



**Coláiste Pobail Acla**

## **Substance Misuse Policy**

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## 1. Background

Coláiste Pobail Acla is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to drugs and other prohibited substances. The implementation and success of the policy depends on the commitment of all involved.

## 2. Scope of this Policy

This Substance Misuse Policy applies to the entire school community including teachers, students, Parents/Guardians and users of the school building. It is in force at all times on the school premises, during school time and during school related activities (including school tours, away trips, work experience, extracurricular activities and evening classes.) **This is not an exhaustive list.**

## 3. Policy Content

The term 'Substance' as referred to in this policy is defined as being any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels. Prohibited substances include but are not limited to:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Medicines
- Illegal Drugs
- Solvents e.g. glue, etc.
- Cleaning agents
- Aerosols
- E-Cigarettes

**This is not an exhaustive list.**

The use of properly prescribed drugs is excluded from this list, but Parents/Guardians of students taking prescribed medication should inform the school in writing of that fact, and any possible side effects the student might display.

## 4. Relationship to School's Mission Statement

1. To encourage students to be positive in their outlook on life and to make a positive contribution to their school and society.
2. To foster the confidence in our students and teachers to develop their talents and abilities in order to reach their full potential.

This policy is part of a general pastoral approach by the school in order to ensure a safe, healthy, caring and supportive learning environment.

## **5. Rationale**

1. The school is committed to the health and safety of its community and will act to safeguard their well-being.
2. The school acknowledges the importance of its pastoral role in the welfare of young people, and through the general ethos of the school, will seek to persuade pupils in need of support to come forward.
3. To outline the procedures for dealing with incidents of substance use and misuse as stated in the Code of Behaviour of the school.

## **6. Goals/Objectives**

The school recognises that drugs, both legal and illegal, are available in the local community and that the school, as part of that community, has an important role in terms of education, prevention, support and the handling of drug related incidents within the school.

We believe and support the following educational aims in respect of substance use and misuse:

- To enable pupils to make healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge, challenging attitudes and developing and practising skills.
- To increase understanding about implications and possible consequences of substance use and misuse.
- To encourage an understanding for those experiencing or likely to experience substance use and to encourage those students to seek professional help.
- To enable young people to identify sources of appropriate personal support within the school and locality.
- To make sure Parents/Guardians are aware of this policy

These aims are fulfilled through aspects of the pupils' experiences in the taught curriculum and the informal curriculum and through opportunities for extra-curricular activities.

## **7. Substance Misuse Education Programmes**

The Social, Personal and Health Education Department will co-ordinate the teaching of substance misuse throughout the school. This will involve liaising with teachers of SPHE, Social Education, CSPE and Religion Education. The school actively co-operates with external agencies.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **8.1. Board of Management**

- Board of Management supports and is committed to providing the training of teachers on matters of substance use and misuse.
- To ensure the policy is developed and evaluated over time.
- To approve the policy at a meeting of the board.
- To consider reports from the Principal and relevant post holders on the implementation.
- To decide on appropriate sanctions for the students found using, attempting to obtain or dealing alcohol or prohibited substances.

## 8.2. Principal and Deputy Principal

The Principal or his/her nominee is responsible for dealing with substance abuse incidents arising in the school.

- To establish structures and procedures for the implementation of the policy.
- To monitor the implementation of the policy.
- To ensure that the policy is reviewed after 3 years or whenever necessary.
- All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal
- The Principal is responsible for all decisions regarding investigation of the incident.
- The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.
- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and reports associated with an incident.
- The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances and disposing of them via the relevant authorities.
- The Principal will, where deemed appropriate, make teachers and staff aware of any medication students may be using.

The Principal/Deputy Principal are responsible for the provision of support and CPD to staff members in relation to such matters.

The Principal will establish the nature and extent of activity of any student found selling or distributing prohibited substances. The student will then be referred to the Board of Management and the Gardaí.

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the young person/s, it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding. Due care will be taken to discern between allegation, suspicion and direct evidence of substance misuse.

## 8.3. Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are required to support school policies. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to attend school organised activities relating to substance misuse awareness.

**Parents/Guardians are obliged to make the school authorities aware of any medications a student is using.**

## 8.4. Teachers and Staff

Teachers and staff must be aware of the contents of this policy and realise that they may have the initial contact with a substance user, and should attempt to control any given situation, pending notification and arrival of the relevant school authorities.

### **8.5. Students**

Alcohol and/or prohibited substances must not be misused, bought or sold while on school property, grounds, on school tours and activities or while wearing the school uniform. Students must not encourage others to use alcohol or prohibited substances.

### **9. Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited on the school premises both during and outside normal school hours including school break time and lunch time. It applies to all those using the premises. Students are also governed by this policy when representing the school or involved in any school activity both during and outside normal school hours. This includes school break time and lunch time, going to and coming from school, when representing the school and wherever our school Code of Behaviour applies.

### **10. Assessing an Incident Involving Substance Misuse**

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

Incidents might involve the following:

- Drug/substance misuse related emergencies when the person may be unconscious or showing no signs of life.
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises, on the way to or from school or on school related activity.
- Use of a prohibited substance on the school premises, on the way to or from school on a school related activity.
- Selling/supplying prohibited substances/drugs on the school premises, on the way to or from school or on a school related activity.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour due to substance misuse.
- Disclosure by another person/person seeking help from a member of staff.
- Legal/illegal drug paraphernalia found on school property.
- School grounds being used for drug activity.

**This is not an exhaustive list**

## **11. Warning Signs**

### **11.1. Warning signs that a Student is abusing drugs/engaging in substance misuse**

Drug abusers often try to conceal their symptoms and downplay their problem. If you're worried that a student might be abusing drugs, look for the warning signs listed in sections 11.2 to 11.5.

### **11.2. Physical warning signs of drug abuse/engaging in substance misuse**

- Bloodshot eyes
- Pupils larger or smaller than usual
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns.
- Sudden weight loss or weight gain.
- Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits.
- Unusual smells on breath, body, or clothing.
- Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination.

### **11.3. Behavioural signs of drug abuse/substance misuse**

- Drop in attendance and performance at school.
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems.
- May borrow or steal to get it.
- Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviours.
- Sudden change in friends, favourite hangouts, and hobbies.
- Frequently getting into trouble (fights, accidents, illegal activities).

### **11.4. Psychological warning signs of drug abuse/substance misuse**

- Unexplained change in personality or attitude.
- Sudden mood swings, irritability, or angry outbursts.
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation, or giddiness.
- Lack of motivation; appears lethargic or "spaced out."
- Appears fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason.

### **11.5. Warning Signs of Commonly Abused Drugs**

- Marijuana: Glassy, red eyes; loud talking, inappropriate laughter followed by sleepiness; loss of interest, motivation; weight gain or loss.
- Depressants (including Xanax, Valium, GHB): Contracted pupils; drunk-like; difficulty concentrating; clumsiness; poor judgment; slurred speech; sleepiness.
- Stimulants (including amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine, and crystal meth): Dilated pupils; hyperactivity; euphoria; irritability; anxiety; excessive talking followed by depression or excessive sleeping at odd times; may go long periods of time without eating or sleeping; weight loss; dry mouth and nose.
- Inhalants (glues, aerosols, vapours): Watery eyes; impaired vision, memory and thought; secretions from the nose or rashes around the nose and mouth; headaches and nausea; appearance of intoxication; drowsiness; poor muscle control; changes in appetite; anxiety; irritability; lots of cans/aerosols in the trash.

- Hallucinogens (LSD, PCP): Dilated pupils; bizarre and irrational behaviour including paranoia, aggression, hallucinations; mood swings; detachment from people; absorption with self or other objects, slurred speech; confusion.
- Heroin: Contracted pupils; no response of pupils to light; needle marks; sleeping at unusual times; sweating; vomiting; coughing, sniffing; twitching; loss of appetite.

## **12. Monitoring Procedures and Sanctions in Suspected or Confirmed Cases of Illegal Drug Use**

It is important in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident.

The following procedures relate to any school activity, which includes all extra-curricular activities, school tours and coming/going to school.

1. A student suspected of using or being under the influence of these substances will be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal.
2. The Principal will interview the student and an evaluation of the situation will be made. The Principal may consult with other members of staff.
3. As a result of this interview, an opinion will be formed by the relevant leader as to the extent and nature of the problem presented by the student.
4. If the Principal is satisfied that there is a case to answer by the student, the following will take place:
  - a) The Student may be temporarily excluded, Parents/Guardians will be informed, and Tusla will be informed.
  - b) A meeting will be arranged with student and Parents/Guardians
  - c) Gardaí may be informed
5. A student who accepts involvement with substances will receive the following help;
  - a) Will be placed on report
  - b) Referred to School Counsellor.
  - c) May be requested to undergo drug testing before returning to class.
  - d) The Tutor will review their situation on a continuous basis and report to Principal.
  - e) If a student re-offends the case will be referred to the Board of Management.
6. Any Student found selling or distributing illegal substances, will be referred to the Gardaí in the first instance, suspended from school and the case brought to the Board of Management with a view to permanent exclusion from the school.



- Records of the incident will be maintained by the Principal or Deputy Principal and completed immediately following each relevant substance abuse related incident.
- It is the duty of teachers and staff of the school community to inform students that they cannot offer total confidentiality regarding these matters.
- The School may be required to contact an appropriate outside authority/expert such as the Gardaí, Tusla, and Probation Service.

### **13. Counselling/Support**

Students directly involved in a drug related incident will be offered the support of the school counselling service, who may refer to specialist external agencies if deemed appropriate. Students, Parents/Guardians, or other members of the school community who wish to speak to someone about their own drug use are invited to approach any member of staff. Where voluntary, such disclosures are seen as a desire to seek help and will therefore not be subject to disciplinary consequences and all available supports will be offered to this person.

### **14. Legal Context**

- The school has a duty of care to students, staff and other persons who may come into contact with the school.
- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The School aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for school in Circular 18/02.
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000

This policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use and misuse.

### **15. Sources of Information**

- [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)
- [www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie)
- [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)

### **16. Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy will be reviewed on a three year basis, or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management, through:

- Relevant legislation
- Student feedback
- Staff feedback
- Communication with Parents/Guardians

## 17. Links with Other Policies and Documents

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Code of Behaviour
- Smoke Free Work Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Critical Incident Management Plan

## 18. Declaration

This Coláiste Pobail Acla Policy was formed following consultation with staff, members of the Board of Management, Parents/Guardians and Students. It is recommended that this policy be reviewed every three years or whenever it is deemed necessary by School Management. It was adopted by the Board of Management of Coláiste Pobail Acla on:

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Pat Kilbane

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. Paul Fahy

Board Secretary & School Principal (Acting)