

Mayo Abbey NS Substance Use Policy

Scope of Policy:

This policy applies to users of the school building. In this policy, our understanding of drugs is: 'A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels.'

The substance use policy is applicable to all school-related activities and any exceptions to be discussed with the Principal and/or Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Relationship to School's Mission:

The characteristic spirit of the school (school ethos) has been developed and agreed with the partners in education. The substance use policy reflects the school ethos in that it is dedicated to the care of the whole school community and it aims to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

Policy Content:

The policy content is divided into sections.

- **Education concerning substance use:**

Education concerning substance use in Mayo Abbey National school will be provided within the broad context of the subject of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) by following our 2 year plan for SPHE as outlined in our planning grid.

Considerations which inform the selection of content and methodologies include adherence to our planning grid for SPHE in which we follow the same strand units in the same two month period to ensure thematic approach throughout the school. Approaches to co-ordinate, involve teachers and allocate time include adherence to the same strand units in the same 2-month period.

Active learning strategies advocated in the SPHE curriculum and will inform our selection of methodology. Our work will be reinforced by project work and the possibility of talks from local Gardaí and Public Health Nurses as long as the content of their talk is in keeping with the school curriculum on the topic.

The use of an outside visitor/speaker to enhance the work done in the class should always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and should be undertaken in the presence of a teacher.

Tobacco

The school is a no smoking zone .

Students are not permitted to smoke or possess tobacco products on the school premises or on any school related activity. Staff may smoke off the school ground out of view of the pupils or in a designated smoking room. There is not a designated smoking room in Mayo Abbey National school.

All visitors to the school will be expected to comply with the school policy as outlined and signs informing visitors to the school of this will be displayed.

Pupils found smoking on the school grounds are on a school activity will be asked to hand over all tobacco products and matches/lighters and parents informed of the incident.

These products may then be returned to the parents. Garda may be informed especially if the children were supplied the tobacco products i.e. the tobacco product was not stolen from the house as a once-off act of bravado.

Tobacco products will not be used as prizes in school raffles.

Illegal drugs/Solvents/Food and Beverages

The school is an area where illicit drugs, non water-based solvents and certain food and beverages which affect the behaviour of children will not be allowed.

Children have a noticeable change in behaviour if certain physical fizzy drinks and chocolate are consumed. The parents of the school would be encouraged not to include fizzy drinks or chocolate in their child's lunch as per the healthy eating policy.

Any illegal drugs found on the school premises will not be disturbed unless leaving them in the location they were found presents an unreasonable risk to pupils. Gardaí will be informed immediately and asked to remove the substances. No member of the staff will transport illegal substances at any time.

If any member of staff thinks that a pupil is under the influence of an illegal substance, the Principal will be informed immediately and further action will then be decided.

- **Provision for training and staff development:**

The shared understanding among the staff regarding the contribution that an SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance misuse is evident throughout adherence through the 2-year plan for SPHE and the use of the Walk Tall Programme as per the content objectives of the SPHE curriculum.

Staff members are aware of the contribution they can make to the prevention of substance misuse within their own class by developing a supportive class environment and informing the pupils taking the age of the pupils into consideration and local circumstances and events, which may arise.

staff members will be made sufficiently aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse by asking the Public Health Nurse and relevant Garda to inform the staff of same.

Staff members have been made sufficiently aware of laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how they relate to themselves, to the school and the students by having this policy inspected by a legal expert and reading prescribed material as advocated by legal advice sought.

Further training needs we have in relation to the implementation of the substance use policy include revision of the signs and symptoms of substance use - training similar to the training received by staff on the Walk tall programme.

Training can be accessed from the substance misuse prevention project based in Dublin West Education Centre - at present this training is only available to schools in the local drugs task force areas and Mayo Abbey is not in one of those areas.

New staff, in particular, will be briefed on the substance use policy of the school on commencement of employment in the school.

Parent education on SPHE and issues relating to substance misuse will be promoted in the school community by holding an information night for parents/guardians informing them of all related issues - this information to be given by an employee of the Health Promotion Unit or a Garda officer. It is envisaged that the parents will be informed of the schools role in relation to child protection by informing them that the school must adhere to the 'Children First Guidelines' and more specifically the Department of Education and Science guidelines produced in conjunction with the aforementioned 'Children First Guidelines'.

Monitoring and Review Procedures:

This policy will be reviewed regularly taking into account

- Changing information and legislation
- Feedback from parents/teachers/students
- Incidents relating to substance use that may arise in the school or in connection with school-related activities.

Timeframe:

The completed policy will be circulated on the 1st of March 2005 .

The policy will come into force on the 1st of May 2005 with all parents expected to sign a letter that they have read the policy and agreed they are bound by the policy.

It will be subject to review every June or whenever an incident arises - not covered by the policy at present.