

Substance Misuse Policy



Ethos Statement

Mayo, Sligo Leitrim ETB is a community of learners with an historic and unique tradition as a provider of education and training. In responding to the needs of the community it delivers the highest standards of teaching and learning.

Mayo, Sligo Leitrim ETB Schools and Centres of Education are democratic, co-educational and multi-denominational in character where policies, practices and attitudes are underpinned by the core values of Respect, Equity and Fairness.

The Board of Management of Coláiste Iascaigh is publishing this document as the official Substance Misuse Policy. Mayo, Sligo Leitrim ETB as patron of the school has approved this publication. Copies of the policy are available at the school and are furnished to each person who applies to be admitted to the school.

Link to Mission statement

Coláiste Iascaigh in conjunction with its education partners is committed to providing an environment where each student is cherished equally and is nurtured to a personal, intellectual and moral maturity.

The Substance Misuse Policy helps to set the standards that the school community aspires to; students and staff work together to continue to develop the school and maintain an atmosphere in which all individuals feel safe.

The School Position

Coláiste Iascaigh is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance misuse. The policy has been drawn up and accepted by the Principal, Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Board of Management and Students. It is necessary that all involved work together to implement this policy. It is vital that Parents/Guardians actively work with the school to implement to ensure their children's health and safety. In this policy '*drugs*' means any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically, or emotionally. 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.

Rationale

This policy reflects the view that:

The prevalence of tobacco, Nicotine products, alcohol, and drugs misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.

- It recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and alcohol misuse.
- The school policy aims to co-operate with the strategic plan adopted by the Government under the national Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in Circular 18/02
- The Education Act 1998 provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

Aims, Goals and Objectives

Our educational aims in relation to drug education are:

- To increase the self-esteem in young people.
- To equip young people to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
- To Provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions
- To create a healthy school environment
- To promote a clean air environment (ie No Smoking / Vaping)
- To encourage responsibility

Substance Misuse

- Smoking including e-cigarettes on school premises/grounds is forbidden/illegal
- Consumption of alcohol is forbidden, including on school trips.
- The possession of and involvement in drugs is illegal.
- The school does not accept the possession, use, or supply of illegal drugs in the school, or on outside activities or in non-school time by any member.
- The school does not accept the possession, use or supply of alcohol, tobacco or nicotine products or e-cigarettes in the school or on school activities by any student.
- The school does not accept the misuse of solvent based substances. Students may have prescribed or “over the counter” medicines for legitimate personal use only.
- Students who have in their possession and take medical drugs in school long term must inform the school.
- The school and relevant teachers must be informed if a student has a medical condition.
- A student or teacher may not give another student any prescribed or “over the counter” medication.

Chemicals in school laboratories will be held under lock and key. Students will handle and use such substances only under their teacher’s supervision.

Steps to be taken by a teacher if an alcohol or a drug related incident arises

1. Take steps to secure the health and safety of the class or group and the individuals involved in the incident.
2. Make contact with and if possible, send for the Principal, Deputy Principal or Class Tutor(s) whichever is available at the particular time
3. Ask for, collect and secure any substances or paraphernalia associated with the incident if such are in evidence (Remember only the Gardai have the authority to search an individual)
4. Complete a full report of the incident and give it to the Principal.

Investigating Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs Related Incidents

The following steps will be taken in managing and investigating an abuse incident.

1. When it is apparent that there is an immediate danger to students or the school community, the school reserve the right to suspend or to remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
2. All incidents involving the use of drugs will be investigated immediately or as soon as practicable and an Abuse Incident Report form will be completed.
3. All steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident will be taken in whatever time is deemed necessary by the school.
4. The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substance and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording such items and holding them pending completion of the investigation.
5. Statements will be sought from all persons involved in, concerned with and having knowledge of the incident and these statements will be recorded.
6. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation, including all communications and documents associated with the incident.
7. The school may liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice and assistance, as it is deemed appropriate

Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Drugs Related Incidents

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

Assessing a substance misuse incident: if there is no damage done to the student/s, it is important to:

- Take time to listen and assess before responding
- Separate fact from rumour
- In situations of confirmed use, possession or supply all details must be recorded and acted upon
- Then complete the drugs incident report

People will be informed on a “need to know “ basis. All written records will be held confidentially by the Principal or Deputy Principal. Parents/guardians will be involved. They will be informed sensitively and support offered to them.

In the case of illegal drugs the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact the Gardai-Juvenile Officer, and any drugs will be dealt with by Gardai. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered.

If the school becomes aware that a student has a substance misuse problem referral will be recommended. Parents/Guardians staff and other students involved in the incident will be offered support. Confidentiality is a complex issue. It is important that the limits of any confidentiality are discussed with students before any disclosure is made. The well being and welfare of students and teachers must be a primary focus.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will handle all media enquiries. They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedure in place to manage any drug related incident.

If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the student concerned and their parents in the following manner:-

- Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his/her at the discretion of the school in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his/her own reply to the matter at issue and any representation that he/she would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
- The school will allow the student concerned and his parents, reasonable time to respond to the matter at issue. The school will take into account so made and any other relevant extraneous consideration and mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
- The school will shortly thereafter inform the student and his/her parents of the school findings and the reason for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident it shall indicate the penalty or the sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
- In relation to a verified incident the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to an oral warning, written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion.
- The school can at its sole discretion postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
- The school will also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the students and the parents/guardians affected by the incident abuse. The service of the guidance counsellor, School Completion Project Worker, Home Youth Liaison Service personnel, Home School Community Liaison Officer or year head may be offered by the school at a time of a personal crisis. In addition, the school

will play its part in initially liaising with the various statutory bodies with a view to establishing ongoing support for the family

The involvement and role of various parties in the incident investigation

The Principal is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area. She/he may nominate the Deputy Principal, Year Head or other nominated staff to act on his/her behalf in the investigation of the substance abuse incident. The duties and the responsibilities of the Principal (or his/her nominee) in this regard include the following.

- The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school.
- All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.
- The Principal makes all the decisions regarding investigation of an incident, communication with liaising with and reporting to the relevant parties and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.
- 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 records associated with an incident.
- The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with the same upon appropriate advice.

The school will inform at an early stage parents of children involved in drug related incidents, particularly when there are health and safety concerns relating to the child. Students involved will also be kept informed of what is happening and why. Such actions will be taken without prejudice to the schools separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.

The school recognises the importance in limiting as far as practicable the number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident. It is the aim of the school to involve only those properly concerned with the incident.

However, students and parents are asked to obtain and accept that:

- The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any student when they come into contact with an abuse incident.
- The school may be required in a given situation to contact as appropriate such authorities as the Gardai, Health Board, Probation Service or the officers of the Courts
- The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate the incident.
- The school may from time to time be obliged to notify certain persons about an incident or the investigation of an incident under statute, or other regulations Department of Education guidelines.

Media Enquiries

It is the policy that media enquiries involving a substance abuse incident will be handled as follows:

- The school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents.
- In the interest of the schools reputation the Board of Management may clarify the schools position regarding an incident after the investigation has been concluded.

Disciplinary Procedures

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules are broken, sanctions and Punishments will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence. These will be consistent with school rules (see the code of conduct)

As a general rule, in the event of an abuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student involved, the welfare of the whole school community and the reputation of the school.

Training and Development

Parents and Boards of Management

- The school will provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops in relation to drugs and the school policy
- Parents and the Board will be consulted and kept informed of this policy and matters relating to Substance Use Policy in the school.

Staff

- The school will facilitate training for staff involved in delivering S.P.H.E. Programmes.
- Staff will be offered appropriate information and awareness training.
- First Aid training will be made available to key staff.

Students

- Coláiste Iascaigh will offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their S.P.H.E classes. Drug/Alcohol awareness will be an integral part of the Pastoral Care Programme of the school.
- Guest speakers will be invited to address students on a regular basis in regard to Drug/Alcohol use.

Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluation

The Principal, Year Heads and S.P.H.E. Co-ordinator will regularly monitor and update aspects of the policy on the three areas of

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents

→ Parents, Staff and Management training

The results of the monitoring will be recorded and made available to the Principal, the teaching staff and the Board of management.

The policy will be reviewed regularly, in the light of changing information or circumstances by a drug policy working group set up by the Principal and the representatives of the wider school community.

Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Students and the Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy when it has been in place for one year. Again, the three specified areas above will be evaluated.

The three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:

1. Drugs Education Programme
2. Managing Drugs Related Incidents
3. Parents, Staff and Management Training and courses offered to the school community

This policy was formulated by the substance misuse committee September 2006

Reviewed April 2009

Reviewed June 2017

Appendix 1

Examples

The following are examples of drug incidents

- Intoxication/uncharacteristic 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 of legal/illegal drugs
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drugs paraphernalia found on school property

Definitions

1. The school is Coláiste Iascaigh including all school buildings, grounds, play areas and public areas where students congregate coming to and from school
2. Parents are defined to include natural parents, foster parents, step parents and guardians of pupils in the school.
3. Students mean students in the school.
4. Banned or prohibited substances includes all substances covered by the misuse of drugs act, non validated prescription medication, all alcohol and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. The school reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or a prohibited substance.
5. "Drug Paraphernalia" includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be seemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances and may be written or printed material promotions, on the use of illicit substances
6. The Principal means the principal appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the Deputy Principal where the Principal is unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy or another staff member of the school.