



Douglas Community School

Substance Use Policy

Douglas Community School Substance Abuse Policy

Scope:

This policy applies to all members of Douglas Community School. It is applicable when in school and when involved in any school activity whether on school premises or on school trips/outings.

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

It is applicable to students, teachers, parents, the Board of Management and all visitors to the school.

Relationship to Douglas Community School's Mission statement

Douglas Community School is a Christian school which works to develop the full potential of each student – spiritual, intellectual, moral, physical, artistic, creative and emotional.

We promote the integration and wholeness of the individual and work in partnership with students, parents and community to enhance the self-esteem, self-discipline and motivation of each students

We work to ensure that our students leave school well-educated, self-confident, articulate and with life skills and attitudes that enable them to live good lives and to contribute to society.

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Rationale

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

Wellbeing of which Social Personal and Health Education is one component, is mandatory in all post primary schools. Substance misuse prevention education is an integral part. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023

The National Drugs Strategy requires every school to have a substance use policy in place.

Action 21 of the National Drug Strategy mandates the Department of Education and Skills monitor the implementation of substance use policies in schools through the whole school evaluation process as operated by the Inspectorate. It is also mandated to ensure that best practice is disseminated to all schools.

The 2019 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (E.S.P.A.D.) report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among 16 year olds in Ireland as compared to the other ESPAD countries survey. The ESPAD survey results show that in the previous 30 days, 41% of our 15-16 year olds surveyed had used alcohol and 33% had consumed 5 or more alcoholic drinks on one occasion. 14% of teenagers were current smokers and 5% reported smoking daily. The use of E-cigarettes was also high with 39% of students surveyed having used them with 16% of those using one in the last 30 days. Drug use reported among teenagers included cannabis, inhalants, painkillers, alcohol with pills and other substances including cocaine and ecstasy.

- 19.1% of respondents have tried cannabis
- 10% have tried inhalants
- 5% of teenagers reported using painkillers
- 4% mixed pills with alcohol
- 3% reported using cocaine
- 3% also reported using ecstasy

The school being aware of this believe that the primary defence against substance abuse is vigilance by parent, staff and the student body

The Position of Douglas Community School

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.

Definition of a Drug

For the purposes of this policy a drug is:

Substance/Drugs can be defined as all mood altering substances, both legal and illegal that cause changes in the way a person thinks, feels and acts. Substance misuse is the use of any drug, which can potentially lead to injury of the individual and/or society. For the purpose of

this school's policy this includes tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, solvents and illicit drugs such as, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, cannabis, etc. This is not an exhaustive list and may include any new or in vogue drugs at any particular time.

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

Goals and Objectives

Douglas Community School does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school, on school trips by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school must be informed by parents/guardians of same.

Where the principal, following an investigation, has reasonable belief that a student is supplying an illegal substance the Principal will recommend to the Board of Management that the student be expelled from the school. This sanction also applies to:

The supply of prescribed medication to persons other than for whom it was prescribed.

Legal substances purchased over the counter for those over 18 but subsequently supplied to a person under 18.

The substance use policy of Douglas Community School is intended to focus on four key areas: –

- Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Training and Staff Development
- Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Policy Content

1. Education Programmes for Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug use.

Douglas Community School is committed to providing a drugs education programme for all its students. This will be introduced primarily through the Social Personal Health Education Programme (SPHE) with cross curricular links to the Wellbeing, Science and Religious Education programmes. This in turn will be developed and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment.

The aims of our education programme are:

- 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

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of our students
- To promote a healthy lifestyle amongst our student population by encouraging participation in sporting, extracurricular and healthy eating activities

These aims will be met through the following actions:

- The teaching of SPHE, Religious Education and through crosses curricular links with other subjects such as Wellbeing, Science etc.

Outside Speakers:

Outside speakers and agencies may be involved as appropriate to reinforce work done in the classroom

- **Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Drug Related or Substance Abuse Incidents:**

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 will be enacted if school rules are broken in regard to drugs related incidents. Procedures are in place and outlined below to handle specific drug incidents.

Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include:

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession or supplying
- 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
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants
- Possession of petrol, lighters or any other solvent
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

Assessing an Incident

- The possession, use or supply of alcohol and illicit drugs as defined is viewed as unacceptable by all in the school community.
- Where there is an immediate danger the Emergency Services should be contacted without hesitation and the principal/deputy principal should be informed.

- Parents/Guardians should be informed as soon as possible
- In all cases where there is no immediate danger to young person/s it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding and to complete a written report.

Recording Procedures

School staff are always alert to changes in behaviour in any member of the school community.

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, 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.

Principal

The principal or his delegate is the person responsible for all matters relation to the area of substance abuse. The principal may nominate the deputy principal and/or year head or other nominated staff to act on the principal’s behalf and to aid in any investigation.

Parents and Guardians

Parents/Guardians will always be involved if there is a substance misuse incident in the school. 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 Pastoral Care team.

Counselling and Pastoral Care Team

The pastoral care of all – students, parents/guardians and staff involved with a drug incident must be of 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.

Gardaí

The principal or a designated person will contact the Community Garda in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the Community Garda.

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”***. The Board of Management may clarify the school’s position regarding an incident when the investigation has concluded and its findings have been viewed.

Disciplinary Procedures

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding substance misuse are broken, the following sanctions and punishments may be implemented. Any student found **smoking/drinking/using illicit substances** or in **possession** of cigarettes/alcohol/illicit substances, will be dealt with under the school’s Code of Behaviour.

More serious sanctions, up to and including expulsion will be considered for repeated offences and will be the only sanction when a student is supplying illegal substances/drugs to others.

The school may ask that other agencies be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place i.e. drug testing, counselling, Health Board, G.P or any other relevant agencies.

Smoking: In relation to smoking of cigarettes (rolled or manufactured) or e-cigarettes the following applies:

- Smoking within the school building – 3 day suspension
- Smoking on school grounds (outside) – 2 day suspension
- Smoking while wearing the school uniform – 1 day suspension
- If a student is supplying or sharing cigarettes or e-cigarettes further sanction will apply. This may take the form of a longer suspension when the Board of Management have been consulted.

Alcohol: In relation to alcohol the following applies:

- Student found in possession of alcohol either on their person, in their locker or in their school bag – 2-day suspension
- Consuming alcohol in school or on a school trip– 3-day suspension
- If a student is supplying or sharing alcohol to others further sanction will apply. This may take the form of a longer suspension when the Board of Management have been consulted.

Illicit substances/illegal drugs: In relation to illegal substances/illegal drugs the following applies:

- Possession of illegal drugs – 5-day suspension

- Repeated Possession – the principal will recommend to the Board of management that the student be expelled
- Consumption – 5-day suspension
- Repeated Consumption - the principal will recommend to the Board of management that the student be expelled
- Supply – Following an investigation, if the principal believes that any student supplied (regardless of whether any money was transacted) drugs they will recommend to the Board of Management that the student be expelled. This includes legal prescription drugs supplied to a person for who they were not prescribed. It also applies to over the counter substances (e.g. Legal highs or intoxicating drugs) for those over 18 when they are supplied to those under 18.

Powers of search

In the interest of safety of the general student body the school retains the right to search any part of school property if there is any reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy is present.

- Search of a student's locker.
- Search of a student's school bag.
- An instruction to a student to empty his/her school bag or pockets or locker.

The following conditions will apply:

- Any such search will be authorised by the principal/deputy.
- Consent of the parent/guardian should be sought where possible.
- Any search will be undertaken in the presence of two members of staff.

Disposal of Illegal Substances

If an illegal drug is found it must be stored securely by staff while awaiting the Gardaí who will dispose of same. The substance should be handled as little as possible and no attempt should be made to taste or analyse the substance.

Two staff members should be present during any procedures involving handling illegal substances.

Administration of Medicines

An increasing number of students are being prescribed a range of medications during the school day. It is the parents/guardians responsibility to inform the school authorities and make the necessary arrangements for any administration of medicines. All asthma sufferers are expected to be independent inhaler users.

Emergency Response:

Drug taking can have dangerous consequences, it is therefore important to know what action to take in the event of an emergency.

- Teachers should be prepared to deal with an emergency by calling the trained first aider where available in the school, calling emergency services, notifying the principal and attempting to make contact with parents/guardians.
- It is essential that contact with local medical services has been established in advance and agreement in place on how to access the service in an emergency and what the school can expect in terms of support.
- Liaison with external support services in this area is essential both as a source of ongoing support and for the provision of training.

General Procedure: Alleged Substance Misuse:

It is essential that all staff members know the signs and indicators of substance misuse.

- Remain calm and keep a note of incident/s, noting date, time, place, any witness present, and the context and nature of the alleged incident.
- Inform the principal of the incident and action taken to date.
- Document where possible all relevant details and evidence relating to the incident.

Inform parents when the following apply:

- Any reasonable suspicion of drug use.
- Students alleged to have misused drugs does not understand the gravity of the situation.
- Students alleged to have misused drugs needs support from parents and/or professional support.
- Refer to the school counsellor/pastoral care team.
- Liaise with HSE for advice and assistance as soon as possible.
- If the allegation suggests an initial incident or that it is experimental in nature it is important to remain supportive and reasonable.
- Students who breach the smoking policy will be subject to the sanctions outlined in this policy.

General Procedure: Alleged trafficking of drugs within the school:

Trafficking refers to the supply of and giving of drugs to another, no money need change hands.

- It is essential that all staff know the signs of drug misuse.
- Remain calm and keep a note of alleged incident/s, noting date, time, place, any witness present, and the context and nature of the alleged incident.
- Inform school principal of the incident and action taken to date.
- Document where possible all relevant and evidence relating to the incident.
- Inform parents immediately.
- The normal disciplinary procedure will apply including immediate suspension pending further investigation.

- **Provision for student information**

Students

Douglas Community School will continue to offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their mainstream curriculum.

Roles and Responsibilities

The school should respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse in a planned and considered way. In certain situations, legal advice should be sought. Due care will be important in deciding on the balance between a pastoral response and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving substance misuse may involve referral to a support agency. Disciplinary procedures will be called in if school rules are broken and expulsion will be considered for a one off incident of the supply of illegal substances. The principal, deputy principal, year head, Care Team and person(s) directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the principal.

The role of the Principal

The duties and responsibilities of the principal (or nominee) in this regard include the following:

- The principal is responsible in dealing with substance abuse incidents
- All reports of substance abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the principal
- The principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of a substance abuse incident
- The principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed and up to date regarding investigation developments
- The principal is responsible for the secure storage of any substances or related paraphernalia and written documentation associated with the incident
- The principal may seek the assistance of the deputy principal, year head and or guidance counsellor
- The principal will be the point of contact in relation to all media enquiries

Confidentiality

Staff cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses substance use involvement. We recognise the need for care in this area as the student may be coming to the teacher because they trust him/her and need help. The student will be informed that all disclosures will be made known to the principal. The handling of this situation will have an important bearing on the outcome. The student must be informed about all decisions that are happening and the reasons for any action that maybe taken. The well-being and welfare of the student and the teacher will be the primary focus.

The role of Parents/Guardians:

- Parents/guardians are expected to acknowledge the importance of these programmes

- Parents/guardians are asked to recognise that they are critical members of the community in the education process in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance use
- Parents/guardians are asked to cooperate fully with the substance use policy of Douglas Community School and with any incidents that may arise regarding substance within the school.
- To assist parents/guardians with their role, the school will provide information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes (SPHE etc.)

The role of visiting Speakers

A number of organisations and individuals offer or are asked to speak about drugs to students and parents. It is advised that the approach taken by the speaker and their purpose in speaking be carefully considered. Speakers have the greater chance of being effective when they are invited to make a presentation as part of an ongoing planned programme on health issues within the school.

- The speaker will be advised in advance of the policy on substance misuse and the overall policy framework in operation within the school.
- The speaker will meet where possible and submit the content of the proposed presentation to the coordinator in advance of the visit.
- The coordinator will consult with relevant stakeholders eg principal, deputy principal, SPHE staff etc to review the proposed presentation.
- The teacher will remain for the duration of the presentation.
- A subsequent evaluation will take place with students and staff to determine the outcome of the presentation on those present.

Success Criteria

- Feedback from all parties involved within the school environment.
- Effectiveness of the policy dealing with any incidents.
- Feedback from staff training and awareness – SPHE Support Service etc.

Monitoring of the Policy

The policy will be monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that it is up to date with relevant substance use information.

The three areas are:

- Substance Use Education Programmes
- Managing Substance Use Related Incidents
- Parents, Staff and Management Training

Policy Review

The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and changes may be applied in accordance with ongoing substance use trends. (Date of review to be agreed) Prior to approval by the

Board of Management, the policy will be shared with the students through the Student Council, the parents through the Parents Association and all teachers.

Evaluation

Teachers, parents, students and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of the policy when it has been in place for one year and any necessary changes will be incorporated in the three main areas outlined above.

Dissemination of policy / Timeframe

Copies of the draft policy will be disseminated to the school community; revision of the current policy will then commence.

This policy will be published on the website and accessible to all.

Students will be made aware of the policy as part of their substance use education within the context of the various programmes previously outlined.