

USE OF SUBSTANCES

Policy Statement

Introduction

The word “substance” or “drug” covers anything taken into the body to change the way it functions. It includes medicines, alcohol, tobacco, as well as illegal substances such as ecstasy and cannabis. While recognising that tobacco and alcohol are the drugs that our students are most likely to experiment with or use, there is growing concern that students are finding themselves in situations where illegal substances are being made available to them. While we acknowledge that the numbers of young people who use and misuse substances is rising, it is important to recognise that the vast majority of young people are choosing not to use substances. However, it is also important to realise that school children - even those in the early years in secondary school - are likely to be exposed to the effects and influences of substance misuse in the wider community, and that is now an issue in rural areas just as much as in deprived inner-city areas.

In drawing up this policy consideration has been given to

1. substance abuse prevention;
2. methods of intervention if a student is found abusing drugs.

The policy deals with drugs and solvents, alcohol and tobacco as separate issues.

General Aims

- to promote and develop the ideals, values and beliefs of the college as set out in the college mission;
- to ensure the welfare of the students is of paramount importance at all times;
- to develop the idea of the college as a health promoting environment;
- the college's policy on substance use and misuse will focus on education, prevention and intervention;
- the college will work towards these aims in partnership with parents and outside agencies;
- all curricular areas will contribute to the raising of student awareness of the health risks associated with substance abuse and to the development of the student's ability to reject the drug culture to which they are currently exposed.

Educational Objectives

- to enable students to make healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge, challenging attitudes and developing and practising skills;
- to provide them with accurate information about substances;
- to increase their understanding about the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse of substances;
- to encourage an understanding for those experiencing or likely to experience substance use;
- to widen their understanding about related health and social issues, e.g. crime and HIV;
- to seek to minimise the risks that users and potential users face;
- to enable them to identify sources of appropriate personal support if the need arises.

DRUGS AND SOLVENTS

Prevention

The programmes of work in Personal and Social Education, Science, and Physical Education cover the physical and moral effects of drug and solvent abuse in our society and are presented in such a way as to discourage experimentation.

In PSE, the programmes help students to develop more mature responses to the dangers of substance abuse and how to deal with the pressure of the peer group when confronted socially with alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Likewise in RE, the programme encourages students to adopt a reasoned and thoughtful approach to this difficult area.

It is hoped that all areas of the curriculum will contribute to developing an awareness of the dangers of substance abuse.

Each member of staff in Holy Cross College will be made aware of the problems, signs and symptoms of drug and solvent abuse and has a responsibility to adhere to and promote this policy. Opportunities will be created to update staff regularly in the battle against drug abuse, and parents will be provided with relevant literature from time to time.

Procedures Should an Incident Occur Involving Drugs or Solvents

Should an incident occur in the college where drugs or solvents have been abused, the following procedures will be carried out:

Legally Held Substances

1. In the case of misuse of legally held substances, the member of staff who discovers the incident should call for First Aid and inform the designated teacher who will
 - assess the situation
 - ensure the safety of the student and others
 - give emergency aid and seek medical attendance if necessary
 - inform parents
 - if unsure, get help immediately
2. It is important that he/she remains calm especially if sniffing is suspected. Make sure the student has plenty of fresh air. If he/she wants to sleep, turn him/her to the side so that he/she will not choke on his/ her vomit.
3. Student will, if it is thought necessary, be taken to a health centre to receive medical assistance.

Illegally Held Substances

- i. In the case of illegally held substances, the above steps will be taken. Advice and guidance will be sought if necessary from WELB's Assistant Education Officer with responsibility for Drug and Solvent Abuse.

Should any illegal substance be found on the premises, staff should take possession of the evidence - preferably in the presence of a witness. The relevant authorities, e.g. the community police liaison officer, should be informed.

- ii. Suspicion of trafficking in illegal drugs in college will lead to an investigation co-ordinated by the designated teacher. If an offence is confirmed, the person or persons concerned will be suspended pending recommendation by the Governors of expulsion. In the interim, guidance will be given to students and parents on the availability of specialist advice from support agencies.
- iii. Incidents where students are suspected of buying illegal drugs in college or bringing illegal drugs into college will be investigated and, if this is found to be happening, those involved will be counselled by the designated teacher and by other support agencies as appropriate. Parents will be informed, and the matter will also be referred to the Board of Governors. If the offence is confirmed, the person or persons concerned will be dealt with according to the college's disciplinary procedures.

- iv. Students suspected of taking drugs outside college will be monitored and, if appropriate, be offered counselling and parents will be informed. The college and the parents can then work together to support the young person involved. The Governors will expect parents to inform the Principal or designated teacher if they suspect their children of drug-taking.
- v. Any incident involving the misuse of drugs or solvents will be carefully documented and records kept in confidential files; where at all possible, it will be dealt with confidentially.
- vi. Should an incident involving drug or solvent abuse occur in college its implications will be considered by a team which will include the following staff members:
 - The Designated Teacher (i.e. Vice-Principal)
 - Form Teacher
 - Head of Year; Head of Key Stage
 - Principal

The team will meet on a regular basis to

- assess the local drug scene & consider information supplied to the college
- decide if any action needs to be taken
- review the policy.

vii The involvement of the media will be dealt with by the Principal.

viii All staff (teaching and non-teaching) will be made aware of the above procedures.

N.B. Where a student discloses to a teacher or other member of staff that he/she is taking drugs, the staff member should make it clear to the student that he/she can offer no guarantee of confidentiality.

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a mood-altering drug. Technically, it is a depressant drug as it slows down the action of the brain. Some people think that it is a stimulant, but this is not the case.

Despite licensing laws, around 60% of children aged between 13 and 17 are likely to have bought alcohol in a pub or off-licence.

Prevention

The Health Education Programme in college also covers the consequences of alcohol abuse. Students will not be permitted to bring alcohol into college or to consume it in college or on any college activity.

Intervention

Students breaking this rule will be dealt with according to the college's disciplinary procedures

SMOKING

Background

Smoking is an addictive habit generally acquired in childhood which causes an appalling amount of preventable death, disability and suffering. In Northern Ireland, over 2,500 people die every year because of smoking.

Passive smoking, once thought to be only a nuisance is now acknowledged to be harmful to health. This college has a responsibility to promote healthy lifestyles and, in pursuit of this, teaches students about the hazards of smoking as part of the health education cross-curricular theme. The college wishes to provide an environment which complements this teaching. It also wants to protect the health of staff and visitors to the college.

Objectives

- A. To educate students and staff about the serious health risks of smoking and the subsequent benefits of stopping.
- B. To provide support for those wishing to stop smoking.
- C. To demonstrate the college's commitment to promoting health of its staff, its students and the community it serves.
- D. To protect non-smokers from environmental tobacco smoke.

The College Policy (*conforms with all recent legislation relating to smoking*)

- (a) The college is a non-smoking environment.
- (b) Students will be educated on the effects of smoking, and given opportunities to learn the skills necessary to resist the pressures to smoke. They will be able to make informal decisions on smoking.
- (c) Staff should not permit students to smoke on any college trip.

Implementation of the Non-Smoking Policy

- (a) Members of staff will be given a copy of the policy.
- (b) Members of staff will inform visitors as appropriate.

Monitoring and Review

The policy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Drugs education is just as necessary for students with special educational needs. Children with learning difficulties may need more help than others in understanding what sorts of behaviour are and are not acceptable and desirable, and in developing the confidence and skills to resist drugs. Indeed, such children may often be more at risk than others.

For these young people, it will be particularly important that schools take into account their individual needs and abilities in interpreting the information given.

Holy Cross College is taking into account those students with special educational needs in the development of its drug education programme. A specially adapted programme of information will be provided for teachers of these students to facilitate understanding.

Dissemination of the Policy on Substance Use and Misuse

The Board of Governors and all staff will be given a copy of this policy. Copies will be available in the Principal's office, Vice-Principal's office, main office, staffroom and the medical room.

A summary of this policy will be given to the parents/guardians of all students.

A Partnership with Parents

Fundamental to our college's values and practice is the principle of sharing the responsibility for caring and educating our students with the parents. The college will take every opportunity to inform and involve parents or guardians by:

- direct contact
- by parent evenings
- by encouraging parents to contact the college if they have any concerns.

Implementation of this Policy

- This policy will be disseminated as described above;
- Its implementation will be the immediate concern of the various committees and areas of study: Senior Management, Pastoral and Curricular Committees, Personal and Social Education, Health Education, RE and the Areas of Study.
- Necessary staff training will be provided.
- The policy will be monitored and regular reviews carried out.