Scoil Fhursa Substance Use Policy

This policy applies to students, teachers, parents, Board of Management, Coiste na dTuismitheoirí and any other users of the school building. It applies during school time (including break time) and to all school related activities. It also applies to all other events/occasions/meetings when the school is in use.

Introductory Statement and Rationale

The decision was taken by the Board of Management and Teaching Staff of Scoil Fhursa to draw up a substance use policy,

- The National Drugs Strategy, 'Building on Experience', is now Government Policy and it requires schools to have a drugs policy in place (Action 43).
- To develop a shared understanding of the term 'drugs' and to define the schools' agreed position in relation to drug related issues.
- To equip schools to deal with issues relating to substance misuse in a planned and considered way and in accordance with their statutory responsibilities.
- To assist teachers in their classroom experience.
- This policy supports the school's aim that we provide a safe learning environment for all. It aims to protect the school community and to help those who have difficulties.

Aims of Policy Implementation:

- To ensure the welfare, care and protection of every young person as provided for in the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
- To ensure that the school complies with legislative requirements and principles of good practice.
- To make a contribution, in the area of education and prevention through the SPHE programme.
- To prevent the dangers caused to children by drug misuse.
- To manage drug related incidents in a planned manner.
- To support parents and pupils in addressing drug misuse.

It should be read with the Code of Behaviour/Discipline policy of Scoil Fhursa – An Cód Iompair/Rialacha na scoile.

School Vision

The school see itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to increase control over and improve their health. We endeavour to promote the wellbeing of students by: -

1. Providing a safe secure healthy environment.
2. Promoting positive health behaviours.
3. Increasing knowledge about health.
4. Promoting the self-esteem and self-awareness of students.
5. Working in partnership with the parents and pupils.

Definition of a Drug
A drug can be defined as a chemical which causes changes in the way the human body functions mentally, physically or emotionally.

Aims of Policy

The child should be enabled to:

- be self-confident and have a positive sense of self-esteem
- develop a sense of personal responsibility
- develop an understanding of healthy living, an ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health
- develop a sense of safety and an ability to protect himself/herself from danger and abuse
- make decisions, solve problems and take appropriate actions in various personal, social and health contexts
- become aware of, and discerning about, the various influences on choices and decisions

Education Concerning Substance Use

It is accepted amongst educationalists that education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is best carried out by teachers through the inclusion of SPHE in the curriculum.
In Scoil Fhursa education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education Programme which is delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment.
In Social, Personal and Health Education, education on substances is provided through the Misneach (Walk Tall) programme and through project work. Weaving Wellbeing.

On the timetable each week half an hour is allowed for Social, Personal and Health Education.

If outside speakers or experts are invited to school there will always be a teacher present, and the guidance in Circular 0042/2018 will be followed.

Smoking – School Policy:

- The school is a nonsmoking area.
- Students are not permitted to have cigarettes on the school premises or in the school environment (i.e. clós na scoile).
- Visitors will comply with the non-smoking policy.

Alcohol – School Policy:

- The school is an alcohol-free area.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, she/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home. In cases, it may be necessary to seek advice from TÚSLA.
- Students breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's Code of Behaviour.
- Alcohol will not be used as prizes in school raffles
- Alcohol will not be stored in the school building.

Illicit Drugs – School Policy

- Students are forbidden from being in possession of or using illicit drugs in the school premises.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, she/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home. In cases, it may be necessary to seek advice from TÚSLA or the Gardaí.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises will be locked away and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them. Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs the advice and assistance of the Garda and TÚSLA will be sought.
- Parents have a duty to inform the school if they suspect their child of drug taking.
- The Code of Behaviour will be implemented if any of these rules are broken.

Solvents:

- Children are not allowed to have any solvents in school for example: aerosols, perfume, aftershave, cigarette lighters, correction fluids and thinners.

Medicines:

All medicines in school must be stored in such a way that children cannot access them.

Children's medicine, see Administration of Medicines Policy*

If staff have personal medicines at school, they are responsible for safe storage of same, so that children cannot access them.

Management of Incidents in relation to Alcohol, Tobacco or Drugs:

Incidents such as these may occur:

- Use of alcohol, tobacco or drugs in the school or at school activities
- Drunkenness or unusual behaviour
- Information about substance abuse
- Finding substances
- Possession or supply in the school or at school activities.

Parents/Guardians:

If any staff member becomes aware of a parent/guardian coming to collect a child while obviously under the influence of a substance and incapable, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the welfare of the child. Gardaí or HSE will be informed.

Staff Members:

It is not appropriate for any staff member to have consumed alcohol if they are in charge of or in the view of pupils.

In certain cases, legal advice may be required. If a member of staff is under the influence of a substance they must be sent home immediately and an enquiry will follow.

In the case of a teacher or SNA, the school may work with the Employee Assistance Scheme.

The school will take into account reports regarding use or supply of drugs by any staff member.

Role of Principal:

It is the role of the Principal to ensure that the Misneach (Walk Tall) programme is taught in each class.

To ensure that the teachers understand the importance of the SPHE programme in the curriculum in order to avoid substance abuse.

To ensure that each teacher is aware of the law regarding alcohol, tobacco and drugs and how this relates to themselves, the school and the pupils.

To deal with parents the Gardaí, TÚSLA or any other organisation necessary in the event of an incidence of substance abuse in the school.

Teachers' Role:

To be aware of the importance of the SPHE curriculum in the children's education about substance use.

To implement the Walk Tall programme.

Parents' Role:

The school wishes to make clear that the primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with the parents and they must ensure to educate their own child on substance abuse in an age-appropriate way.

Implementation:

This policy was implemented from the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year and is reviewed regularly.

23rd November 2021

Seán Ó Meachtair