



St. Michael's School
Substance Use Policy

Introduction and Rationale

St Michael's School caters for pupils, ages 4 - 18 years, who on psychological testing, are found to be functioning within the level of mild general learning disability. The School is committed to care, quality and excellence in education for all pupils. This includes educating pupils about the dangers posed to health and to community life by the abuse of tobacco, alcohol and drugs. An essential element of preparation for the future is to educate pupils in relation to healthy and responsible lifestyles. *“It is our wish that our pupils leave us with enhanced self-confidence and with life-skills and attitudes which will enable them to lead lives satisfying to themselves and lives which will contribute to the betterment of society.”* (School Mission Statement)

The policy addresses the welfare, care and protection of our pupils in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 and is necessary because the world in which we live presents many challenges to young people that affect their lives and well-being. The use of tobacco can damage health; we wish to alert pupils to the dangers. Alcohol abuse is prevalent in society; education can contribute to a more responsible use of alcohol. The availability and use of drugs poses a great threat to young people. Education on the dangers and on avoidance strategies is essential.

Rationale

The school believes that the Personal and Social development of each member of the school community is important. Education flourishes in an environment where good relationships are encouraged, where people feel valued and respected and where there is genuine tolerance, fairness and support for those in difficulty. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work we do and is central to this policy document which is part of a general pastoral approach by the School in order to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment.

We are committed to:

- providing a nurturing environment where each individual can develop self-esteem and a sense of their place in, and responsibility to, society;
- fostering mutual respect between the whole community;
- respecting the unique potential of every pupil and encouraging each to maximise it.

Aims

The school is committed to providing a comprehensive drug education programme for all pupils which will be incorporated into the SPHE programme currently running in the school. Our aims in relation to Drug Education are to:

- increase the self-esteem and confidence of pupils,
- equip pupils with personal and social skills,
- enable pupils to make informed, healthy and responsible choices,

- provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs,
- minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions,
- work with parents/guardians.

These aims will be met through the following actions:

- comprehensive implementation of all strands and strand units of the SPHE Programme/L2LPs over a 2 year period;
- staff will be made aware of all relevant resources in relation to drug education by the SPHE post-holder;
- the Designated Liaison Person will manage and handle any instances with regard to substance misuse.

Objectives

The objectives of this policy are to:

- educate pupils about substance use so that they may have a clearer understanding about the consequences of various forms of substance use in order to act more responsibly,
- outline procedures that the school will follow in the event of substance use taking place during the school day or during school activities.

Administration of Medication

Please refer to the school's Administration of Medication Policy.

School Policy on the Use of Drugs in School

A drug can be defined as a chemical, which causes changes in the way the human body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. For the purpose of this policy we are concerned with drugs which have the power to change a previous mood and the way a person thinks about things and drugs which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent.

The school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of illegal drugs, alcohol and tobacco in the school, on school trips or on school-related activities by any of the pupils. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal (essential long term) use and the school has to be informed by parent/guardian who must furnish, to the school, written verification from authorised medical personnel.

This policy is focused on four key areas:

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

- Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.

Programmes for Alcohol, Tobacco, Vapes, Volatile Substances and Drug Education

St Michael's School, within the limited resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all its pupils. This programme of education will be age-appropriate and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes already being taught in the school – Religion Programme, SPHE and PE, Health & Fitness, Home Economics.

Parents are asked/expected to:

- acknowledge the importance of these programmes,
- recognise that they are in partnership with the School in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse,
- assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist the parents in their role the School will:

- provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes (e.g. SPHE etc).
- encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

School Policy on smoking/vaping

- The school is a non-smoking/vaping area.
- Pupils are not permitted to vape, smoke or possess cigarettes/ electronic cigarettes on the school premises or in any other place.
- All adults will comply with the non-smoking/vaping policy.
- Pupils found smoking/vaping on school premises will be reported to the Principal and parents will be informed. Repeated offences will incur a suspension.

School Policy regarding alcohol:

- No alcohol is allowed on the school premises without the permission of the Principal.
- Nobody is allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities, unless there is permission from the Principal.
- If a Staff member is of the opinion that a pupil is under the influence of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Should a pupil come to school under the influence of alcohol, the parents will be contacted immediately and requested to bring their son/daughter home.

School Policy on illicit Drugs and Solvents

- Being in possession of illicit drugs or solvents in the school premises is strictly forbidden.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them. Staff are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time.
- If a staff member is of the opinion that a pupil is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out. Parents/guardians of any student involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer will be sought.
- The school B.O.M. will expect parents/guardians to inform the Principal or teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking.

Health and Safety

There will be no toxic substances available to primary aged pupils. Any toxic substances for pottery, science or woodwork will be stored in a locked cupboard

Managing Drug Incidents

The following are examples of a drug incident:

- Experimenting with solvents, tobacco, vapes and alcohol.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour.
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession or dealing.
- Disclosure by another person.
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity.
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs/vapes etc.
- Person seeking help from member of staff.
- School grounds being used for drug activity.
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property.

It is important in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of staff is involved in managing the incident. Staff will be informed on a 'need to know' basis. The Designated Liaison Person directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal. Gardai will be informed regarding all incidences of illegal drugs. The matter may also be reported to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency.

Procedure:

Where there is no immediate danger to the pupil, it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding.

- Any Staff member who encounters a drug incident must complete a ‘Serious Incident Report’ form and hand it to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP).
- Parents/guardians will be informed and the “Code of Behaviour” invoked; suspension may follow and expulsion is the final option.
- Confidentiality: Where a pupil confides in a member of staff regarding drug use with a view to seeking help, the staff member should follow the Child Safeguarding Statement. The DLP/DDLP, in consultation with the staff member, will then decide on the involvement of parents/guardians at an appropriate time.
- The Principal will liaise with the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of any drugs found on the premises.
- In response to all incidents, parents will be advised to seek support from the relevant Community Care Area.
- If a pupil has a drug problem, parents will be advised to make referral to a G.P. and /or Drug Treatment Centre.
- The Principal will handle all media queries. The school will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and the procedures in place to manage any drug-related incident.
- In situations of confirmed use/possession or supply, then all the details will be recorded and acted upon. The record will be retained by the school.

Drug-related issue relating to adults

Adults found to be smoking or drinking on the premises will be asked to stop.

- If they refuse to do so, they will be asked to leave.
- Failure to comply with the request, the Gardai may be called and the matter will be reported to the Board of Management.

Adults found to be under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs will be asked to leave. The Gardai will be called and the matter will be reported to the Board of Management.

In cases of suspected drug misuse by parents/guardians, the Child Protection Policy will be invoked.

Drug-related issue relating to Staff

A verbal warning will be given by the Principal to staff who do not comply with the policy. If the matter persists it will be reported to the Board of Management and the staff member will be advised to seek appropriate help. Disciplinary procedures may be invoked which may result in dismissal.

Provision for Training and Staff Development

At present schools are assisted at the primary level by the Professional Development Support Team (PDST). HSE also provide a wide range of supports for schools including Health Education and Health Promotion, Smoking Cessation Support and Adolescent Counselling Services.

Information on drug education and on drug awareness courses will also be made available to parents through the Parent Committee, as necessary.

The Board of Management will facilitate staff to obtain training, bearing in mind the overall budgetary framework and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the School to continue with as little disturbance as possible.

Outside Speakers

We believe that trained teachers and appropriate outside speakers are in the best position to carry out drug education. The use of an outside visitor/ speaker to enhance the work done in class should always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and should be undertaken in the presence of a teacher.

Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.

This policy will be monitored and evaluated at the beginning of the school year to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices. This policy will be reviewed in line with the SPHE Plan.

Copies of the policy will be available to all staff. Pupils will be made aware of the policy through SPHE class.

Teachers, Parents/Guardians and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy.

Three main areas of the policy which will be evaluated are:

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

Signed: *Sr. Bernadette Carron*
Sr. Bernadette Carron
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 24.04.2024