

COLÁISTE CHOILM
POLICY ON
SUBSTANCE ABUSE

2003

11th.May 2003
Revised Nov 2003

The School Ethos

Central to the ethos of the Christian Brother school is its' mission to

- Live by Gospel Values.
- Recognise the dignity of each individual.
- Contribute constructively to the local community.
- Work for peace and justice in society.

In fulfilling this ethos the personal and social development of each student forms a central part of the curriculum. Good relationships are encouraged, people are valued and respected and there is tolerance, fairness and support for those in difficulty.

Substance Abuse

Coláiste Choilm is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance abuse.

We believe that Staff, Parents, Board of Management, Students and outside relevant personnel need to work together and that co-operation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of the policy.

It has been agreed that a drug is 'any substance that changes the way the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally'.

This school recognises that drugs – both legal and illegal - are available in the local community and that the school could have substance abuse incidents that need to be handled in a consistent and sensitive way. This school also acknowledges that it has an important role to play in substance abuse education both in terms of prevention and offering support to those who use illegal substances.

The School Policy

This school does not tolerate the possession, use or supply of tobacco, tobacco products, alcohol, solvents, illegal substances or drug paraphernalia in the school, on school related activities or in out of school time. The sole exception is where drugs are prescribed for medicinal use and when the school authorities have been informed.

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Substance Abuse Education Programmes

Aims

This school is committed to providing a comprehensive and time-tabled substance abuse education programme for all students which will be incorporated into the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme currently running in the school.

Our aims in relation to Substance Abuse Education are:

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

Training

These aims will be met through the following actions:

- All teachers involved in SPHE will be given the opportunity to avail of training in group facilitation skills and personal development.
- A Substance Abuse Policy Co-ordinator will be appointed.
- Staff teaching the Substance Abuse Education Programmes will be given the opportunity to avail of training in The Substance Abuse Prevention Programme (SAPP) – ‘**On My Own Two Feet**’ (Department of Education and Science and the Department of Health and Children.)
- All teachers will be offered substance abuse information and substance abuse awareness training through in-service training.

Outside Speakers

We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out substance abuse education but sometimes outside expert speakers will be called in to supplement or reinforce work done in the class.

Parents

Parents shall be made aware of the Substance Abuse Education Programme in the school. From time to time, the school in conjunction with the Parents’ Council will offer information sessions on Substance Abuse for Parents. These shall be facilitated by relevant outside agencies such as the Gardaí and the Health Services.

2. Managing Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug related incidents.

The School Approach

We acknowledge that in all situations involving substance abuse, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the young person and the needs of the school community.

Incidents

The following are examples of drug or alcohol incidents:

- Emergencies when the 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 or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal substances, solvents and drug paraphernalia
- Person seeking help from member of staff
- School property being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property

Assessing an incident

Listening, separating fact from myth and support will be our initial approach to the situation. Disciplinary procedures will be followed if school rules are broken and expulsion will be considered in certain situations. **Appendix 1**

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the young person/s, time will be taken to assess the situation before reacting.

Recording Procedure

In situations of confirmed use/possession or supply then all the details will be recorded and appropriate action taken.

A **written recording procedure** will be used. This procedure will ensure that a fair process of challenging the student about behaviour of concern is in place.

Appendix 2

Information Dissemination

It is important in all suspected or confirmed substance abuse incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a 'need to know' basis.

The Principal, Substance Abuse Policy Co-ordinator, Guidance Counsellor and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held by the Principal during the course of the investigation. If disciplinary action results, the relevant documentation will be included in the student's personal file.

The school will involve the parents/guardians in any drug related incident. This needs to be handled sensitively and whatever possible support offered to them. In the first instance this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor.

It is agreed that the Principal or a designated person will contact the Gardaí / Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed drug incident and any drugs found on the premises will be handed over to the Gardaí.

As it is a criminal offence, a student found in possession of illegal substances or equipment will be reported to the Gardaí.

Counselling/Pastoral Care

For some young people involvement with drugs may be masking some underlying difficulties and for others it may be a phase of experimentation, which they will pass through safely. A core value of the school is the well-being of all its students. Where necessary, the school will endeavour to assist the student and his family in accessing the appropriate rehabilitative agencies, subject to the availability of resources.

- In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.
- If the person has a serious drug problem then referral to an appropriate service will be recommended.
- Parents and Staff involved in the incident will be offered support.

Confidentiality

The school recognises that the issue of confidentiality is complex. It is important that confidentiality and its limits are discussed with the students. A planned module will be incorporated into the SPHE programme.

Teachers cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses substance abuse involvement. We recognise the need for care in this area as the young person may be confiding in a teacher because they trust him/her and need help. How this situation is handled will have an important bearing on the outcome. Information must remain private and only disclosed on a strict 'need to know' basis. The young person must be informed about what is happening and why.

The well-being and welfare of the young person, the teacher and the wider school community must be the prime focus.

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 the procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.

3. Training and Staff Development

All staff shall be made aware of the signs of substance abuse and be alert for changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour will not be taken as evidence of substance abuse.

Staff

- The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes.
- All Staff will be offered substance abuse information and awareness training.
- Detailed and specific training will be made available to the Substance Abuse Policy Co-ordinator and key staff in relation to managing drug related incidents.
- First-aid training will be made available to all staff.

Parents & Board of Management

- From time to time the school will provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to substance abuse and the school policy on Substance Abuse. These will be offered as part of the induction course for parents of new students to the school.

Young People

- This school will offer all its students at Junior Cert level drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE classes. At senior level Substance Abuse education will continue to take place in the context of Religious Education classes.

Such Training/Development is subject to time and resources being available to the school.

4. Disciplinary Procedures

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding substance abuse are broken, the sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the offence.

Appendix 1.

The school aims to keep children in the school system wherever possible, as early school leaving is associated with increased risk of problem behaviour including substance abuse. However, as stated previously, there must be a balance between the needs of the young person and the needs of the school community. The school policy on the use or possession of illegal substances or drug paraphernalia in the school or on school related activities is that a student found in possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia will be suspended pending a hearing before the Board of Management when expulsion will be considered for such serious breaches of the Code of Behaviour.

When reaching a determination on an incident the Board will take cognisance of all relevant information appertaining to the incident and those involved in it.

5. Monitoring the Policy

The Substance Abuse Policy Co-ordinator will monitor the policy to ensure that it is of practical benefit to the school.

The results of the monitoring will be recorded and made available to the Board of Management.

Review and Evaluation of the Policy

The policy will be reviewed annually or in the light of changing information, in consultation with the wider school community.

Teachers, Parents, Students, Board of Management and other relevant groups will be involved in the evaluation of this policy when it has been in place for one year and any changes will be incorporated into the amended policy.

Three main area of the policy we will evaluate are:

- Substance Abuse Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parent, staff and Management Training and courses offered to the school community

Dissemination of Policy

The school community shall be made aware of the policy. Copies will be available on request from the Principal or Substance Abuse Policy Co-ordinator. New staff members and parents of new entrants shall be made aware of the policy as part of their induction to the school.

Monitoring and Evaluation is subject to time and resources being available.

APPENDIX 1

The School Policy

Coláiste Choilm does not tolerate the possession, use or supply of drugs, alcohol, solvents, drug paraphernalia or any illegal substances in the school, on school trips or in non-school time. The sole exception is where drugs are prescribed for medicinal purposes and when the school authorities have been informed.

Disciplinary Action.

In accordance with the school policy on Substance Abuse, the following disciplinary procedures will be followed in all drug related incidents.

Reports

- a.** Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his parents, at the discretion of the school, in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
- b.** The school will allow the student concerned and his parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take in to account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.

Formal Communication of School's Finding

The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his parents of the school's findings and the reason for these. If the school finds that the student has been found guilty or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.

Right of Appeal

All sanctions imposed by the school authorities including suspension and expulsion may be appealed under section 29 of the Education Act.

TOBACCO

A student will be suspended for **three days** for any of the following breaches of discipline:

1. Smoking on school grounds
2. Smoking on a school related activity
3. Possession of cigarettes, lighter or matches

Should a student be seen smoking, while in school uniform, outside the school premises, his name will be recorded and a letter shall be sent home to his parents. Further sanctions will ensue if he does not desist from smoking whilst in school uniform.

ALCOHOL

1. Where a student is caught drinking, or is clearly intoxicated or is suspected of being intoxicated his parents will be called in to school and he will be suspended pending a Board of Management meeting at which expulsion will be considered.
2. If a student is caught in possession of alcohol on school grounds he will be suspended for **five days**
3. If a student, wearing a school uniform, outside school hours is found with alcohol in his possession he will be suspended for **five days**.
4. Where a student in school uniform, outside school hours is found to be intoxicated, or drinking alcohol, or is suspected of being intoxicated his parents will be called in to school at the next available opportunity and the student will be suspended pending a Board of Management meeting at which expulsion will be considered.
5. If a student is clearly intoxicated or is suspected of being intoxicated while on a school outing he will be taken to a Doctor/Hospital to ensure he is in no immediate danger. His parents will be notified and he will be suspended pending a Board of Management meeting from which expulsion could result.

ILLEGAL SUBSTANCES

1. As it is a criminal offence, a student found in possession of illegal substances or equipment will be reported to the Gardaí.
2. In the case of any of the following breaches of discipline the student and his parents will invited to attend a meeting of the Board of Management at which expulsion will be considered. The student will be suspended pending this meeting.
 - a) Student caught taking an illegal substance.

- b) Student caught in possession of an illegal substance or drug paraphernalia such as hash pipes, syringes etc during school hours or any school related activity
 - c) Student caught dealing while in school or on any school related activity, or while in school uniform.
 - d) A student who is apparently “high” or “stoned” during school hours.
3. If a student appears to be under the influence of drugs while on a school outing he will be taken to a Doctor/Hospital to ensure he is in no immediate danger. His parents will be contacted at the first possible opportunity and the student will be suspended pending a Board of Management meeting from which expulsion could result.
 4. When it is reported to the school authorities that a student has been involved in a Substance Abuse incident outside school time we will monitor him while he is on the premises.
 5. When a student discloses substance abuse but is not in breach of the code of behaviour, he will be referred to the school counsellor who will take the appropriate measures.
 - 6 In the event of a Substance Abuse incident the school reserves the right to request a student to submit to a search of his person or property.
 - 7 The Board of Management reserves the right to request a student or students found in possession or under the influence of an illegal substance or substances to submit to a random drug test or tests, the results of which must be provided in confidence to the Board of Management. The cost of these tests will be borne by the parent/guardian of the student/students involved.
 - 8 The Board of Management further reserves the right to request a student or students found in possession or under the influence of an illegal substance or substances to submit to a random drug test or tests. These tests are to be undertaken by an independent professionally qualified person or group competent in the field of drug testing chosen by the Board of Management..

