



Substance Misuse Policy

This policy is rooted in the Mission Statement and aims of the school, fostering partnership between parents, teachers and the community in the interest of children's learning. All members of the school community will be treated with respect and compassion irrespective of social, racial, sexual or ethnic background.

Moate Community School Commitment:

Moate Community School, within its Mission statement, promotes an ethos based on respect, co-operation and participation where the partners are fully committed to creating an environment within the organization that is safe and healthy, and where young people will develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to make informed choices in a drug oriented society. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work we do and is central to this policy document.

Definition of Substance/Drugs and Substance Misuse

Substance/Drugs can be defined as all mood altering substances, both legal and illegal that cause changes in the way a person thinks, feels and acts. Substance misuse is the use of any drug, which can potentially lead to injury of the individual and/or society. For the purpose of this policy this includes tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs.

Scope of the Policy:

This policy applies to all school personnel and students of the school and any other users of the school premises including parents, visitors and those attending evening classes. The school will not tolerate the possession, use or supply of drugs. The policy is in force at all times on the school premises, during school time and during school related activities, including school tours.

The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use (school will be informed by parent/guardians) and the correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum-related materials/ingredients.

Key Considerations:

The policy is focused on four key areas:

- Alcohol, tobacco and drug education programs.
- Managing drug related incidents.
- Training and staff development.
- Monitoring, review and evaluation.



Aims and Objectives of the Policy on Substance Misuse:

- To affirm publicly the commitment of the school to promote, prevent and endeavor to eliminate any form of substance misuse in school.
- To set out clearly the definition of what constitutes substance misuse, signs and indicators of concern and appropriate responding guidelines, which are fundamental to the implementation of the policy.
- To provide a framework which will ensure that the policy and procedures will be applied fairly, and without delay to ensure consistent and equitable standards of care.
- To promote the inclusion and participation of all partners, which includes student, teacher, parent and other agencies in the community in the ownership, development and implementation of the policy and procedure.
- To develop a policy and procedure that promotes long-term sustained education on substance misuse underpinned by enhancing the social and psychological development of all young people within the context of the local culture.
- To ensure that the approach is grounded in factual or informational education which aims to give unbiased, accurate information on substance misuse and facilitated in a manner, which is conducive to open education, discussion and exploration of attitudes and experience.

Principles :

- We are committed to an environment free from drug misuse.
- The school promotes the right of all students and school personnel to be treated with integrity and dignity.
- We actively promote the raising of awareness of all partners on what constitutes drug misuse and the means by which it is dealt with appropriately.
- The school is committed to an environment where open communications are enhanced at all levels, where students and staff are empowered to talk about any concerns they have.
- The school promotes interagency partnership with the HSE and other relevant professionals in raising awareness on substance misuse.
- Student and staff development programs promoting self-esteem, self-empowerment and self-worth are an integral part of the school provision of a comprehensive drug education program which will be incorporated into the SPHE, Religion, PE and Science programs currently being run in the school.

Education on substance use/misuse essentially aims:

- To increase the self esteem and confidence of young people.
- To equip young people with personal and social skills.
- To enable young people to make informed, responsible and healthy choices.
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimize the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions.



These aims will be met by the following actions:

- Teachers involved in SPHE will receive ongoing in-service training pertaining to education on substance misuse.
- All teachers will be offered information and awareness training on substance misuse.
- Parents are to be made aware and informed of what is happening in the school regarding education on substance misuse.

Managing substance misuse related incidents:

The school will respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse in a planned and considered way. In certain situations legal advice may be sought. Due care will be important in deciding on the balance between a pastoral response and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving substance misuse may involve referral to a support agency. Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco on the school premises or on a school related activity, will be dealt with under the school's Code of Behavior.

Assessing an Incident:

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to young person/s it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding and to complete a drug incident report form. The possession, use or supply of alcohol and illicit drugs as defined is viewed as unacceptable by all in the school community.

It is important in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved. All reports and incidents of substance misuse will be dealt with firmly, sensitively, consistently and confidentiality will apply on a 'need to know' basis.

In most cases the school will want to involve parents unless the student is over the age of 18 years. This needs to be handled sensitively and support offered to the parent/guardian by the Guidance Counsellor/Chaplin in the first instance.

The principal or designated person will liaise with Gardai in the event of a confirmed drug incident.

General Procedure:

- Remain clam and keep a note of incident/s, noting date, time, place, any witness present, and the context and nature of the alleged incident.
- Inform school designated person who has the responsibility to investigate allegation and who will then:
 - Inform school principal/manager of the incident and action taken to date.
 - Document where possible all relevant details and evidence relating to the incident.
 - Inform parents.



Powers of search:

In the interest of the general student body the school retains the right to search any part of school property if there is any reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy is present. This may include:

- Search of a student's locker.
- Search of a student's school bag.
- An instruction to a student to empty his/her schoolbag or pockets or locker.

Any such search will be authorized by the principal/manager/deputy. Any search will be undertaken in the presence of two members of staff.

Disposal of Illegal Substances:

If an illegal drug is found it must be stored securely by staff while awaiting the Gardai who will dispose of same. The substance should be handled as little as possible and no attempt should be made to taste or analyse the substance.

Two staff members should be present during any procedures involving handling illegal substances.

Counselling/Pastoral Care

- Pastoral care will be offered in response to all incidents.
- If the person has a serious drug problem then referral to an external agency will be recommended.
- Parents and staff involved in an incident will be offered support.

Disciplinary Procedures:

Drug incidents are complex and in a situation where the school rules are broken the sanctions will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the incident. (Please refer to the Code of Behavior)

Recording of Incidents:

All incidents involving alcohol and illicit drugs and any action taken including the consequences or repeat misbehavior will be recorded in a confidential file.

Confidentiality:

School staff cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses substance misuse. Information must remain private and only discussed on a 'need to know' basis.



Media:

The principal/manager or a nominated spokesperson will handle all media queries. The school will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures on the management of drug related incidents, Guidelines For Managing Substance Misuse Related Incidents. All reports and incidents of substance misuse will be dealt with sensitively, discreetly, consistently and confidentiality will apply on a 'need to know' basis.

Emergency Response:

- Drug taking can have dangerous consequences, it is therefore important to know what action to take in the event of an emergency.
- Teachers should be prepared to deal with an emergency by calling the trained first aider where available in the school, calling emergency services, notifying the co-ordinator/director/manager and attempting to make contact with parents/guardians.
- If it is been identified that any immediate health threatening reaction has occurred as a result of substance misuse please refer to the steps set out in Appendix 1 for guidance.
- Liaison with external support services in this area is essential both as a source of ongoing support and for the provision of training.

Visiting Speakers:

A number of organisations and individuals offer or are asked to speak about drugs to students and parents. It is advised that the approach taken by the speaker and their purpose in speaking be carefully considered. Speakers have the greater chance of being effective when they are invited to make a presentation as part of an ongoing planned program on health issues within the school.

- The speaker will be advised in advance of the policy on substance misuse and the overall policy framework in operation within the school/centre.
- The speaker will meet where possible and submit the content of the proposed presentation to the coordinator in advance of the visit.
- The coordinator will consult with relevant stakeholders eg principal, BOM, SPHE staff etc to review the proposed presentation.
- Normally a teacher/coordinator will remain for the duration of the presentation

Implementation of the Policy:

- Promote an atmosphere of openness, honesty and respect in which students, teachers and parents are encouraged to talk openly about their concerns.
- Promote staff training on substance misuse and First Aid as an integral part of the annual in-service calendar.
- Clearly state that the school will not administer any medicines to students.



Staff Training and Development Training will be made available to staff involved in the delivery of the SPHE program:

- All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training.
- First aid training will be made available to all staff.
- The school will provide opportunities for members of the Board of Management and parents to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to substance misuse

Evaluation of the Policy:

- The Planning Team/management will evaluate the policy to ensure that it is of practical benefit to the school and in keeping with any legislation.
- The policy will be reviewed annually or in the light of changing information by the policy working group in consultation with the school community.



General Information

Signs and Indicators of Substance Misuse

1. Common features indicative of drug-taking among adolescents:

- Unusual loss of interest in school
- Poor school results
- Increased truancy
- Habitual lateness for school
- Rowdy or unusually giddy behavior in class after breaks
- Groups congregating in out of the way places
- Unexplained loss of consciousness in class
- A secrecy about activities and whereabouts
- New and different friends
- Keeping unusually late hours
- Losing interest in old friends, sports or hobbies
- Excessive tiredness or loss of appetite
- Mood swings that cannot be explained
- Appearing drunk or stoned
- Selling prized possessions
- Stealing
- Job loss
- Clashes with the Gardai
- Information learned from other members of the group/class

2. General Signs and Indicators of Substance Misuse

Substance misuse can involve a wide range of different drugs and each drug used will have specific consequences. Among the initial signs which are often noted are:

- Drunkenness
- Hallucinations
- Erratic or violent behavior
- Fixed stare blurred or double vision
- Restlessness tiredness and lack of energy
- Unusual smells including solvents
- Persistent cough runny nose and eyes
- Unusual spots, rashes, red marks or unexplained burns on the face area or on arms
- Nausea, loss of appetite and weight

Emergency Response Guidelines

Do not panic and approach the student in a firm, caring way avoiding confrontation.



1. If a Person is Tense or Panicky:

This tends to happen with drugs like LSK, amphetamines, magic mushrooms and ecstasy.

- Calm her/him down and reassure the person.
- Talk openly and explain that panicky feelings will go.
- Keep them away from loud noises and bright lights.
- Encourage them to take slow deep breaths and exhale slowly.
- Contact medical help immediately.

2. If the Person Overheats or Dehydrates

This tends to happen with drugs like ecstasy or amphetamines have been used.

Warning signs include:

- Cramps in the legs, arms and back
- Failure to sweat
- Headaches, dizziness and vomiting
- Suddenly feeling tired
- Fainting
- Action:
- Move the person to a cool area
- Splash them with cold water to cool them down.
- Remove excess clothing and fan person to cool him/her down.
- Call an ambulance immediately.

3. If the Person Faints or Loses Consciousness

This happens mainly with drugs like alcohol, heroin, tranquillizers and solvents.

- Put the person in a recovery position.
- Loosen any tight clothing that might restrict breathing.
- Keep person warm but not too warm.
- Check their breathing and be prepared to do mouth to mouth resuscitation.
- Call an ambulance as soon as possible.

4. If the Person is Drowsy and Conscious:

- This usually happens with drugs like alcohol, tranquillizers, heroin, and solvents.
- Put the person in the recovery position and keep talking to them.
- Try to stop them losing consciousness and do not put them to bed.
- If they want a drink give sips of lukewarm water only.
- Call medical help as soon as possible.