

Coláiste Abbáin



Substance Misuse Policy 2018

Mission Statement

“Coláiste Abbáin endeavours to provide quality education for all students in a caring, disciplined and respectful environment. We aim to prepare students for life and responsible citizenship and motivate them towards the achievement of their full potential”.

1.1 Introduction

Coláiste Abbáin is a health promoting school. It recognises that substance misuse takes place in the community. The school as part of the community can therefore have incidents of substance misuse which need to be handled in a fair, consistent and sensitive way, with the health, safety, care, protection and welfare of students and the whole school community as its central concern.

1.2 Definition of Substance/Drugs and Substance Misuse

Substance/Drugs can be defined as all mood altering substances, both legal and illegal that cause changes in the way a person thinks, feels and acts. Substance misuse is the use of any drug, which can potentially lead to injury of the individual and/or society. For the purpose of this policy this includes tobacco, vaping solvents, alcohol, and illicit drugs such as, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, LSD, magic mushrooms, cannabis, solvents, barbiturates, tranquillisers etc. (Illicit drugs mean all illegal drugs together with solvents, magic mushrooms and tranquillisers, this list is not exhaustive).

Aims and Objectives of the Policy on Substance Misuse

- To affirm publicly the commitment of the school to promote, prevent and endeavour to eliminate any form of substance misuse in Coláiste Abbáin.
- To set out clearly the definition of what constitutes substance misuse, signs and indicators of concern and appropriate responding guidelines, which are fundamental to the implementation of the policy.
- To provide a framework which will ensure that the policy and procedures will be applied fairly, and without delay.
- To promote the inclusion and participation of all partners, which includes student, teacher, parent and other agencies in the community in the ownership, specific needs analysis, development and implementation of the policy and procedure.
- To develop a policy and procedure that promotes long-term sustained education on substance misuse underpinned by enhancing the social and psychological development of all young people within the context of the local culture
- To ensure that the approach is grounded in factual or informational education which aims to give unbiased, accurate information on substance misuse and facilitated in a manner, which is conducive to open education, discussion and exploration of attitudes and experience.

Principles

- We are committed to an environment free from drug misuse in Coláiste Abbáin
- The school promotes the right of all students and school personnel to be treated with integrity and dignity.

- We are committed to an environment where open communications are enhanced at all levels, where students and staff are empowered to talk about any concerns they have.
- Coláiste Abbáin promotes interagency partnership with HSE professionals in raising awareness on substance misuse.

Use of Drugs at Coláiste Abbáin

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all school personnel and students of the school and any other users of the school premises including parents and visitors. The school does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs. The policy is in force at all times on the school premises, during school time and during school related activities, including school tours. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the correct and supervised use of chemical cleaning agents and curriculum-related materials/ingredients. On either occasion the relevant school authority has to be informed.

Legitimate Medicinal use of Drugs:

Coláiste Abbáin does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school at any time during the school day or on school organised trips/activities during non-school time by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school should be informed in advance. An increasing number of students are being prescribed a range of medications that need to be taken during the school day. Common examples are treatments for Asthma and Diabetes. The Principal should be informed of any students who are on prescribed regular medication and these students are expected, in the normal course of events, to be independent managers of their own medicines. Students are absolutely forbidden to share with others, prescribed/over-the-counter medication.

Signs and Indicators of Substance Misuse

The identification and recognition of substance misuse is not an easy task as some of the signs may also have explanations linked to normal adolescent development. While it is essential that harmful and potentially fatal behaviours be identified as early as possible, it is equally vital that parents and other authority figures should not label a young person as a drug misuser. A combination or pattern of the factors often associated with drug misuse are set out in Appendix 1

Drugs education

The school acknowledges that it has a vital role to play in drugs education especially in the prevention of substance misuse:

This policy is focused on four main 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 Abbáin is committed to providing a comprehensive timetabled drug education programme for all students. At Junior Cycle this will be incorporated into the S.P.H.E. and C.S.P.E. programmes currently running in the school. At Senior Cycle level it will be incorporated into the Transition Year programme.

Our education aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self-esteem, confidence and well-being of our students (Resilience Programme)
- To equip our students with personal and social skills.
- To enable students to make wise, healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge and by challenging attitudes.
- To increase understanding of the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse.
 - To enable students to identify sources of support and intervention
 - To help adult members of the school community to recognise the symptoms of substance misuse
 - To minimise any harm which might be caused by involvement in a drug incident by offering supportive interventions
 - Develop a planned and considered response to incidents involving substance abuse with a view to the protection of the person(s) involved and the maintenance of a safe environment for the wider school community. Due care will be taken in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and disciplinary response.

These aims will be met in the following way:

- Coláiste Abbáin will continue to encourage its students to become involved in projects, activities or organisations which may provide ideas, initiative, support, leadership skills, self esteem or social facilities. Examples include:

Meitheal Leadership Programme

Prefect system

Comhairle na nÓg agus Dáil na nÓg

Young Social Innovators Project

Amber Flag
Extra-curricular activities

- All teachers who wish to be involved with SPHE/CSPE will be actively encouraged to seek appropriate training and will be given the opportunity to avail of it.
- Any teacher teaching any Drug Education Programme will be given the opportunity to avail of training.
- All teachers will be offered Drug Information and Drug Awareness training through dissemination of relevant information and any required in-service training.

Use the outside supports available from the HSE to the school to provide a wide range of supports to the whole school community including health education & promotion, smoking cessation support and adolescence counselling services.

Guest Speakers

We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out drug education within the school community but sometimes it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in class.

Parent/Guardians

Opportunities to participate in Drug Awareness Programmes will be made available to parents.

2. Managing Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents

Pastoral principles and practice as well as the use of fair and consistent actions and disciplinary procedures will be used. We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the student, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school. As with all situations, listening, separating fact from myth and providing support will be the school's initial approach. Disciplinary procedures will be applied if school rules are broken including permanent exclusion.

Substance Misuse Incidents:

The following are examples of a substance misuse or suspected substance misuse incident:

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious or requires medical assistance
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity

- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Person attempting to procure drugs on school premises
- Person seeking help from a member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug or alcohol activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants.
- Possession of Tippex thinners, petrol, lighters, or any other solvent.
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

Banned Substances and Disciplinary Procedures:

Smoking/ vaping are absolutely prohibited as is the possession of cigarettes, vaping devices lighters and matches on the school premises, its vicinity and during school functions and activities. Breach of this rule will lead to:

1st offence: Reflection

2nd offence and any offence there after: Suspension

The Board of Management will be informed and expulsion will be considered where a student has been repeatedly suspended for breach of this rule.

The possession, purchase, supply to another or drinking of alcohol is absolutely forbidden on the school premises, its vicinity and during school functions and activities. Breach of this rule will involve immediate suspension from school. The Board of Management will be informed and expulsion will be considered.

In Coláiste Abbáin, the possession, purchase, supply to another, or consumption of illegal substances (drugs) during the school day or during school activities, events or trips is strictly forbidden and breaches of this rule leads to immediate suspension. The Board of Management will be informed and expulsion may be pursued. The Gardai may be informed. Students found in the company of anyone consuming illegal substances may be subject to the same sanctions as the perpetrator.

Suspicion of Misuse.

All staff will receive training and support so as to be aware of the signs of drug use. Insofar as possible staff are always alert to changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour will not be taken as evidence of drug use but it will be investigated. Where a student is suspected of being in possession of illegal substances, the school reserves the right to request students to empty pockets and to open lockers, bags etc. so that a search can be carried out. Lockers, although rented are deemed to be essentially school property. A full record of any confiscated items will be kept and they will be retained in a secure place pending the completion of any investigation. Parents/guardians will be informed.

Procedure to be followed in the event of a Substance Misuse Incident:

Do NOT panic! Deal only with the facts.
Assess the situation - Is acute medical intervention necessary?

Where there is an immediate danger to the person concerned call a doctor and an ambulance immediately. If at all possible do not leave the person unattended.

Contact details for local doctors: Health Centre Adamstown 053-9240623
Health Centre Clonroche 053-9244213
Health Centre Taghmon 053-9134492

Ambulance/Gardai 999 or 112

In any case where it is apparent that there is an immediate danger to other students or the whole school community, the School reserves the right (acting through the Principal) to temporarily suspend or remove any student from the premises and/or from any specific school activities.

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the person(s), it is important to assess the situation thoroughly. Find out what has happened, who was involved, what was involved and where did the incident take place but do not attempt to analyse or taste unknown substances.

Inform the Principal, Deputy Principal or a Year Head.

The parents/guardians should be notified as soon as possible.

A report should be written and given to the Principal/Deputy Principal. A written recording procedure will ensure that a fair process of challenging the student about behaviour of concern is in place.

Health and Safety Guidelines for dealing with a drug misuse incident.

Great attention should be taken for personal health and safety when dealing with a confirmed incident involving illegal substances and drug paraphernalia. In the event of an incident the area will be sealed off and secured until the arrival of the Gardai.

Returning to school following a confirmed Substance Misuse Incident

Any student accepted back to school following involvement in a confirmed substance misuse incident may be asked to comply with a six month period of assessment during which the student may be required to

(a) Attend special counselling sessions/ therapeutic intervention

and/or

(b) Provide blood and/or urine samples for drug testing

Confidentiality

The prime focus in any incident relating to a student is the wellbeing of the student, the teacher and the reputation of the school. No member of staff can ever offer total confidentiality. The need for great care in this area is recognised as the student may approach a teacher because they trust her/him and need help. How this situation is handled will have an important bearing on the outcome. It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drug 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, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal. The student will be informed about what is happening and why.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians will always be involved if there is a substance misuse incident in the school. In the case of tobacco/ vaping the parents/guardians will be involved after a preliminary investigation. In all other cases involvement will be immediate. This will be handled in a sensitive manner and whenever possible support and /or intervention will be offered to the student(s) concerned to help them realise the dangers of substance misuse. In the first instance, this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor.

Gardaí

It is agreed that the principal or a designated person will contact the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

Counselling and Pastoral Care:

The school may ask that other agencies be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place: i.e. HSE. Drug testing; Counselling; G.P. etc.

It is a natural reaction when faced with an incident to feel a range of emotions: anger, anxiety, disappointment with those involved etc. It may also appear very urgent to resolve the situation very quickly. The pastoral care of all - students, parents/guardians, staff - involved with a drug incident must be a primary concern. In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered and in some cases referral to a substance misuse counsellor may be required.

The Media

A drug incident in a school can draw adverse media attention. The Principal or his/her representative will act as spokesperson. No comment will be offered on individual cases but clarification where necessary will be given, for example: "The school has a policy in place to deal with any substance misuse related incidents and in all cases the appropriate support services will be provided or accessed."

3. Training

The Board of Management of Coláiste Abbáin has a strong commitment to ongoing staff training.

Up to date information and resources need to be available to the whole school community.

Staff:

The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes. All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training on a regular basis. Detailed and specific training will be made available to key staff in relation to managing drug incidents.

Parents/Guardians and Board of Management:

- The school sees parents/guardians as essential partners in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse.
- The school expects parents/guardians to be fully supportive of the school policy and approach in relation to substance abuse.
- Parents/guardians are expected to acknowledge the importance of this issue in the lives of their children and the importance of the school's programme in supporting their children.
- The school expects parents/guardians to assist and co-operate fully as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise and in the provision of educational programmes aimed at informing students of the dangers of substance abuse.

To assist parents/guardians in this the school will:

- Continue to provide opportunities through the school's Parents' Council to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs and substance misuse. Keep them informed of initiatives and programmes in the school which relate to the area of substance abuse.

Welcome consultation with parents/guardians on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

Provide parents/guardians with up-to-date information regarding the school policy in this area.

Students:

Coláiste Abbáin will continue to offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE/CSPE classes and other classes as the opportunity arises.

Dissemination of Policy:

This Substance Misuse Policy will be available from the Deputy Principal offices and on the school website.

Students will be made aware of this policy as part of their substance misuse education within the context of the S.P.H.E. /C.S.P.E. and relevant curricular areas in other subjects.

4. Review and Evaluation of this Policy
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Review:

The policy will be reviewed in light of changing information by the Students Support Team.

Evaluation:

Teachers, parents, students will be involved in the evaluation of this policy

Three main areas for evaluation are:

- Drug related programmes
- Drug related incidents
- Parent, staff and management training.

Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 13th September 2018

Appendix 1: Signs and Indicators of Substance Misuse

1. Common features indicative of drug-taking among adolescents:

- Unusual loss of interest in school
- Poor centre/school results
- Increased truancy
- Habitual lateness for centre/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
- Job loss
- 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
- Lack of occupation

Appendix 2: Emergency Response Guidelines

Do not panic and approach the student in a firm, caring way avoiding confrontation.

1. If a Person is Tense or Panicky: This tends to happen with drugs like amphetamines, magic mushrooms and ecstasy.

- Calm her/him down and reassure the person.
- Talk openly and explain that panicky feelings will go.
- Keep them away from loud noises and bright lights.
- Encourage them to take slow deep breaths and exhale slowly.
- Contact medical help immediately.

2. If the Person Overheats or Dehydrates this tends to happen with drugs like ecstasy or amphetamines have been used. Warning signs include:

- Cramps in the legs, arms and back
- Failure to sweat
- Headaches, dizziness and vomiting
- Suddenly feeling tired
- Fainting
- Action:
- Move the person to a cool area
- Splash them with cold water to cool them down.
- Remove excess clothing and fan person to cool him/her down.
- Call an ambulance immediately.

3. If the Person Faints or Loses Consciousness This happens mainly with drugs like alcohol, heroin, tranquillisers and solvents.

- Put the person in a recovery position.
- Loosen any tight clothing that might restrict breathing.
- Keep person warm but not too warm.
- Check their breathing and be prepared to do mouth to mouth resuscitation.
- Call an ambulance as soon as possible.

4. If the Person is Drowsy and Conscious:

- This usually happens with drugs like alcohol, tranquillisers, heroin, and solvents.
- Put the person in the recovery position and keep talking to them.
- Try to stop them losing consciousness and do not put them to bed.
- If they want a drink give sips of lukewarm water only.
- Call medical help as soon as possible. It is recommended that training on basic First Aid and the ABC of resuscitation is made available to all relevant centre/school personnel
(Adapted from Cohen Julien, D-Mag. HEA & ISSD, 1995)

