

SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

Introduction

A drug can be defined as a chemical which causes changes in the way the human body functions either 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 on which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent. In the North East Health Board Region it is generally accepted that alcohol and tobacco are the most widely abused drugs, however, illicit substances such as cannabis, Ecstasy, magic mushrooms and solvents are increasingly becoming a problem in our area.

Ashbourne Community School sees itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to increase control over and improve their health. We endeavour to promote the well being of students by:-

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

To this end, in response to the encroaching drug culture in our society we feel the need to implement a comprehensive policy in Ashbourne Community School to address the problem of substance misuse in our schools.

The Policy will focus on:-

- 1. Strategies for prevention of substance misuse problems**
- 2. Procedures for dealing with drug incidences in the school**
- 3. Guidelines and information for teachers to improve their response to the problem of substance misuse.**

This document should be read with the discipline and pastoral care policy of the school.

1. Policy Development

This policy has been developed through the Healthy Schools Steering Group, following a consultative process with parents associations, teachers, Boards of Management and Principals.

The Healthy Schools Steering Group has recommended that individual schools would refine this policy and develop it in their own school by consulting with the appropriate partners.

In Ashbourne Community School, we are adopting this policy in consultation and in conjunction with Parents, Teachers, Management and students.

The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated where necessary.

2. Implementation of the Policy

In Ashbourne Community School the Board of Management, the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads and all Staff will be given a copy of the policy. Parents and Guardians will be given a copy of the policy on enrolment of their child in school. Enrolment will be on acceptance of this and other school policy documents by them.

Teachers will be briefed on the policy by the Principal/Deputy Principal and training needs may be identified. Training may be carried out in conjunction with the Health Promotion Department of the North Eastern Health Board.

3. Prevention

3.1. Education:

It is accepted amongst professionals working within the addiction field that education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is best carried out by teachers the students know and within the overall context of a healthy living programme. Ashbourne Community School follows a Healthy Schools programme developed by the North Eastern Health Board to ensure that:-

- Students have clear information about the effects of the various drugs.
- Students examine their attitudes to alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances in their lives and in the environment in which they live.
- Students are equipped with the skills to make informed and healthy decisions around substance use.

3.2. Counselling:

Substance misuse rarely occurs in a vacuum and where a student has been in difficulties because of their use of any drug it is usually discovered they have been using it to help them cope with or avoid some other problem. By enabling the student to identify more positive sources of support when they need it we can help prevent the inappropriate use of substances. This also assists them in developing more long-term skills to cope with traumas or problems they encounter.

3.3. Parents:

Regular information evenings will be held at the request of the Parent/Teacher Association to help them deal with the problem at home. These evenings may be addressed by the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer, The Home School Liaison Service, local youth service, the Drugs Outreach service/Addiction Counsellor from the North Eastern Health Board or whoever is deemed appropriate by the school.

4. Smoking

4.1. School Policy:

- Ashbourne Community School is a smoke-free area.
- Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on the school premises.
- Staff should not permit pupils to smoke on any school trip and should actively discourage smoking in public places.
- Visitors will comply with restricted smoking policy.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the year head and suspended.

4.2. Support:

Smoking is an addictive habit, generally acquired in childhood. Ashbourne Community School recognises some students may have difficulty stopping smoking. Staff from the North Eastern Health Board are willing to run smoking cessation groups in schools where demand makes a group feasible and where a designated teacher will co-operate.

5. Alcohol

5.1. School Policy:

- Ashbourne Community School is an alcohol-free area, except for designated staff and parent functions where prior notice is given to the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- Students will not be allowed to bring alcohol into school or to consume alcohol in Ashbourne Community School.
- Students will not be allowed to carry or consume alcohol on school trips or tours.
- Alcohol will not be available at Discos or any other after hours activities arranged by the school.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home. This will be followed up by the year head at a more appropriate time.
- Students breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's disciplinary procedure.

6. Illicit Drugs And Solvents

6.1. School Policy:

- Students are prohibited from being in possession of, or using illicit drugs or solvents in Ashbourne Community School's premises.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardai contacted to dispose of them. Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time. An investigation by a designated teacher will be made into the origin of illicit drugs found.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out. Parents of any student involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer will be sought.
- The school management will expect parents to inform the Principal/Deputy Principal or Year head if they suspect their child of drug-taking.
- Students suspected of taking drugs or solvents outside school will be monitored and every effort will be made to support them and ensure they get the counselling and help they need.

The procedure for dealing with behaviour which leads to suspicion of a substance misuse problem is outlined, step by step below. Any incident of intoxication will also be followed-up in this way.

- Having observed the behaviours of concern and verified it with others the Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal will meet with the student. Concern will be expressed for the consequences of this behaviour and as much information as possible elicited from the student.
- A meeting is then arranged with the parents informing them of the behaviour and of the school's concern. The parents will have the opportunity to voice their own worries and fears.
- A referral will usually be made to the appropriate staff of the N.E.H.B., or to an Addiction Counsellor for a full assessment of the extent of the problem. Any further incident at school cancels this agreement and parents will be called in.
- Where a student has been suspended in line with disciplinary procedure, the Board of Management may make it a condition that their return to the school will usually be subject to the student receiving external counselling or follow-up.
- In the event of parents being unwilling to co-operate with this procedure the school will continue to monitor the behaviour. The social work department of the North Eastern Health Board will be contacted if the school's concern warrants it. Parents will be informed before hand and given the opportunity to co-operate with the procedure.
- The Board of Management reserve the right to expel the student where it considers it in the best interests of the school, following normal procedures.