



Coláiste Mhuire, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath

Substance

Misuse Policy 2023



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1. Preface

This policy document replaces the previous Substance Misuse Policy of 2020. This policy has been drawn up and accepted by all educational partners including senior management, teachers, parents/guardians, students, and ancillary staff. It has been approved by the Board of Management. The implementation and success of this policy depends on the commitment of all involved.

2. Scope

This policy applies to the entire school community, including students, teachers, parents/guardians, ancillary staff, school visitors and all users of the school premises. This policy remains in force-

- whilst on the school premises – during school hours and outside school hours
- during school related activities including school tours and class trips
- for students whilst in school uniform
- whilst representing the school in any way
- for anyone using school facilities at any time

In this policy, the terms 'drug' and 'substance' refers to any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally.

It should also be noted that the terms 'drug misuse' or 'substance misuse' extends beyond the misuse of illegal drugs and substances to include legal drugs and substances that are being misused.

The term 'misuse' refers to the using of a drug in a manner that is not appropriate in a school setting.

Since the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) is the Principal, Mr. Keith Quinn, these titles will be used interchangeably in this document.

Since the Deputy Designated Liaison Person (DDLDP) is the Deputy Principal, Mr. Niall O'Brien, these titles will be used interchangeably in this document.

3. Relationship to the School Ethos

Coláiste Mhuire is under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. Our ethos is shaped in accordance with the five elements listed in the *Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter*:

- Nurturing faith, Christian spirituality and Gospel-based values
- Promoting partnership
- Excelling in teaching and learning
- Creating a caring school community
- Inspiring transformational leadership

Inspired by the example of Blessed Edmund Rice, Coláiste Mhuire aims to be a caring school. This care extends to all members of our school community and tackling the issue of substance abuse must be a key element in creating a safe environment for all.

4. Rationale

The government aims to tackle substance misuse on a national level via the strategy; *Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025*. This strategy was prompted by a report called; *The drugs situation in Ireland: an overview of trends from 2005 to 2015(6)*. This report noted that drug misuse in Ireland was prevalent and that new substances are likely to enter the public domain. The report also recognised that the issue of substance abuse evolves and changes and so presents new challenges. Coláiste Mhuire recognises the same findings in the local community and the school is acutely aware that this is pertinent to our school.

The school acknowledges the importance of its pastoral role in the welfare of its young people. It is committed to its role in drug education and drug prevention programmes both in terms of prevention and supporting those who use drugs in a legal and appropriate capacity.

Educating students on substance use and its risks, while also creating deterrents and reactionary methods for substance misuse, aids the school in creating a caring environment.

5. Objectives

Coláiste Mhuire believes and supports the following aims with respect to substance use:

- to minimise the harm caused by substances
- to enable students to make healthy, informed choices by providing honest and age-appropriate information designed to increase knowledge, challenge attitudes and develop life skills
- to increase self-esteem and confidence within our students as individuals and as a collective
- to inform, support and educate parents and guardians

- to encourage an understanding for those experiencing or likely to experience substance use and to encourage such students to access appropriate professional help
- to highlight the prevention and support services which students are free to access both within the school and within the local community
- to create a safe environment in which those who need to access prescribed medication can do so

6. Policy Content

- i. Education concerning substances and their misuse
- ii. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents

i. Education concerning substances misuse

The following programmes contain modules on substance use and related topics. Subject teachers follow schemes of work designed to support aspects outlined within this policy document. All content from these schemes is factual, honest and age appropriate.

- S.P.H.E. - Social, Personal & Health Education (Junior Cycle)
- R.E. - Religious & Social Education (Senior Cycle) Senior R.E. includes a module on drug abuse
- Outside Speakers – appropriate speakers from outside agencies are invited to the school to add to our efforts to educate students on drug misuse. An example of this is the Local Community Garda

The school actively cooperates with internal personnel and external agencies. Coláiste Mhuire is committed to continue drawing on the expertise and support of these.

ii. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents

Substances used for medicinal purposes

Coláiste Mhuire accepts that there will be circumstances where the legitimate medicinal use of certain drugs will need to be accommodated. In such instances, the school must be informed by parents/guardians in writing. This information should be relayed to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Substance misuse

Coláiste Mhuire acknowledges that the drug misuse situation in Ireland is ever evolving. We also acknowledge that each student is an individual capable of their own actions and thoughts which may be very different from those of other students. When we consider these facts, we realise that no two drug related incidents are likely to be the same.

Vapes and E-cigarettes

The use of Vapes and E-cigarettes is strictly prohibited. This prohibition extends to include all use of such devices whether the substances used within these are legal or illegal. In the event of illegal substances being used within these devices, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact An Garda Síochána.

Coláiste Mhuire realises that in many cases, the student may well be the victim, the perpetrator or both. For this reason, a rigid approach to incidents may well prove negligent. It is therefore up to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal to assess each situation individually and determine the most appropriate action while maintaining the integrity of the school's Code of Behaviour.

Procedures

The following are procedures which may be enacted in response to drug related incidents. As previously stated, no two situations are identical and therefore the Principal and/or Deputy Principal should assess each situation individually:

- people should be informed of an incident and its particulars on a "need to know" basis
- the Principal/Deputy Principal should contact emergency health services if they deem it necessary
- all records should be held by the Principal/Deputy Principal who is dealing with the case. These records may be passed on to external relevant agencies, if necessary, e.g. An Garda Síochána
- the Principal/Deputy Principal should inform the parents/guardians of the student(s) involved
- in the case of illegal drugs being involved, the Principal/Deputy Principal should inform the Gardaí of the situation
- pastoral support should be offered to those involved
- if a situation arises that exceeds the capacity of the Pastoral Team a referral to other relevant external agencies may be recommended
- all parties involved, including students, should be aware that strict confidentiality does not apply to any disclosures made, instead the "need to know" basis will apply
- the wellbeing of the student and other parties involved is to be the primary focus of any response

7. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Board of Management

- The Board of Management supports and is fully committed to providing relevant training for its employees on matters relating to substance use
- The Board will ensure that this policy is fully developed to meet the needs of the school. This will involve evaluating the policy over time and approving any subsequent revisions
- The Board will consider all reports from the principal on the implementation of the policy and will decide on sanctions for persons involved in breach of the conditions of this policy

2. Principal and Deputy Principal

The Principal and Deputy Principal are responsible for dealing with issues involving breach of conditions as outlined in this policy document.

The Principal and/or Deputy Principal should:

- monitor the implementation of this policy
- be responsible for all decisions regarding investigation of an incident
- keep all relevant personnel appropriately informed regarding developments in any investigation including the Board of Management and the Gardaí
- ensure the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and reports associated with an incident
- take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and dispose of them via the relevant authorities

3. Teachers and Ancillary Staff

All teachers and staff are required to:

- accept that drug use by students is a possibility and is a reality within our community
- read and note the necessary details contained within this policy, in particular the use of procedures.
- be aware of their professional responsibility to the students in their care as outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct published by the Teaching Council
- always refer to the School Principal or Deputy Principal as the Designated Liaison Person or Deputy Designated Liaison Person
- exercise caution in dealing with potential incidents, keeping their own personal health and safety a priority.
- never offer absolute confidence to a student(s) involved in an incident: the teacher must always inform the student(s) concerned that a subsequent referral to the Principal or Deputy Principal may be required

4. Students

- students must take personal responsibility for their own actions relating to drug misuse and accept its subsequent sanctions
- students must not use, purchase, deal or sell any drug (ref: Appendix 1) while on the school grounds, in school uniform, during school related activities or while representing the school in any way
- students must not encourage others to consume drugs or related substances

5. Parents and Guardians

- the school believes that the best interests of the students are best served when home and school work together
- on enrolment, all parents/guardians are to ensure that the school has a least two contact phone numbers in the event that contact is required to cover all incidents related to this policy and other accidents or emergencies as may occur
- all parents/guardians will have access to this policy on the school website and it is the responsibility of the parents to be aware of the policy and its contents

8. Success Criteria. Monitoring Procedure. Review Procedure and Timeframe

Due to the nature of the drug misuse and its ever-evolving state, it is impossible to numerically quantify the success of this policy. All stakeholders should observe the

9. Appendices

Appendix 1

In this policy, the term 'drug' means any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally. Such substances include:

- alcohol
- OTC medicine
- prescription medicines
- illegal drugs
- solvents e.g. glues
- cleaning agents
- aerosols
- solvents used in E-cigarettes/vapes or similar apparatuses
- tobacco

Appendix 2

This policy has been drafted with direct reference to the following documents:

- School Mission Statement
- Edmund Rice Schools Trust Charter
- Code of Discipline
- National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, ref: Department Circular 18/02
- The Education Act 1998
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025.
- The drugs situation in Ireland: an overview of trends from 2005 to 2015(6)

Appendix 3

School Support Services

Designated Liaison Person
Deputy Designated Liaison Person
Guidance Counsellor/Pastoral Team Member

Mr. Keith Quinn
Mr. Niall O'Brien
Ms. Siobhan Farry

Community Support Services

In case of medical emergency
Poisons Information Services
Hospital, Mullingar
Garda Station, Mullingar

999 or 112
01 8092166
04493 40221
04493 84000

prevalence of the issue in the life of the school and amendments and suggestions should be forwarded to the Principal.

The Board of Management will determine when this policy is due for review.

On approval by the Board of Management, this document will be published on the Coláiste Mhuire Mullingar Website, this will allow access to all relevant parties and external agencies.



Coláiste Mhuire An Muileann gCearr

Substance Misuse Policy

The Board of Management formally adopted this policy on the 23rd. March 2023.

Signed: Moira Mahon

Ms. Moira Mahon

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 23/3/2023.



Ionaidh na Scoileanna Fannín Rís
Edmund Rice Schools Trust