



Drugs Policy

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Drugs Policy

The School Ethos

The ethos of our school is founded on Christian principles where tolerance and respect for others is paramount. It is our intention that everyone feels valued and our pupils are encouraged to develop their full potential in a caring and supportive environment. This ethos underpins the policy and programmes in relation to drugs education. It is a statutory requirement for all schools in Northern Ireland to have a drugs education policy. Drugs education forms part of the school's programme of Health Education.

UNCRC

Article 36 - Children should be protected from any activity that could harm their development.

Article 24 - Children have the right to a ... clean environment, so they will stay healthy.

Rationale

Research carried out with 11 to 16 year olds in 2012 shows that

- 17% of pupils said they have used or tried drugs – mainly cannabis.
- 45% of pupils have taken an alcoholic drink, with most of these drinking for the first time at the age of 12.
- 25% of pupils have smoked tobacco – for most, they had their first cigarette at age 12.

Young people are experimenting with drugs at an earlier age. Pocket money is increasing, while the price of drugs is decreasing. Figures have shown that the message about the dangers of tobacco that has been ongoing in our schools in recent years has had a positive effect in the reduction of young people either experimenting with or currently using tobacco.

We therefore hope that by providing our children with guidance, skills and information we will have made a significant impact on their attitude to and avoidance of drugs.

We are aware that alcohol and drugs while socially more 'acceptable' are in fact seen as 'gateway' drugs, leading the way to the use of other drugs, especially if children start smoking and drinking alcohol at an early age.

We accept the need to prepare our P7 children for the very different environment of post primary education.

We are aware that our children are part of a 'youth culture' that we as teachers and parents are unfamiliar with. This 'culture' is reinforced by the media, fashion, peers etc.

We are aware that we have a part to play in preventing or delaying the use of drugs among our young people but accept that some may go on to experiment or use. We hope that with the support of church, parents and society, we will have some impact.

We endeavour to have a consistent approach among the staff in drug related matters.

We wish to have a clear statement available for parents, the Inspectorate, members of staff and others.

All members of the school community agree that the misuse of drugs on school property is inappropriate. This relates to all activities on school premises and includes tobacco and alcohol. The Governors have designated the school campus as a non-smoking zone.

Definition

By the term 'drug' we mean any substance which, when taken, has the effect of altering the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.

The term 'drug' includes:

- a. alcohol
- b. cigarettes
- c. solvents (glues, correcting fluids, lighter fuel, aerosols, petrol)
- d. nitrates (poppers)
- e. magic mushrooms
- f. illicit drugs

At Whitehouse Primary we will not tolerate the mis-use of drugs in our school.

Illicit Drugs are those listed as Controlled Drugs. These include:

- a. All illegal drugs (e.g. cannabis, LSD, Ecstasy, amphetamine sulphate (speed) and magic mushrooms (processed))
- b. Any prescribed drug that is used wrongly (e.g. valium, mogodon)

Our drugs education programme should allow our children to develop skills to enable them to resist offers and to live a drug-free lifestyle in a drug orientated society.

Protective Factors

There are many factors that influence a young person's decision to experiment with and/or continue to take drugs. Research shows that the following school-related protective factors are associated with less harmful drug use.

- Good staff/pupil relationships
- Low levels of truancy and friends who do not misuse drugs
- Effective drugs education - promoting positive, healthy attitudes
- Academic success - especially in late primary school
- Commitment and a sense of belonging to the school
- Positive social behaviour and high self-esteem
- Clear and consistent messages about drugs-related issues from home, school and the community
- Acquisition of life-skills such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal skills

Aims of this policy

- To provide a clear statement of the school's view on drug education.
- To ensure a consistent approach from staff to drug education and in the handling of drug-related incidents.
- To inform pupils of the effects of drug use and abuse.
- To help pupils acquire skills in managing the pressures of the youth culture they live in.
- To build up the self-esteem of pupils.
- To help pupils acquire decision-making skills.
- To create a climate where a young person feels comfortable discussing issues relating to drugs.
- To foster skills, that empower children to take responsibility for their own health.

Overview

- Drugs Education will be taught mainly under the Health Education umbrella as the skills taught and the approach taken are mainly the same in that both essentially promote a healthy lifestyle.
- Drugs Education in Whitehouse Primary School will largely be cross-curricular. There are opportunities to introduce or expand drugs education not only in Health Education but also in R.E. and Science.
- All teachers will actively play a part in drugs education within our school.
- The school will provide a preventative approach towards children who are found to be users (i.e. taking drugs, sniffing glue, drinking alcohol, smoking) in that the child will be encouraged to stop. If possible counselling will be provided within the school and if necessary from outside sources. (See Board Guidelines).
- It is important to take a child-centred approach to drugs education, to start with children's experience and knowledge.
- In a sensitive area such as this it is often beneficial to work where possible in small groups.

Use of Outside Agencies

Where appropriate, outside agencies may be invited to speak to the children. The Education Authorities advice on the use of outside agencies will be followed.

- The teacher will ensure that the activities will complement the programme
- The class teacher will always be present
- Ensure that the agency/individual has a child protection policy that is in accordance with recognised good practice
- Clarify position of confidentiality
- Ensure content and resources are appropriate
- Provide the agency/individual with this policy
- Inform parents of the use of the agency/individual
- Give pupils the opportunity to discuss the session/class and to give feedback

- Create opportunities for follow-up discussions with the class teacher and the agency or individual
- Request evaluations carried out by the agency or individual

The Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Governors

- Foster and review the development and on-going review of the drugs policy and programme.
- Collaborate with appropriate staff, parents/guardians and pupils, through the School Council.
- Examine and approve policy and programme prior to implementation.
- Ensure an overview of this policy is published in the school prospectus. This has been a statutory requirement since 1996.
- Ensure policy is reviewed regularly.
- Are aware of and adequately trained to deal with suspected drugs-related incidents and their appropriate disciplinary response.

The Principal

- Shall determine the circumstances of all drug-related incidents - but not investigate. It is the role of the PSNI to investigate.
- Will make every effort to contact parents/guardians of pupils involved.
- Will ensure that when a controlled drug is involved there is close liaison with police.
- After contacting police, the principal's responsibilities are to the welfare of the pupils involved, other pupils in the school and the handling, storage and safe disposal of any drugs/drug-related paraphernalia.
- Will report the incident to the NEELB and the Board of Governors.
- Will respond to a request for a press statement, which will be short, factual and positive. In the absence of the Principal, no statement will be made.

The PDMU Coordinator/Designated Drugs Designated Teacher

- ensures that a good and balanced programme of study is being taught
- implements the non-curricular parts of this policy
- liaises with other bodies in relation to drugs education (PSNI, HPANI, other voluntary agencies ensuring that the educational side of this policy is being implemented
- liaises with other staff on drugs education and pastoral care matters
- liaises with the Principal on any drug-related incident at school or in local environment - for curriculum purposes.
- liaises with other bodies in relation to drugs incidents.
- coordinates the school's procedures for handling suspected drug-related incidents.
- coordinates the training and induction of these procedures with new and existing staff.
- takes possession of any substance and associated paraphernalia found in the event of a suspected incident.
- completes a factual report that is forwarded to the principal.
- Recognises the need to have a member of staff trained in the necessary first-aid skills to cope with a pupil under the influence of drugs.

Staff Members

- Individual staff members are likely to be the first to encounter a suspected drugs-related incident.
- They should not attempt to determine the circumstances surrounding the incident but should deal with any emergency procedures if necessary.
- Any information, substance or paraphernalia received should be forwarded to the designated teacher for drugs who may have to take immediate action
- A brief, factual report of the suspected incident should be completed and forwarded to the designated teacher for drugs.

Training

- Information will be disseminated to staff by the coordinator
- Certain agencies and organisations can provide information, talks and training.
- PSNI Drug Squad
- Health Promotion Agency
- Education Authority Staff

Monitoring and Evaluation

- There will be regular monitoring, review and evaluation of the drugs education programme within the school. This will involve a variety of methods and evaluation tools, depending on the issue and the year group.
- Questionnaires for pupils, staff and parents/guardians will be used when appropriate to facilitate planning, monitoring and evaluating and will be used to inform future planning.
- Parents will be informed about the school's policy and will be updated about relevant issues when necessary.
- Feedback from pupils, staff, parents and governors can be useful in evaluating the programme. Any necessary change in the programme will be implemented.
- The programme will be reviewed on a regular basis or in the light of relevant changes.

Procedures

All teachers will know and consider the Board's Guidelines and legal issue before re-acting to a drug related incident.

- **Searching**
Teachers have the right to search school property but not the child or his personal property. The child may consent to emptying pockets, bags etc. However if a child refuses to cooperate, the PSNI should be contacted. Any search should be carried out only in the presence of a witness (perhaps another teacher).
- **Detention**
If a child is suspected of supplying or using an illegal substance then the teacher has the right to detain the child using reasonable force, since this a criminal offence. However, if a child wishes to leave the premises, he/she should be allowed to do so.
There is no right to detain if the substances are legal. A witness should be present.
- **Confidentiality**
When dealing with a drugs related incident where a child is looking for help, staff should be aware that confidentiality **cannot** be guaranteed as it is compulsory to inform the police about any criminal offence. Children must be made aware that confidentiality **cannot** be guaranteed.
- **Interviewing**
The child should only be interviewed in the presence of a witness. If possible during an interview with police, the parents should be present.
- **Dealing with the Press**
A written statement from the Principal should be given. No questions should be answered. Statement should end in a positive manner. Other staff should be aware that they give no information and have no contact with the press.

Disciplinary Measures

- Each incident will be responded to individually, taking into account the age of the pupil, the number of pupils involved, evidence of peer pressure, level of involvement.
- The needs of individual pupils will be considered and appropriate interventions and support mechanisms will be put in place.
- We will endeavour to provide pupils with opportunities to learn from their mistakes and to develop as individuals.
- The school will deal with drug related incidents according to procedures within the Disciplinary Policy. However, because of the seriousness of some aspects of this, certain further measures must be considered.
- The school views possession of drugs or drug taking during the school day extremely seriously and will take appropriate disciplinary measures on any pupil guilty of the offence.
- Disciplinary measures must be taken within the framework of the Education Authority guidelines. When appropriate, internal exclusion may be considered.
- In certain circumstances suspension may be an option. The child can be suspended for a maximum of 5 days while an investigation is carried out. This can be extended to 15 days in one term where necessary.
- As a last resort, expulsion may be considered. The school cannot expel but can recommend a pupil for suspension to Education Authority.

Parents

- The school appreciates parental support and co-operation in any action taken in support of basic school aims outlined within this policy.
- The drugs policy is available to everyone on the school website and a hard copy can be requested from the office.
- Where sensitive issues are being addressed, the school will inform parents/guardians.
- The school expects parents to work together with the school in any measures deemed necessary.

Management of Solvents

- By the term solvent we mean any volatile substance such as - adhesives, glues, petrol, gas lighter fuels, correcting fluids, thinners, aerosols.
- Teachers should be aware of the need to supervise closely any glues, paints etc. used in specialist areas such as craft, technology.
- Any solvent that presents a danger will be kept in a secure store or locked cupboard. Only members of staff will have access.
- Cleaning agents and chemicals used by cleaners and caretaker will be stored according to procedures set out in Section 9 of Health and Safety in Education manual.