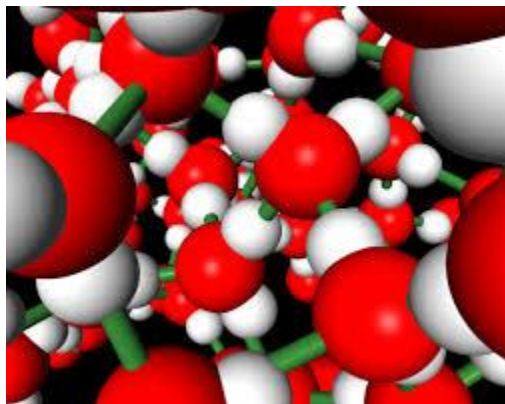


Substance Use Policy

April 2014



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Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed

Substance Use Policy

The substance use policy of Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed Thurles addresses education both the education concerning Alcohol, Tobacco, illicit use of drugs and the procedures for managing any incidents relating to these substances.

Scope of the policy.

The policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, staff, parents, guardians, students (PLC and second level) and users of the school building. Visiting speakers are to be made aware of this policy by their invitees.

Relationship to the Mission Statement.

The policy is in keeping with the schools mission statement as follows

"Our mission at Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed aspires to develop a caring and inclusive learning community which optimises the potential of each person".

Rationale.

Colaiste Mhuire Co-Ed is a school with a proactive approach in its care and education of its students towards a healthy lifestyle. Its aim is to prevent substance misuse while at the same time having strategies in place in the event of such problems arising.

The rationale of the policy is

- To promote the health and well being of each pupil
- To ensure that the pupils parents and staff will be informed of the policy
- To set the policy in the current context of Irish society
- To view substance use/misuse as an issue for all schools; in a society where drugs, legal & illegal are widely available it is important for schools to develop policies and procedures in advance of drug related issues coming to attention
- To meet the requirements of the Education Act and the national Drugs Strategy.

Aim

Our aim is to ensure that we work towards creating safe healthy environments and that we help our learners develop the skills and attitudes necessary to be able to cope with a drug orientated society. This is a very difficult task and requires huge effort from parents , Schools, Community, Gardai, Health Agencies and Government.

Objectives.

- To provide information for pupils and parents on alcohol , tobacco, and the illicit use of drugs.
- To provide staff with clear and specific procedures to guide good practice.
- To Provide students with the skills and competencies that would enable them to avoid a substance misuse culture in their lives.

- To provide staff with the necessary training to support and implement this policy
- To make each member of the school community aware of the school policy its procedures and sanctions.
- To provide support and awareness of this support to pupils parents around the issue of substance misuse.

Definition of a Substance

Drugs can be defined as all mood altering substances which can cause changes in the way the human body functions, either mentally, physically or emotionally. They can be both legal and illegal and can include tobacco, alcohol, solvents and medication.

Drug Education.

Aim of Drug Education.

The aim of drug education is to give the learners the knowledge skills and attitudes to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and to enable them to make informed choices about drugs.

Programme delivery

The programme will be delivered to students through the SPHE programme in Junior Cycle and through the Religious education programme for the other classes. For the PLC students it will be delivered in consultation with the PLC coordinator. For the parents the programme will be delivered in association with the HSCL coordinator.

Where possible we will link in with other services e.g. the HSE “Lets talk about Drugs” programme.

Parents and Drug education.

The parents are the primary educators and have the most influence on the lives of their children as role models over the whole range of behaviours. They are therefore crucial in any prevention strategy. The school will always endeavour to respond to parents specific needs for information and support regarding this issue.

Use of visiting speakers

Drug education is best led by classroom teachers. Where outside speakers or agencies are used, it will be planned and integrated into the programme and compliment the school’s approach. A teacher will be present with the group during the presentation.

MANAGEMENT OF DRUG INCIDENTS

Introduction Statement

This School will endeavour to handle any alcohol or illicit drug incident in a firm but fair manner, with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individual(s) involved, other members of the school and the wider community, and to fulfill any legal obligations that apply.

Outline of Restrictions

The possession, use and supply of drugs or presenting under the influence of drugs is viewed as unacceptable in this school.

When and to whom policy applies

Except where otherwise stated, the policy applies to all students, staff and other users of the school premises (including parents, visitors, and those attending evening classes). It is in force on the school premises during school time or when involved in school activities. The exception is the correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum related materials/ingredients as specified by the staff member involved. We must also ensure that these materials and cleaning agents are securely stored.

Internal Lines of reporting and key individuals

All alcohol and illicit drug incidents must be reported to the Principal who will inform the year head and other staff as appropriate. Students are themselves encouraged to inform a member of the teaching staff if an incident occurs. While on excursions, the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Recording of incidents

Written records will be kept of incidents in breach of this policy and will be stored in a confidential file by the Principal. Reference should be made in the student's normal file indicating that further information is in the possession of the Principal. Records should include any warning and/or advice given to the individual and the consequences of repetition of the behaviour. If the name of the person is to be recorded on the file, they will be informed of this. In written records, the recording of factual information only is preferable; any opinion must be stated as such.

Confidentiality

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality it is not possible to **guarantee confidentiality** to students in relation to alcohol or illicit drug incidents, including disclosure of their own drug use. Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, with the parents of those involved, or with an appropriate external agency. However, discretion within these limits will be observed.

The limits of confidentiality will be explained to the student prior to disclosure where this is possible. Students wishing to speak to someone in confidence may ask the school to put them in contact with an external agency that may meet their need.

Drug Testing

The Board of Management or Principal shall have the right to require any student to undertake a drugs test (by a doctor specified by Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed) and may require a student to undertake a series of drugs tests in event of:

(a) a positive result on a test

and/or

(b) a student been found in possession of drugs

and/or

(c) the student has been before the courts in any matter in relation to drugs

In the case of a student who is a minor, parents/guardians will be present before a test takes place and will be informed of the results of the test.

Note: A positive drug test result constitutes a breach of the policy. Failure to comply with a request to do this will result in permanent exclusion from Coláiste Mhuire Co-Ed.

Informing parents

This section of the policy relates to students only.

Parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity if their minor son/daughter is involved in a drug-related incident, as parental involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents will in such cases be invited to the school to discuss what has happened and the course of action to be taken.

The student will normally be informed that their parents are being notified.

Parents will then be given the name and number of an appropriate external agency should they wish to seek further support for themselves.

Informing Gardai

In incidents involving the use, possession or supply of illicit drugs it is the policy of the school to inform the gardai. Garda advice may be sought about other incidents on a case, by case basis. This decision will rest with the principal and/or other key staff. The school asserts its right to inform gardai of any illegal drug activity affecting the welfare of the school community.

Sanctions/Disciplinary issues

A proactive approach to prevent a recurring behavioral habit forming, will be taken. As per the discipline policy of this school a graded system of firm and consistent sanctions will apply to students involved in alcohol and or illicit drug incidents. Sanctions, including suspension or expulsion maybe imposed depending on the seriousness of the incident. In all cases of repeated breaches of the policy or possession of illegal drugs or in the case of supply of illegal drugs, the student will be expelled. Should a second level student be expelled for this reason they will not be admitted to the further education college on the campus.

Consuming, supplying or carrying of alcohol/illegal substances is strictly forbidden on school premises, while on school tour (or trips) or in the carrying out of any school related business. The consequence will be immediate suspension, A period of suspension will be followed by referral to a subcommittee of the board of management and being placed on red report. Sanctions will be graded depending on the degree and severity of the incident up to and including expulsion.

Breaches of this policy involving staff will be dealt with in accordance with their professional code of practice and conditions of employment.

Support/Pastoral issues ill the event of an incident

This applies to the students involved and their parents

1. On-going contact will be offered to the parents and students by the school counsellors/home school liaison co-ordinator
2. In-school support will be available to the students by relevant school personnel
3. The student care team will be informed about any incident and relevant issues in order to provide a holistic approach of support to the student concerned.
4. Where necessary the general parent body will be informed and up dated on substance use through presentations and information talks at this time.

The HSE alcohol and drugs service can be contacted at xxxxxxxxxx

The Community Substance Misuse team can be contacted at 061-317688

The Ana Liffey Drugs programme (over 18s) can be contacted at (01) 878 6899

The number of Thurles Garda Station is 0504 25100

Disposal of illegal drugs

Gardai will be informed and asked to deal with the disposal of the relevant substances. The illegal substance will be secured with the minimum of handling in the presence of two staff members and held until the arrival of the gardai. Records will be taken and signed by both staff members and the garda representative when the substance is transferred into the custody of the gardai.

In the event of an incidence while on a school trip. the principal will be informed as soon as possible and the procedure outlined in the policy will be adhered to. The health and safety of the offending student will be held as the priority.

Powers of search

The school retains the right to search any part of school property and any bags, lockers, jackets, vehicles or other belongings on school property or at school events. Students may be given the option to volunteer the drug prior to search.

Where there is reasonable cause to believe a student has on their person (including clothes actually being worn) a drug in breach of this policy, they will be asked to volunteer the drug. If they refuse the Gardai may be called in to conduct the search. Two staff members must be present during any form of search. An attempt will be made to notify a minor students parent/guardian prior to Garda search.

In emergencies, medical/emergency services will be sought.

Health and Safety

The physical state of the suspected student/person will be given immediate attention and care in accordance with the general health and safety policy of the school. Normal emergency first aid procedures will apply and will be administered by certified personnel if necessary. All incidents are referred to the principal and records are kept in the health and safety log-book.

Availability, storage and use of solvents.

Cleaning and educational volatile substances will be stored securely when not in use under supervision of authorised personnel. We endeavour to use non toxic products where possible.

Medication

Where a student is using medication, parental approval must be recorded by the Parent/Guardian in the student's School Journal.

Action Plan for implementation of Policy.

This policy will come into effect from April 2014. Every parent/guardian will be informed that this policy is on our school website and be invited to collect a hardcopy from the school office.

Media

The school principal will make a statement to the media where necessary, following legal advice.

Success Criteria

The successful implementation of this policy will result in

- a substance misuse free environment.
- Students who make positive health choices,
- Well informed parents on the issue of substance use and the school policy and a caring committed and well trained staff with the full support of the board of management and the ETB.