



ST MARY'S CBS PORTLAOISE SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

Mission Statement:

St. Mary's CBS is a community of students, teachers, parents, management, and ancillary staff. The central purpose of this community is the intellectual, emotional, religious, physical, social, and moral education of our students. The school strives to maintain an atmosphere of respect, inclusion, Christian care and concern in which our students can grow to maturity. St. Mary's CBS promotes partnership, excellence in teaching and learning and the development of leadership skills across 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. 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 (SPHE) Programme and the school's Code of Behaviour.

St Mary's Ethos

ERST schools promote the development of a community of faith inspired by Gospel values. 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 are 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. The schools promote a spirit of service and care.

Rationale:

The Education Act provides that schools shall use their 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.

During 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 most 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
- To prevent the intimidation of students by any students who are engaging in substance abuse.
- To support students who become involved in drug/substance misuse by referral to appropriate agencies.

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/grounds.

Policy content:

Education Concerning Substance Abuse:

St Mary's CBS 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 promote the SPHE / RSE Senior Cycle programme. 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/RSE are supported by Óide (professional development for teachers' organisation, previously PDST) They will be asked to identify their training needs from time to time and the school will take steps to provide for same. Whole-staff training will also be provided from time to time, if required. The school will liaise with support agencies including the local HSE, as appropriate.

Management of substance abuse allegations/incidents:

- **Harmful Substances are banned:** It is forbidden to possess, supply, offer for sale, use, or encourage the use of alcohol, illegal drugs or other harmful substances including all mood-altering substances such as solvents, edibles, and inhalants. Smoking and vaping are forbidden in the school, school vicinity, or on school outings.
- **Reporting Suspicions/Incidents:** The school is committed to working with staff, parents, pupils, and outside agencies 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 in school or on school activities 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 sale or use of illegal substances in school/on school activities will be handled sensitively and passed onto the parents/guardians and Gardai, as appropriate. It will be considered a serious offence to deliberately mislead the school authorities.
- Teachers will note and date for themselves any evidence indicating drug use such as comments made by a pupil in class, comments of other pupils, behaviour, etc. Appendix 1 contains a list of warning signs.
- **Investigation Procedures:** The Principal, Deputy Principal or another relevant person nominated by the principal will investigate allegations of drug misuse and will implement an appropriate sanction, as legally appropriate, which may include sanctions up to and including expulsion. The school will note the allegation and the outcome of the investigation in accordance with its record-keeping practices.

Allegation against a member of staff, parent or visitor:

Any reasonable suspicion that a member of staff, or any person involved with students on in-school or other school activities is involved in the misuse of substances which could be a negative influence on our students will be brought to the attention of the Board of Management as soon as practicable. At the Board's discretion, it will be investigated by the school and/or brought to the attention of the Gardai for investigation by them. Appropriate in-school industrial relations agreements and policies will be followed, and relevant sanctions applied, as appropriate.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management

Signed: _____
Anne Ahern
Chairperson Board of Management

Date: 16th January 2024

Appendix I

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 information about the signs and symptoms of substance misuse 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 regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Principal/Deputy Principal

- To formulate and 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 regarding 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 substance misuse as a serious threat to the welfare of pupils and the school community.
- To inform themselves regarding the signs and symptoms of substance misuse and their effects.
- To be alert to disclosure by pupils regarding their own or others' involvement in substance misuse.
- To bring any such information or suspicion to the attention of the principal in a timely manner.
- To implement this policy.

Role of Guidance Counsellor

- To offer advice and support to any student who may be involved in substance 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 misuse.
- 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 regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and to make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Appendix II

Definitions:

- For the purposes of this policy, drugs shall be taken to mean all non-prescribed drugs whose use is prohibited by law - alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs including cannabis, cocaine, heroin, liquid THC, edibles and include all mood-altering substances including solvents and inhalants. (this list is not exhaustive)
- A reasonable suspicion is a suspicion backed by evidence such as: a disclosure made by students, staff, comments made by a student(s) (in class or elsewhere), suspicious behaviour in the school where students may be sharing or passing items, unusual or bizarre behaviour, drug paraphernalia found on school property, consistent with drug use. (this list is not exhaustive)

Appendix III

Drug or solvent misuse: recognising the signs

(reproduced from *Misuse of Drugs: Guidance for Schools* (DENI))

The signs listed in Tables 1 and 2 may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing substances. Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of substance 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, 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 substances.
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils).

Table 2: Warning Signs in Groups

- Regular absence on certain days
- Meeting in the bathrooms and areas where there is no CCTV
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground).
- Being the subject of rumours about substance misuse.
- 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).
- 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, 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
- Cigarette papers and lighters.
- Spent matches.
- Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse).
- Cardboard or other tubes (heroin).
- 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).