

Coláiste Chiaráin



Substance Misuse Policy

Introduction

Coláiste Chiaráin is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to drugs. The policy has been developed and accepted by the Principal, Staff, SNAs, Parents/Guardians, Board of Management and Students. It is necessary that all stakeholders work together to implement this policy. It is vital that parents/guardians actively work with the school to implement this policy to ensure their children's health and safety. In this policy "Drug" means any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, psychologically, physically or emotionally. The School recognises that drugs both legal and illegal are available in the local community and that Coláiste Chiaráin, as part of that community, has an important role in terms of education, prevention, support and the handling of drug related incidents.

THE SCHOOL ETHOS

As stated in the School's mission statement, Coláiste Chiaráin is committed to enabling students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical potential. It also is committed to fostering the development of personal responsibility. This is the ethos which guides the School Substance Misuse Policy.

School Position on Drugs

- Coláiste Chiaráin does not accept the possession, use or supply of illegal drugs/ substances/drug paraphernalia in the school.
- Coláiste Chiaráin does not accept the possession, use or supply of alcohol or tobacco /e-cigarettes in the school or on school activities by any student.
- Coláiste Chiaráin does not accept the misuse of solvent based substances.
- Students may have prescribed or "over the counter" medicines for legitimate personal use only.
- Students who have in their possession and take medical drugs in school long term must inform the school.
- Coláiste Chiaráin must be informed if a student has a medical condition and this information will be shared with teachers, e.g. Year heads. A Medical Conditions register will be maintained in the school. Guidelines regarding register should be drawn up locally.
- A student or teacher may not give another student any prescribed or "over the counter" medicine.
- Chemicals in school laboratories will be held in secure storage facilities. Students will handle and use such substances only under their teacher's supervision. Medicine Policy to be developed also.

Scope

The Substance Misuse Policy of Coláiste Chiaráin applies to the students and visitors of the school building.

Rationale

- The central objective of this policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Substances and their misuse is an area of concern for parent/guardians, teachers and students.
- The Education Act 1998 requires schools to promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

Coláiste Chiaráin aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 and made mandatory for schools in relevant circulars.

Coláiste Chiaráin recognises and accepts its responsibility in providing drug awareness and education in the misuse of drugs.

The substance misuse is focused in four key areas:

- 1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes.**
- 2. Managing Drug Related Incidents.**
- 3. Training and Staff Development.**
- 4. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation**

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

Coláiste Chiaráin is committed to providing an Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programme for all.

This education will be provided in the context of S.P.H.E., R.S.E., C.S.P.E., and other relevant subject areas and is in accordance with the SPHE, RSE, Guidance and Counselling policies.

Our educational aims 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 decisions.
- To provide clear and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimise the harm caused by substance misuse and to offer supportive interventions.

These aims will be achieved by:

1. Management in conjunction with relevant staff
2. Drug Awareness training, SPHE training or any relevant training through SPHE/PDST in-service training.
3. Outside speakers/agencies are used where appropriate to reinforce the topics addressed in class, provided that their contributions complement the School's approach, values and ethos and are compliant with the school visiting Speaker Policy and Circular 0023/2010.
4. Parents/Guardians will be updated and informed on the need for substance misuse education and will be informed of what is happening in Coláiste Chiaráin. Substance misuse information and drug awareness sessions are organised for parents by school management as required.
5. Student Drug Education will be achieved through:
 - SPHE Programme
 - Recognised Drugs Education Programmes
 - RSE
 - CSPE
 - Recognised Substance Misuse Education Programmes (HSE)

2. Managing Drugs and Alcohol Related Incidents

Incidents will be addressed in line with the Coláiste Chiaráin's Code of Behaviour-. In the event of a substance misuse incident, the School will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student(s) involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the School. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered.

- In the first instance the School will seek advice from the appropriate agencies e.g. LCETB, NEPS, CAMHS, TUSLA, HSE, Gardai, etc.
- In line with the School's Code of Behaviour the School will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any substance misuse incident
- An 'Incident Report Form' will be completed by the investigating staff
- Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the School reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the School any students involved in a suspected substance misuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident. In the event of a substance misuse incident, the School will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
- The School will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of the incident.

The Role of the Principal

The Principal or his/her nominee is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising in the

School.

- The Principal may seek assistance of the Deputy Principal, Yearhead, Guidance Counsellor or other relevant school personnel in conducting an incident investigation and will delegate to appropriate person.
- All reports of substance misuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.
- The Principal or his/her nominee makes all decisions regarding investigation of the incident, communication with, liaison with and reporting to relevant parties and disclosure of information regarding investigation.
- The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments.
- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
- The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.

Role of Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are expected to:

- Acknowledge the importance of Coláiste Chiaráin's Substance Misuse Policy.
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the School in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance misuse.

Assist and co-operate fully with the School as it seeks to deal with substance related incidents.

- Contribute to the ongoing development and review of Coláiste Chiaráin's Substance Misuse Policy.

Procedure

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, calling emergency services, notifying the Principal and attempting to make contact with parents/guardians.

It is essential that contact with local medical services has been established in advance and agreement in place on how to access the service in an emergency and what the school can expect in terms of support.

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 signs of substance misuse for

guidance.

Liaison with external support services in this area is essential both as a source of ongoing support and for the provision of training.

Powers of search

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.

- Search of a student's locker
- Search of a student's school bag
- An instruction to a student to empty his/her schoolbag or pockets or locker.

The following conditions will apply:

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

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.

General Procedure: Alleged trafficking of drugs within the school

Trafficking refers to the supply of and giving of drugs to another, no money need change hands.

- It is essential that all Coláiste Chiaráin personnel know the signs of drug misuse
- Remain calm and keep a note of alleged incident/s, noting date, time, place, any witness present, and the context and nature of the alleged incident.
- Inform school designated person who has the responsibility to investigate the allegation and who will then
- Inform school Principal of the incident and action taken to date
- Document where possible all relevant and evidence relating to the incident
- Inform parents immediately.
- The normal disciplinary procedure will apply including immediate suspension pending further investigation
- A recommendation of expulsion may follow on confirmation of the trafficking allegation.
- In incidents involving the supply of illegal drugs, it is the policy of the school to inform the Gardai or the Garda Liaison Officer in the case of a student under the age of 18 years. Garda advice may also be sought about other incidents on a case by case basis. The decision to

contact the Gardai will rest with the Principal and other relevant staff.

Confidentiality

A limited number of people are involved in all suspected or confirmed substance misuse incidents. People will be informed on a "need to know" basis. Confidentiality is a complex issue. It is important that the limits of confidentiality are discussed with students before any disclosure is made. When investigating and managing a suspected substance misuse incident it is the aim of the School to involve, as far as is practicable, only those persons concerned with an incident.

It is important that students and Parents/Guardians accept that:

- The duties of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with a substance misuse incident or a suspected substance misuse incident.
- Coláiste Chiaráin may be required to contact an appropriate outside authority such as the Gardaí, HSE, Probation Service or officers of the Courts.

Keeping Parties Informed

If the circumstances merit and an investigation is ongoing, Coláiste Chiaráin will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their Parents/Guardians in the following manner:

- Copies of all records deemed relevant to 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/her Parent/Guardians.
- Coláiste Chiaráin will allow the student concerned and his/her Parent/Guardians reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. Coláiste Chiaráin will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.

Procedures and Sanctions

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding substance misuse are breached, sanctions will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence. These will be consistent with Coláiste Chiaráin's Code of Behaviour.

In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Principal may recommend disciplinary actions or sanctions in accordance with Coláiste Chiaráin's Code of Behaviour. Restorative Practices will be engaged in when deemed appropriate.

Coláiste Chiaráin will refer students affected by an incident of substance misuse to pastoral supports within the school (e.g. Student Support Team, Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Home School Liaison Coordinator, Year Head) or outside the school (e.g. LCETB, Tusla, HSE, NEPS, drugs.ie, CAMHS) as deemed appropriate.

3. Training and Staff Development

Substance Awareness and other relevant programmes will be offered to Parents/Guardians and teachers of the School when opportunities to do so arise and the School's resources permit.

Staff

The School's Substance Misuse Policy will be issued to all staff members.

- Staff training needs will be addressed regularly as part of the school's ongoing engagement in Continuous Professional Development.

Parents/Guardians

Coláiste Chiaráin will provide opportunities to attend substance misuse workshops, information evenings and sessions on the School Substance Misuse Policy on request by the Parents Association.

- In addition to assist Parent/Guardians/guardians in their role the school will keep them informed on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes for their children.
- Provide opportunities for Parent/Guardians, through the Coláiste Chiaráin Parents' Council to inform and update themselves on issues relating to substance misuse.
- Provide advice and information and establish links with relevant authorities and support bodies.

4. Monitoring and Review

The policy was approved by the Board of Management on _____

The School will monitor and review the policy on an ongoing basis and the next review date will be _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix:

Definitions:

'The School'

1. "The School" referred to in this policy is to be interpreted as all Management and Staff of Coláiste Chiaráin. 'The School' also includes school buildings, buses, grounds, play/sports areas and public areas where students congregate coming to and going from school. This policy also applies to all School Tours.

'Banned/Prohibited'

This term includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol and tobacco substances used contrary to the law of the land. The School reserves the right to determine that a substance found at school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

'Paraphernalia'

This includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

'Substance Misuse Incident'

The School reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes a substance misuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the policy.

Drug

Any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, psychologically, physically and/or emotionally.

S.P.H.E. – Social, Personal and Health Education

R.S.E. – Relationships and Sexuality Education

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
- Clashes with the Gardai
- Information learned from other members of the group/class

2. General signs and indicators of substance misuse

Substance misuse can involve a wide range of different drugs and each drug used will have specific consequences. Among the initial signs which are often noted are:

- Drunkenness
- 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

3. 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