possible staff are always alert to changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour will not be taken as evidence of drug use, however staff may alert school management if they feel that the rumour or suspicion may be valid.

In situations of confirmed possession/use/distribution, all details will be recorded and acted upon. A written recording procedure will be used to ensure that a fair process of challenging the student about behaviour of concern is in place.

Managing a Drug Incident

It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a "Need to Know" basis. The Principal, Deputy Principal, Substance Misuse Officer, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians will always be involved if there is a substance misuse incident in the school. In the case of tobacco the parents/guardians will be involved after a preliminary investigation. In all other cases involvement will be immediate. This will be handled in a sensitive manner and whenever possible support will be offered. In the first instance, this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor.

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It is agreed that the principal or a designated person will contact the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

Counselling and Pastoral Care

It is a natural reaction when faced with an incident to feel a range of emotions: anger, anxiety, disappointment with those involved etc. It may also appear very urgent to resolve the situation very quickly. The pastoral care of all – students, parents/guardians, staff – involved with a drug incident must be a primary concern. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered and in some cases referral to a substance misuse counsellor may be required.

The Media

A drug incident in a school can draw adverse media attention. The Principal or his/her representative will act as spokesperson. No comment will be offered on individual cases but clarification where necessary will be given, for example:

"The school has a policy in place to deal with any substance misuse related incidents and in all cases the appropriate support services will be provided or accessed."

Disciplinary Procedures

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding substance misuse are broken, the following sanctions and punishments will be implemented:

- 1.) Any student found smoking or in possession of cigarettes/matches/lighters will receive an automatic two day suspension. Any student found selling or offering cigarettes to others will also be suspended for a period of two school days.
- 2.) Any student found in possession of or under the influence of or selling/offering alcohol will be suspended for five school days.
- 3.) Any student found in possession of or under the influence of illicit substances (drugs) will be suspended pending a drugs test from a certified medical practitioner. On receipt of the test report to the school Principal the student in question may return to school if the test is clear of any banned substance. If the test proves that the student was under the influence of drugs at the time of testing,

the student may only return to school after a clear test report has been received by the school Principal.

- 4.) Students who have a history of previous substance misuse may be subject to random testing should school management feel that this is necessary.
- 5.) The school Principal reserves the right to seek an illicit substance (drugs) test from the parent/guardian of any student should he have concerns over substance misuse.
- 6.) Any student found in possession of illicit substances (drugs) or selling/offering/buying illicit substances will face automatic expulsion.

Any student who repeats any of the above offences (2 or 3) will be recommended for expulsion to the Board of Management.

The school may ask that other agencies be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place: i.e. drug testing; counselling; Gardaí; HSE; G.P. etc.

3. Training

The Board of Management of Scoil Ruáin has a strong commitment to ongoing staff training. Up to date information and resources need to be available to the whole school community. We will provide:

Staff

- The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social and Personal Health Education Programmes.
 - All staff have been offered drug information and awareness training.
 - Detailed and specific training will be made available to the Substance Misuse Officer and key staff in relation to managing drug incidents.
 - First-Aid training will be made available to all staff.
- Parents/Guardians and Board of Management**
- The school will continue to provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to drugs and the school policy. As part of the induction for parents/guardians of students new to the school this policy will be examined in detail.

Students

- Scoil Ruáin will continue to offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE/CSPE classes and other classes.

4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation of this Substance Misuse Policy

Monitoring

Monitoring this drug policy is an ongoing process, which will take place on a regular basis. The Substance Misuse Officer together with the Principal of the school will monitor the policy once a term to ensure that it is of practical benefit to the school.

The three areas are:

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parent, Staff and Management Training

The results of the monitoring will be recorded and made available in the school office.

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually, or in the light of changing information, by the Substance Misuse Policy Working Group. This group has equal representation of Staff, Students, Parents, Board of Management and is chaired by the Principal. Review will take place in consultation with the wider school community.

Evaluation

Teachers, Parents, Students and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy. Any changes will be incorporated into the amended policy.

Three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parent, Staff and Management Training and courses offered to the College community.