

Coláiste Toghnaí



SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

Substance Use Policy

Aim: A framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use.

Introduction:

The policy has been drawn up and accepted by the Principal, Deputy-Principal, Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Board of Management and students.

Rationale:

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, solvents and drugs is part of their reality.

Coláiste Iognáid is committed to enabling students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical potential.

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

- The National Drugs Strategy, 2001-2008 sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government Department and Agencies to combat the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. The strategy, which is Government policy, highlights the important contribution that schools can make in the area of education and prevention, and requires them to have substance use policies in place.
- Section IV of the Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools states that all schools should be actively engaged in the process of developing and agreeing a Substance Use Policy in line with Action 43 of the National Drugs strategy and Circular.

Relation of Policy to School's Mission

In keeping with its mission to develop a community of learning and academic excellence and to ensure the holistic development of every student in its care

Coláiste Iognáid asserts the right to require certain standards of behaviour and to prohibit certain practices.

The College's policy on substance use is part of a general pastoral approach to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment and to offer a formal programme of drugs education both in terms of prevention and offering support to those who use drugs. The College is also committed to fostering the development of personal responsibility.

This school policy is written in the context of, and informed by, the Characteristics of Jesuit Education, the National Drugs Strategy, the Health and Safety policy, The Rules and Programmes for Secondary schools and best educational practice.

SECTION 1: Aims and Objectives of the Policy

Central to the '*Characteristics of Jesuit Education*' is a concern for the total development of each individual student. Coláiste Iognáid S.J. is committed to providing a comprehensive education programme regarding legal and illegal substances for all students delivered in part through the Social, Personal and Health Programme and also in the overall context of a supportive whole school environment. We believe that teachers, parents, the Board of Management, students and other relevant personnel need to work together and that cooperation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of the policy. In addition, the school does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school, on school activities or in non-school time by any member of the whole school community.

The school endeavours to promote the well being of individuals by:

- a) Providing a policy with fair and transparent procedures for dealing with substance use issues and complying with our statutory requirements.
- b) Facilitating a safe and healthy environment
- c) Promoting positive health behaviours through:
 - i. Increasing knowledge about health
 - ii. Promoting the self esteem of individuals
 - iii. Working with parents, students, and teachers and outside agencies.
- d) Supporting students and their families who are affected by substance use.

SECTION 2-Substance Use Education

Aim of student substance use education programme: The aim of our programme is to give young people the knowledge, skills and attitudes to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and relate these to their choices about substance use, both now and in their future lives.

(a) Parents-

The school recognises that parents are the primary carers and educators of their children, and it is essential that parents support any prevention strategy.

The Parents Association will invite appropriate guest lecturers on substance education meetings annually as deemed appropriate, in consultation with school management.

Visiting Speakers

Speakers may be invited to support the programme from time to time. Visitors should be properly planned and part of overall programme.

In normal circumstances teachers should be present and involved particularly in liaison beforehand with speaker with reference to content.

Speakers are expected to work within the norms and ethos of the college.

The organising teacher needs to make them aware of these norms.

(b) Staff-

- The College will provide training in delivering education programmes relating to legal and illegal substances.
- The College will provide specific training on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of an abuse incident.
- Teachers involved in SPHE will be given the opportunity to avail of training in group facilitation skills and personal development.
- While trained teachers are in the best position to carry out illegal substance use education, it may sometimes be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in class.

(c) Students-

- Junior cycle students receive Social Personal and Health Education(SPHE) which includes a substance use module. A minimum

of 4 class periods per year will be dedicated to issues of substance use for these students

- Staff delivering other subjects where opportunities arise to examine substance use issues (e.g. Religion, Science subjects, P.E., Home-Economics, etc) are invited to use these opportunities to support the drug education programme
- In Senior Cycle, Religious Education, Science and Health Education(Transition Year) teachers will deliver substance use education.

SECTION 3: School Rule

Smoking

- a. The right of all to a smoke free environment is affirmed by the College.
- b. Smoking is prohibited at all times in the school, on the school premises, on school activities or during any school related activity.
- c. The only exception will be in regard to teachers and guests of the College who are allowed smoke in a specially designated area.

Alcohol:

The possession, sale and consumption of alcohol by students in the school, on the school premises, on school activities or during any school related activity is prohibited.

Rare exceptions may be made with regard to a school related activity outside the school premises, in the case of students over 18 years of age who have the prior written approval of their parent(s) / guardian(s).

Illegal substances, solvents etc

The possession, use and the supply of illegal drugs or any drug paraphernalia etc, either in the school, on the school premises, on school activities or during any school related activity, by members of the school community is prohibited.

SECTION 4: Procedures for Managing Suspected Substance Abuse Incidents

4 (i)

A) Definition of substance use incidents:

1. Emergencies where the person may be unconscious
2. Intoxication/Unusual Behaviour
3. Suspicion of substance use, possession or dealing.
4. Disclosure of a person involved in substance use by a third party
5. Prevention of substances on the school premises or on a school related activity
6. Selling/supplying legal (prescription drugs, solvents etc) or illegal substances
7. Drug paraphernalia found on school property.

B) Exceptions are:

1. The correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum related materials or ingredients as specified by the staff member involved
2. Alcohol may be provided for adult use at special school events or accessions with the prior consent of school management
3. Medication professionally prescribed for specific conditions

SECTION 4 - (ii) Assessing and Managing Substance use Incident

In the event of a suspected incidence of drug abuse the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

All staff members need to be aware of the signs of drug use and be alert for changes in behaviour. Rumour must not be taken as evidence of drug use.

The following procedure will be adopted in managing and investigating an abuse incident

1. In cases where there is no immediate danger to the student (s), it is important to take time to assess and investigate the situation fully before responding.
2. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the college community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.

3. In all cases the staff member concerned should complete the Substance Abuse Incident Report Form (see Appendix 1) available from the headmaster's office.
4. Pupils found with cigarettes will have them confiscated. A letter will be issued to parents.
5. The college will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever action it deems necessary to do this. It may be necessary to search lockers (which remain College property at all times), or to ask individuals to empty out the contents of their pockets or school bags. Lockers should only be searched when two members of staff are present. Searching a person is, however, beyond the remit of College personnel.
6. Any member of staff will, immediately upon becoming aware of an alleged abuse incident, proceed as follows:
 - Take immediate possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident
 - Place all confiscated items in the bag / envelope provided for the purpose.
 - Sign and date the flap of the bag / envelope
 - Invite all person(s) concerned with the alleged incident to countersign the flap. Should such person(s) decline to sign or be unable to do so, the staff member will make a note to this effect on the bag.
 - The sealed bag / envelope will be immediately brought to the principal who will place it in the school safe pending further investigation OR
 - The College will hand these items over to the Gardai immediately on confiscation.
 - In the event of the incident taking place abroad the staff member will dispose of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident having carefully recorded the contents. All concerned will be invited to witness the record.
7. In the event of an incident, the College will seek detailed statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements (There may also be a Garda investigation)

8. The details relating to the incident will be recorded by the member of staff investigating it and acted upon by the Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster.

The document will be retained confidentially.

9. The College will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of any incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
10. The College, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
11. When it is deemed necessary by the headmaster to continue with an investigation the College will present the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
 - a. Copies of all records deemed relevant will be made available to the student and his parents/guardians-at the discretion of the College-in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters arising and afford him an opportunity to make representations that he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
 - b. The College will allow the student concerned and his parents/guardians reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue, taking into account any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - c. The College will inform the student and his parents shortly thereafter of its findings and the reasons for these. If the College finds that the student has been found guilty of or involved or implicated, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions to impose in the circumstances.

SECTION 4 (iii)-Sanctions for substance use

The College 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 College asserts the right to exercise appropriate discretion.

1(a)-In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to:

an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, referral to the Juvenile Liaison Officer, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.

1(b)-In the case of suspension, there may be conditions relating to the re-admission of the student.

This may include an undertaking that the student involved will attend appropriate counselling e.g. drugs counselling.

1(c) - Involvement in an external drug prevention programme and drugs testing can be required.

(2)-The College will also ensure that pastoral supports (Chaplain, Form Tutor, School Guidance Counsellor, SPHE teachers etc.) are offered to the student / students and parents/guardians affected by an incident of substance use. Incidents such as these can be very traumatic for all involved.

(3)- The Headmaster /Deputy Headmaster or designated teacher will monitor individuals suspected of taking these substances

(4)-At all times the DES *Child Protection Guidelines* will be adhered to.

SECTION 4(iv)-Confidentiality

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, the College cannot undertake to keep confidential the names of those making the allegations. Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, the parents/guardians of those involved, or with any external agency.

The College should firstly establish the fact whether the allegations are genuine before they pursue an investigation. If the allegations are malicious and unsubstantiated they should not be pursued.

Information gathered for one purpose will not be used for another without consulting the person who has provided the information.

Section 5-The involvement and roles of various parties in an incident investigation

1. Informing parents /guardians

In the event of formal allegations being brought against students the parents/guardians will be entitled to all documentation related to the incident. In the event of suspension / expulsion the parents/guardians will be entitled to the reason for the schools decision and will be informed of their right of appeal.

2. Informing Gardai

Following a thorough investigation and where the College is firmly of the view that the student is dealing with drugs the Gardai can be invited to assist the investigation in the context of respect for personal property.

3. Searches

The school has a legal obligation to keep its property drug free and therefore retains the right to search any part of school property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy may be obtained therein. Two members of staff must be present during any form of search. Students will be given the option to handover any substance prior to a search. If a student refuses to co-operate, their parent/guardian will be called in and a Garda may be called to conduct a search of any school member should illegal activity be suspected.

A teacher cannot carry out a personal physical search but students may be asked to voluntarily display the contents of their person and / or property. At least two teachers should be present during this search.

4. Disposal

If substances in contravention of this policy are found on the school premises they will be locked away by two members of staff in the Headmaster's office and the Gardai may be contacted to dispose of them.

In the case of school tours the teacher in charge is responsible for the implementation of this policy and the Headmaster / Deputy Headmaster should be informed as soon as any incidents occur.

5. Dissemination

- Initially, all parents / guardians will receive a copy of the policy by post. They are encouraged to discuss the policy with their son / daughter.
- In future years the policy will be added to the list of those available for parents/guardians on request.
- Students will be made aware of the policy through the substance use education programme.
- Parents of incoming students will be given a copy of the policy on registration. staff will be aware of the policy through staff meetings and thereafter through the staff handbook.
- Policy will be available on Coláiste Iognáid web-site.

Section 6- Procedure for Review, Monitoring and Evaluation

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices. This review will be consistent with the whole school planning process.

Section 7 – Media Inquiries

It is the sole responsibility of the Headmaster to deal with all media inquiries or to appoint an appropriate person if he is not available. The College will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. However, in the interests of the College's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the College's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completed.

Section 8- Implementation

This policy is operational from:

Ratified by the Parents' Council-distributed to parents council by Sandra Butler on the 26th March to be discussed at meeting of the 28th March. Final draft

submitted to parents in 30/05/07 for ratification.

Ratified by the Academic Staff:-distributed to staff on the 15th March at staff development day.

Ratified by the non-academic staff:

Ratified by the Student Council:

Ratified by the Board of Management on 07/05/07 after first being presented to board for discussion on the 21st March.

Appendix.....