



St Oliver Post Primary School

Substance Use Policy

This policy applies to the entire school community, including staff, pupils, parents/guardians and all users of the school building/facilities.

In accordance with our mission statement, members of the school community strive to enable students to achieve their potential within a happy and secure learning environment. St Oliver Post Primary School asserts its right to take whatever steps are necessary to protect and promote those values that are central to its mission statement by requiring certain standards of behavior and prohibiting certain practices that undermine it. This philosophy is reflected in our Substance Use Policy.

For the purposes of this policy substance use refers to:

- a) use of alcohol and tobacco,
- b) use of illegal drugs,
- c) illicit use of other substances e.g. sprays, aerosols, chemicals, medicines and many other substances in daily use,
- d) Use of any substances such as psychotropic drugs that could adversely affect the health and well-being of students. The school at its discretion will determine what substances are deemed to be unacceptable for use or possession by students.

Rationale

- The prevalence of all forms of substance misuse poses challenges and opportunities for the school community. The school is an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.
- The school recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drugs and, in particular, alcohol misuse.
- The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-08 and made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02. School policy also dictates that any subsequent legislation/strategic plan will also be complied with.
- The Education Act (1998) states that schools promote the social and personal education of pupils and provide health education for them.

What is substance misuse?

Our school believes that a substance misuse incident is as follows:

- any incident involving alcohol, solvents, tobacco, use of psychotropic drugs or use of illegal drugs or misuse of legal drugs
- use or suspected use of alcohol, aerosols, tobacco or other drugs on the school premises (including the grounds) or on a school-related outing or activity
- possession/supply of alcohol, solvents, tobacco, other drugs or associated paraphernalia on the school premises (including the grounds) or on a school related-activity



- where intoxication arises from suspected substance misuse or where behaviour suggests the use/ misuse of alcohol, solvents, tobacco or other drugs
- medical emergencies where substance misuse is suspected in school or on a school-related activity or outing

School Policy

St Oliver Post Primary School does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia by any pupil in the school, or on a school related activity or outing.

A legitimate exception is the use of a prescribed drug in accordance with medical advice and prescription. There is a responsibility on parent/ guardians to inform the school if/ when a pupil is using prescribed medicines and/or any form of medication.

This policy aims to:

- provide information and education, within the resources available to the school, to the entire school community including all staff, students, their parents/guardians about the effects of substance misuse and its prevention
- provide students with the knowledge and skills which would enable them to make informed decisions
- increase the self-confidence, self-esteem and well-being of pupils
- help pupils to identify sources of support and intervention
- help adult members of the school community to recognise the symptoms of substance misuse.
- guarantee the safety of the whole school population in accordance with the Code of Behaviour
- provide a planned and considered response to incidents involving substance misuse with a view to the protection of the person involved and the maintenance of a safe environment for the wider school community

These aims will be achieved by:

- 1) a co-ordinated approach to the issue of substance misuse through a taught curriculum within SPHE, CSPE and RE
- 2) the appropriate use of Psychological Support Services, an Garda Síochána and Social Services
- 3) sanctioning those involved in accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour in order to protect the health and welfare of the school community

The Role of Parents/ Guardians

- The school views parents/ guardians as essential partners in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance use.
- Parents/Guardians are expected to acknowledge the potential importance of this issue in the lives of their children and the importance of the school's substance use policy in supporting their children.
- The school expects the active support of parents/ guardians as it seeks to deal fairly and effectively with any incidents of substance misuse that might arise.



Confidentiality

The school recognises the importance of limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating a substance misuse incident. However, the school can give no absolute guarantee of confidentiality.

In the event of any substance misuse incident or suspected substance misuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the pupil involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

Procedures for dealing with substance misuse incidents

The school anticipates the full co-operation and active assistance of the parents/guardians in facilitating an investigation of a substance misuse incident.

- If any member of staff is of the opinion that a student is unsafe/a threat to others due to suspected substance misuse, the teacher may not allow the student to participate in class and the incident will be reported to the Year Head / Deputy Principal / Principal and if necessary, the parents will be contacted.
- In discharging its duty of care, the school may need to make contact and/or disclosures to outside agencies such as an Garda Síochána , and the Health Board.
- The school may need to engage the expertise of an appropriate third party in properly investigating the incident.
- The school may be duty bound under national legislation and Department of Education and Science guidelines to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an investigation.
- The duty of teachers and other staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any pupils when they come into contact with a substance misuse incident or a suspected substance misuse incident.

Media Enquiries

It is inappropriate for the school to comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for dealing with incidents. However, in the interests of the school's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been concluded.

In dealing with media enquiries, the Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Management will act as Spokesperson on behalf of the school.

Procedures for managing and investigating a substance misuse incident:

- 1) Where it is suspected that there is an immediate danger to pupils or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any pupil involved in a suspected substance misuse incident pending a full investigation of the incident.
- 2) A full written record of all investigations will be kept.
- 3) The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any substance misuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
- 4) The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drugs



paraphernalia associated with the incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies. All suspect illegal substances in possession of the Principal/Deputy Principal will be handed over to the Gardaí.

5) In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.

6) The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in all the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any sanctions or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.

7) The school will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.

8.1 If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the pupils concerned and their parents/guardians in the following manner:

8.2 Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the pupil concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a pupil is facing will be made available to the pupil and his or her parents/guardians (at the discretion of the school) in time to permit the pupil reasonable opportunity to make his or her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he or she would wish to make or have made on her behalf

8.3 The school will allow the pupil concerned and his or her parents/guardians reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school 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.

8.4 The school shall shortly thereafter inform the pupils and his or her parents/guardians of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the pupils have been involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances and may inform the relevant external agencies.

8.5 The school can, at its own discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise clemency if it deems it appropriate.

8.6 In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions up to and including exclusion in accordance with the school's discipline code. These measures will be taken in order to protect the health and safety of the entire school community.

8.7 Pastoral supports may be offered to the pupils affected by the incident of substance misuse.

The Role of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation

1. The Principal or Deputy Principal is responsible for dealing with substance misuse incidents arising in the school.
2. All reports of substance misuse or suspected misuse incidents must be made to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
3. The Principal may nominate the Deputy Principal or Year Head or another member of staff



to act on his behalf in the investigation of a substance misuse incident.

4. The Principal makes all decisions regarding the investigation of the incident; communication with the relevant parties and disclosure of the information regarding the investigation.

5. The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with the incident.

6. The Principal or Deputy 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.

7. The Principal may seek the advice of the Deputy Principal, Year Head, Guidance Counsellor or any other relevant person in conducting the investigation.

8. Where substance misuse is suspected the Principal or Deputy Principal should immediately inform parents/guardians, particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a pupil and share any available information that may help parents/guardians in attending to their child's health and well-being. This action will be taken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any substance misuse incident.

In the absence of the Principal/Deputy Principal, a designated acting Principal may assume the responsibilities outlined in the points above.

Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating

This policy will be subject to an initial review within a twelve month period. Following this review the interval between reviews will not be greater than five years. Ongoing monitoring of the policy will occur to ensure that its provisions are adequate to meet the challenges posed by substance misuse and to ensure congruence with other relevant school policies such as the school Code of Behaviour.