

Coláiste Alhuire



**Substance Misuse  
Policy  
2018/2019**

## ***Mission Statement:***

At Colaiste Mhuire, our mission is to enrich the educational and personal development of students in an inclusive caring and Christian school community.

Colaiste Mhuire is committed to an environment free from drug misuse and actively promotes 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 and students and staff are empowered to talk about any concerns they have.

## ***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, such substances include tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs such as, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, cannabis, solvents, barbiturates, tranquilizers, prescription drugs, anti-depressants, etc. This list is not exhaustive.

## ***Scope Of The Policy***

This policy applies to all students, school personnel and any other users of the school premises including parents and visitors. The policy is in force at all times on the school premises and during school-related activities, including school tours. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use, of which the school must be notified in writing, and the correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum-related materials/ingredients.

## ***Aims Of The Policy***

- To co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy- Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025 (made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02.)
- To promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them (in line with the Education Act 1998).
- To provide the protection necessary to all members of the school community.
- To outline the procedures to be followed in the event of a drug-related incident in the Colaiste (procedures outlined towards end of this policy).

## ***Objectives***

- To affirm publicly the commitment of the school to prevent any form of substance misuse in the Colaiste.

- 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 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 ensure that the educational 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.

### **This policy is focused on four key areas: -**

- I. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes
- II. Managing Drug Related Incidents
- III. Training and Staff Development
- IV. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

#### ***Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes:***

Colaiste Mhuire is committed to providing a comprehensive drug education programme for all students, which at Junior Cycle will be incorporated into the Social, Personal Health Education Programme (SPHE). At Senior Cycle, this will be incorporated into the Religious Education programme under RE. Colaiste Mhuire welcomes its partnership with An Garda Siochana who, under the 'Garda Schools Programme', raises awareness among our students of the dangers of drug misuse.

Our education aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self esteem and confidence of our students
- To equip our students with personal and social skills
- To enable our students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
- To provide honest and age-appropriate information on drugs
- To minimise any harm which might be caused by involvement in a drug incident by offering supportive interventions

These aims will be met through the following actions:

- All teachers involved in SPHE will receive ongoing in-service training pertaining to education on substance misuse.
- A Substance Misuse coordinator will be assigned within the school.
- The whole staff will be offered information and awareness training on substance misuse.

- Parents will be made aware and informed of what is happening in the school regarding education on substance misuse on a regular basis.

An understanding of the issues relating to substance abuse will be promoted in the school wherever the opportunity arises. This may be done through the curriculum (such as SPHE, Religion, Home Economics, CSPE, Science or Transition Year Programme) or through occasional assemblies or talks, information leaflets or similar.

The school will explore opportunities to promote awareness of substance misuse. This may take the form of a Health-Awareness Week or a Transition Year / Year Group project.

### **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.

- The speaker will be advised in advance of the policy on substance misuse and the overall policy framework in operation within the school.
- 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.
- The teacher/coordinator will remain for the duration of the presentation.
- A subsequent written evaluation will take place with students and staff to determine the outcome of the presentation on those present.
- Colaiste Mhuire will adhere to the advice offered under the Department of Education Circular 0023 2010 on 'Best Practice Guidelines for Speakers'.

### **Administration of Medicines**

An increasing number of students are being prescribed a range of medications during the school day. Common examples are treatments for asthma and diabetes.

On school trips a teacher will be designated as the first aid provider. Paracetamol is not allowed in the school. All asthma sufferers are expected to be independent inhaler users.

Parents are asked to inform the Office if their child is prescribed medication, for either short or long term use.

An epi-pen is permanently stored in the office for use in emergencies only.

### **Whole-School Support:**

- The Colaiste's Class Teachers and Discipline Committee
- SPHE/RE Departments
- Anti-Bullying Committee

- Guidance Counsellor
- Chaplain
- Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator
- Garda Schools Programme

### ***Related Policies:***

This Substance Misuse Policy is supported and complemented by many of the Colaiste's policy documents including:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Health and Safety Statement

### ***Managing substance misuse related incidents:***

#### **Signs And Indicators Of Substance Misuse**

The identification and recognition of substance misuse is not an easy task as some of the signs may also have explanations linked to normal adolescent development. While it is essential that harmful and potentially fatal behaviour be identified as early as possible, it is equally vital that parents and other authority figures should not label a young person as a drug misuser. A combination or pattern of the factors often associated with drug misuse are set out in Appendix 2.

#### **Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use might include:**

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, aerosols, etc on the school premises or on a school related activity.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour.
- Disclosure about use.
- Finding these substances or associated paraphernalia on school premises.
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school related activity.
- School grounds being used for drug activity.
- Emergencies when a person may become unconscious.
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities.
- Members of school staff, students, parents/guardians or members of the public being under the influence of drugs including emergency situations where the individual is unconscious or seriously ill.

#### **Assessing an Incident**

The Colaiste acknowledges that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school.

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. Disciplinary procedures will be called in if the school rules are broken and expulsion will be considered as a last option when other options have not worked. Procedures are in place and outlined below to handle specific drug incidents.

### ***Guidelines For Managing Substance Misuse Related Incidents***

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 and where there is an immediate danger Dr. Kennedy and the Emergency Services should be contacted without hesitation and the Principal/Deputy Principal and the Colaiste's Substance Misuse Officer informed.
- 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.
- Parents/Guardians will be informed as soon as possible. This needs to be handled sensitively and support will be offered to the parent/guardian by the Guidance Counsellor.

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to anyone, it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding and to complete a health and safety incident report.

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 and sensitively and confidentiality will apply on a 'need to know' basis. The Principal, Deputy Principal, Substance Misuse Coordinator, Guidance Counsellor, Class Teacher and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal. It is important that confidentiality and its limits are brought to the attention of all students.

#### **Recording Procedures**

In situations of confirmed possession/use/distribution, all details will be recorded in compliance with GDPR and will be acted upon. A written recording procedure will be used to ensure that a fair process of challenging the student about concerning behaviour is in place.

## **Gardai**

It is agreed that the Principal or the Substance Misuse coordinator will contact the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

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 includes search of a student's locker, search of a student's school bag or an instruction to a student to empty his/her schoolbag, pockets.

In any search, the following conditions will apply:

- Any such search will be authorised by the Principal or Deputy Principal.
- Consent of the parent/guardian should be sought where possible.
- Any search will be undertaken in the presence of two members of staff.

## **Counselling/Pastoral Care**

The pastoral care system is the first response to an incident. For some young people their involvement with drugs may be masking some underlying difficulties and for others it may be a phase of experimentation.

## **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.

## **Media**

The Principal 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.

## ***Investigation Procedures:***

1. All necessary precautions will be undertaken to ensure the welfare, safety and health of students in the school including those involved in some way in the incident being investigated
2. Any steps taken will be consistent with the school's Child Protection Policy
3. An Incident Report Form will be completed.
4. The school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements in writing.

5. Parents /guardians will be informed of the alleged incident at the earliest opportunity
6. Matters of a criminal nature will be reported to the Gardaí or other relevant authority
7. Where there is a strong suspicion that a student is in possession of a prohibited substance, the student will be asked to voluntarily hand over that substance to the investigating teacher. If the student refuses to do so, a search may be carried out or the matter may be handed over to the Gardai.
8. Where it has been established that the student has been in breach of this policy, appropriate sanctions will be decided by the Principal. In every case the parents / guardians will be informed.
9. The school will maintain a written record of all the stages of the investigation of an incident, including communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matter under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any disciplinary measure imposed and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following the investigation. These will be made available to the parents /guardians, Board of Management or gardaí, as appropriate and in compliance with GDPR. Confidentiality will be maintained throughout, within the normal confines.
10. The school will assist in any practical way in any referral, rehabilitation or counselling deemed essential to sustain the well-being of any student involved in any way in substance misuse.
11. In the case of a student attending the school following a drug or alcohol related incident, the Colaiste reserves the right to stipulate conditions and interventions which it deems necessary to assist the student in question and/or other students, the school community and the needs of the school. These conditions may include external counselling and ongoing consultation with external agencies.

Staff breaches of the policy will be dealt with as per the Code of Professional Conduct and Conditions of Employment.

### ***Sanctions:***

Where the school is satisfied that the conduct of a student is in breach of the Code of Behaviour the appropriate sanction will apply. Details of such sanctions may be found in the Code of Behaviour.

### ***Staff Training and Development***

The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social and Personal Health Education Programmes.

- Next year all staff will be offered drug information and awareness training.
- Detailed and specific training will be made available to the nominated



Substance Misuse Coordinator and key staff in relation to managing drug incidents.

- First-Aid training has been made available to all staff in 2012-2013.
- Up-to-date resources will be provided as needed to the SPHE/RE Departments to facilitate ongoing education and awareness to students and 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.

### ***Developing the Policy and Procedures on Substance Misuse:***

- Establish a core committee with representatives of students, staff, parents and external agencies to oversee policy development and implementation.
- Review the current situation in the school regarding substance use policy issues – survey students/parents Spring 2019
- Consult via focus group, publicise, revise/amend and finalise draft policy.
- Monitor review and evaluate the policy.
- Inclusion in school induction week programme on policy awareness.
- Informal collective vigilance by school personnel, students and parents.
- A designated person within the school will be nominated to coordinate and implement the policy guidelines – Substance Misuse Coordinator
- All teachers will be offered Drug Information and Drug Awareness training through regular in-service training

### ***Monitoring And Evaluation Of The Policy***

- The Substance Misuse Coordinator will monitor the policy once a year to ensure that it is of practical benefit to the school. The results of the monitoring will be made available to the Principal and Staff.
- The policy will be reviewed regularly or in the light of changing information by the Substance Misuse Committee in consultation with the school community. Teachers, Parents, Students and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy. Any changes will be incorporated into the amended policy.

Review Date: Once ratified, the Colaiste hopes to fully review the Substance Misuse policy in 2020.

## **Appendix 1: 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 behaviour 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
- Hallucinations
- Erratic or violent behaviour
- 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

### **Reasons Why Young People Start Taking Drugs**

Substance misuse is found in all social classes and in all ages with the majority of people starting to take drugs in their teenage years.

There are many reasons including the following:

- Peer influence
- Drugs are more available
- Desire to experiment, for pleasure and excitement
- Relieve boredom
- A need to escape from other stresses and traumas in life
- Media influence
- Lack of occupation

### **Appendix 2: 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, tranquillisers 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, tranquillisers, 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.

It is recommended that training on basic First Aid and the ABC of resuscitation is made available to all relevant school personnel

(Adapted from Cohen Julien, D-Mag. HEA & ISSD, 1995)