



Substance Abuse Policy for Caherline National School

Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, teachers, staff, parents, visitors and users of the school building. It is applicable at all times when the school is in a position of responsibility.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Our school, Caherline NS, cherishes all pupils equally, and to aid them in achieving their true potential, SPHE should provide particular opportunities to foster their personal development. It should provide particular opportunities to foster self-esteem, health and well being, to help him/her to create and maintain supportive relationships and become active and responsible citizens in society.

Through the SPHE programme, that is planned and consistent throughout Caherline NS, the children can develop a framework of values, attitudes and understanding that will inform their decisions and actions, both now and in the future.

Since SPHE has a moral and spiritual dimension, it's development and implementation has been influenced significantly by the Christian ethos of Caherline NS.

Rationale

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges which affect their health and well being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality.
- 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 'Building on Experience' is now government policy and requires schools to have a substance use policy.

- The European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average

Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998.

Our objectives are to enable the child to:

- Develop a sense of personal responsibility
- Develop an understanding of healthy living, and ability to implement healthy behaviour and a willingness to participate in activities that promote and sustain health.
- Make decisions, solve problems and take appropriate actions in various personal, social and health contexts.
- Become aware of and discerning about the various influences on choices and decisions.
- Begin to identify, review and evaluate the values and attitudes that are held by individuals and by society and to recognize that these effect thoughts and actions.
- Develop some of the skills necessary for participating fully in groups and in society.
- Become aware of some of the individual and community rights and responsibilities that come from living in a democracy.

Policy Content

- (i) Education concerning substance use.
- (ii) Management of incidents
- (iii) Training and staff development

(i) Education Concerning Substance Use

- This will be provided within the broad context of SPHE which is timetabled on our curriculum.
- We will endeavour to ensure that by the time each child leaves 6th class, all contents of the SPHE curriculum which deal with Substance Use, will have been covered in an age appropriate manner, as determined by the staff taking cognisance of diverse needs as they present.
- All education concerning Substance Use will be provided in the context of the positive climate and atmosphere of our school which seeks to nurture, care and support.
- We intend to use the Walk Tall Programme as our primary resource in providing education concerning Substance Use. The main themes in this

programme are: *Self Esteem, Feelings, Influences, Decision Making and Drug Awareness*. These themes are developed in a systematic way at each class level. In accordance with the curriculum, we will endeavour to use Active Learning strategies where possible.

- We will also consider having outside speakers to work with the pupils, in the presence of the teacher, to enhance the work done in the context of the full SPHE programme. Such speakers may include;
 - The Garda Schools Programme
 - The Drug and Alcohol Education Officer (Health Board)

(ii) Mangement of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents

It is the understanding that a drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how a person thinks or feels. In the context of our school substance use policy we include the following as drugs:

- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Over the counter medication
- Solvents
- Prescription medication
- Illegal drugs

Tobacco

Smoking is not allowed in the school, on the school premises or on any school related activity. Should a pupil be found to be smoking or in the possession of cigarettes the parents/guardians will be contacted.

Alcohol

Should a pupil be found intoxicated or in the possession of alcohol the parents/guardians will be contacted.

Over the counter medication

It is our policy not to allow our pupils to bring over the counter medication (throat lozenges, headache medication etc.) to school. Should a child bring over the counter medication to school it will be taken from them and placed in a safe and secure location and returned to his/her parents.

Solvents

Should a child be found to be experimenting with solvents, his/her parents will be contacted. In line with our Safety Statement, all cleaning agents/sprays will be kept in a safe and secure location.

Prescription Medication

See our school policy on administration of medication.

Illegal Drugs

Should a pupil be considered to be under the influence of a substance or in possession of a substance, the parents/guardians will be contacted. The Chairperson of the BOM will be informed and the Gardai will be contacted. We will record all actions taken.

Should a suspicious substance be discovered in the school building/on the school grounds, the Gardai will be contacted. All actions taken will be recorded.

(iii) Provision for Training and Staff Development

- As a staff, we have a shared understanding of the contribution an SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance misuse.
- We are all aware that by developing and maintaining a positive climate and atmosphere in our school and in our individual classrooms we are playing a vital role in the prevention of substance misuse.
- We are all aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse.

Signs and Symptoms of Substance Misuse:

- Unusual smells around the child
 - Bouts of drowsiness
 - Unusual sores or spots around the mouth or nose
 - Sudden changes of mood/erratic mood swings
 - Uncharacteristic irritability or aggression
 - Changes in appearance
 - Furtive/secretive behaviour
 - Involvement in stealing
 - Changes in friendship patterns
 - Gradual loss of interest in school, friends, hobbies
 - Changes in eating habits.
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- Opportunities will be provided for the staff to avail of training when necessary. This may include:
 - Inservice training in SPHE
 - First Aid training
 - Drug awareness training
 - New staff will be briefed on the Substance Use Policy of our school
 - We will consider involving our parent body when speakers visit the school in the context of SPHE, and of Substance Use as an integral part of Substance Use.