

St. Laurence O'Toole's Girls' School

Policy on Substance Abuse 2008

1. Introduction

This is our substance use policy relating to use and misuse of drugs in the school.

This Policy supports the nurturing and education of the children, in accordance with our school ethos.

The Policy applies to children, teachers, parents and all the members of the community who use the school building during school time and at after school activities at any given time.

2. Rationale:

We feel that we need to respond appropriately, to the needs of the children and the whole school community and to recognise the choices they need to make and the dangers they may face.

We are also adhering to the Education Act regarding the provision of S.P.H.E. and to Government Policy requiring us to have a written policy regarding substance use in our school.

3. What is a Drug?

We define a drug as "a chemical substance which changes how the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally". This includes alcohol, tobacco, solvents, prescribed and non-prescribed medicines, legal and illegal substances.

4. Aims of the Policy:

We aim to promote the good health of the children and the whole school community and to define our position on drug related issues.

5. Education Concerning Substance Use.

Substance Use Education Programmes.

a. Our aims in relation to substance use education are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of the children.
- To equip the children with personal and social skills
- To enable the children to make informed healthy and responsible choices.
- To provide accurate and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To adhere to best practice in the field of school based substance use education.
- To minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions.

b. We are committed to delivering a timetabled substance use education programme to all our pupils, which will be incorporated in our S.P.H.E. Programme. This programme includes lessons from the following programmes: Walk Tall, Stay Safe, Relationships and Sexuality Education.

Our school will follow good practice guidelines in delivering substance use education:

- It will be delivered in the context of our S.P.H.E programme.
Information given will be age and developmentally appropriate.

c. Outside Speakers/Programmes/Events

We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to deliver drug education but we recognise that sometimes it

may be appropriate to have outside speakers/ supplementary programmes/ events to supplement/ reinforce the work done in the classroom.

All outside speakers/programmes/events will be properly advised, prepared and planned. They will adhere to best practice on substance use education and will be age and developmentally appropriate.

This school acknowledges research evidence that states:

- Fear based messages are ineffective and can have reverse effect.
- Once off single sessions on substance use issues have limited effect
- Information/ facts alone may increase knowledge but have virtually no effect on decisions to try or use drugs.

6. Pastoral support for students at risk.

The school supports the child in every way possible including:
-teaching the child the skills for making informed choices (through S.P.H.E).

- Information on/ referral to external counselling if appropriate.
- Referral to the Health Services.
- Liaising with parents.

We deal with all this in a confidential manner, using legal advice where necessary and involving the parents as much as possible.

7. Management of Prescribed and Non Prescribed Medication within the School and on School Related Activities.

The parents/ guardians of the child are obliged to inform the BOM/ Principal of any relevant medical condition or medical needs of the child. The teacher must also be informed of the

steps to be taken if the child should require medical attention.

We as a staff do not administer medicine. If a child requires medicine the child's parents should write to the BOM informing them that the child has permission to self-medicate. The parents/ guardians can arrange to come to the school to administer medicine. If a child unexpectedly needs medical attention in school the parents are to be contacted immediately and the child is to receive medical attention straight away.

8. Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Related Incidents:

The School Approach:

The Pastoral care system is our first response to a drug related incident. This school aims to keep children in the school system whenever possible and offer support as far as possible to children, parents, guardians and staff.

Drug Incidents:

The following are examples of possible drug incidents:

- Emergencies when a person may be unconscious
- Intoxication/ unusual behaviour
- Suspicion/ rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Possession of a legal/ illegal drug on the school premises/ school related activity
- Selling/ supplying legal/ illegal drugs
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property

All incidents/ suspected incidents will be reported to the Principal. In situations of confirmed use or supply all details will be recorded and acted upon. Records will be kept

confidentially by the Principal. People will only be informed on a need to know basis.

Parents/ Guardians will be contacted in most cases. This will be handled sensitively. The JLO will be contacted in serious instances for example: possession of illegal substances. Sanctions and punishments will be consistent with other school rules regarding breaches of conduct.

9. Training and Staff Development.

The staff receives training in S.P.H.E. and Walk Tall. The local Drugs Task Force also provides support. Parents are informed at the start of the school year regarding the Walk Tall Programme.

As part of the induction of new staff into the school, the new staff members are to be familiarised with the policy on substance use.

10. Implementing, Reviewing and Up Dating.

The formulation and implementation of this policy is the result of consultation with the schools BOM, its teachers, parents of the pupils, community groups and the JLO of An Gardai Siochana. This policy is being implemented on an on-going basis. Every class group in the school is involved in its implementation.

Our substance use policy will be reviewed and up-dated annually. The school Substance Policy Co-Coordinator (Mr. A. O' Riordain) will be responsible for this annual service, working with the School Substance Use Policy Development Group. If changes are necessary they will be made and the policy will be duly ammended.

