

ST NESSAN'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE

(Pobal Choláiste Neasáin Naofa)



Substance Use Policy

December 2007

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY/MISSION STATEMENT

St Nessian's Community College is a non-denominational, co-educational school. It is comprehensive in its intake and in its curricular provision.

St Nessian's Community College is committed to maintaining an educational environment where the growth, learning and development (Fás, Foghlaim, Forbairt – school motto) of our students can flourish.

To further the aims of St Nessian's as expressed in the mission statement:

- The pursuit of high standards in all endeavours will be expected and every effort will be directed towards the attainment of such standards.
- The school will do its utmost within its resources to provide appropriate opportunities so that every individual has the opportunity to gain maximum benefit from their experience in St Nessian's.
- The rights, responsibilities and dignity of all individuals within the school community will be respected. However, the Common Good takes precedence where there is a conflict between individuals.

INTRODUCTION

This policy came into being in response to staff reflection on the issue of School Development Planning. It emerged as a key area requiring immediate attention by the staff. Copies of this policy will be available at all times from the school office.

SECTION ONE

Scope

This policy applied to the students, parents and teachers of St Nessian's Community College, the users of the school building, administrative and maintenance staff. Once people are on school grounds or partaking in any school related activity e.g. school tours, matches, day trips, retreats, etc. it comes into force.

Relationship to the School's Mission/Vision/Aims

In devising a drugs policy we are encouraging students to have a sense of respect for themselves and others and for the community and society in general. The vision of the school is to create a healthy, caring and supportive environment for everybody. The substance use policy will enable the school to achieve this. The College has the right to expect and promote certain standards of behaviour and to prohibit certain practices. (Please refer to the College's Code of Behaviour).

Rationale

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Substance use is recognised as a significant problem in our community with 20% of young people taking drugs excluding alcohol. At thirteen either drug or alcohol experimentation has begun. As a health promoting College we need to provide for the needs of the whole College community and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues. This policy will enable us to deal with various crises as they occur.
- The Education Act (1998) provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- The report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled 'Drugs Use Prevention' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.
- The College is obliged to adopt a substance use policy under the National Drugs Strategy 'Building on Experience' 2001 – 2008.

Goals and Objectives

- To raise awareness of the issue of substance use among the community.
- To provide a whole school education programme for pupils through the integration of various subject areas which deal with substance use e.g. SPHE, CSPE, PE RE and Social Education in Leaving Certificate Applied.
- To provide educational programmes on substance use.
- To prevent substance use by our pupils through education.
- To provide information for parents with regard to substance use.
- To provide ongoing staff training.
- To develop a school intervention programme through pastoral care, staff meetings, etc.
- To outline clear and defined procedures in relation to managing incidents.

SECTION TWO

College Policy

The College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances i.e. alcohol, tobacco, solvents, tranquillisers, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, opiates and others or drug paraphernalia by any person in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school related activity.

SECTION THREE

Education Concerning Substance Use

- There will be a co-ordinated approach among all areas which address this: SPHE, LCA – Social Education, elements of CSPE, RE, Social and Scientific, Science and PE.
- The various needs of the pupils themselves and the whole College community will determine the methodology and the syllabus content.
- Syllabi and the different subject areas will determine the methodology and content of courses.
- The co-ordination of the education programme within the policy will take place following a meeting of the various subject areas. Representatives of the subject areas involved will attend a substance use workshop meeting on a regular basis.
- Speakers and resources from outside agencies will support the work done in the substance use education programme.
- Training will be provided for staff regarding substance use awareness i.e. In-Service training, guest speakers, Health Promotion Unit Training.
- Parents will be made aware of what is happening regarding substance use education programmes and provided with information through leaflets, information meetings, guest speakers etc., to assist them in their role as parents.
- The Board of Management/VEC through the Principal's Report should be made aware of the education programme.

SECTION FOUR

Procedures for Managing Substance Use Incidents, i.e. Allegations against a student, young visitor, member of staff, parent or adult visitor

- In the event of a substance use incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the people involved and the welfare of the College community as a whole and the reputation of the College.
- The College at its own discretion, may liaise with any appropriate outside authority e.g. H.S.E., J.L.O. and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- The following detailed steps will be followed:
 1. The Principal/Deputy Principal and Year Head (if appropriate) will be informed.
 2. An incident report form will be completed.

3. The College will take all the necessary steps required to fully investigate and assess any incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this. The College will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an incident and the community drugs garda officer will be notified. The College will carefully record all such items and retain them pending completion of the investigation having contacted the community drugs garda officer. Should the accused refuse to hand over these items the gardai will be called immediately. In the event of an incident, the College will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
4. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the College reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the College any person involved in a suspected abuse incident pending further and complete investigation of the incident.
5. If there is a reasonable suspicion that a person has been involved in an incident an initial assessment will be carried out in order to decide further action.
6. The College will question the person; this may include Principal/ Deputy Principal and the Year Head.
7. In the case of a student or minor, parents will be informed.
8. The College will compile a written report about the incident.
9. The College will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
10. The College will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in 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, penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
11. If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the College will put the full particulars of the incident to the people concerned and their parents, if necessary in the following manner:
 - (a) Copies of all records deemed relevant i.e. incident report form/school policy will be made available to the person and in the case of pupils or minors his/her parents, by the Principal, in time to permit the person a reasonable opportunity to make his/her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he/she would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf.

- (b) The Principal will allow the person concerned and his/her parents, if appropriate, reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The College will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous consideration or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - (c) The Principal shall shortly thereafter inform the person and his/her parents, if appropriate, of the school findings and their reasons for these. If the College finds that the person has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, a formal letter in which it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions it intends to impose in the circumstances shall be sent to the people involved.
 - (d) The person involved has the right to appeal a decision made in regard to his/her case within a time frame specified by the Principal.
12. In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management/VEC will deal with each case on its own merits.
 13. The College can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The College asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
 14. The College will also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the people affected by an incident. As these incidents can sometimes be traumatic for those involved the services of the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Class Tutor, Year Head will be made available.

(The College's Code of Behaviour underpins all aspects of the procedures to be followed when investigating all issues of indiscipline.)