

# 6

## Mercy Primary School

### **Substance Use Policy**

#### **Introduction:**

The process for formulating the policy was begun on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, 2009 by facilitator Ursula Smyth, a Support Officer with Walk Tall and a core committee consisting of then representatives from the Parents' Association, Staff of Mercy Primary School and the Board of Management.

In 2019-2021, the relevant updates to the policy were added by B. Dermody, as part of a post of responsibility.

Mercy Primary School recognises that there are issues and consequences surrounding the taking of drugs. We are committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substances. The School acknowledges that it has a significant role to play in terms of prevention education through the Walk Tall programme, management of drug related incidents and supporting parents. We recognise parents as the primary educators in this field. The Policy will set out in writing how our school community will deal with all matters relating to substances.

#### **Definition of a Drug:**

It is generally agreed that a drug is any substance which changes how the body functions physically, mentally and emotionally.

- physically - how we behave
- mentally - how we think
- emotionally - how we feel

#### **Scope:**

The Policy will apply to all substances ranging from prescribed and over the counter medicines as well as legal and illegal substances such as nicotine, alcohol and solvents.

It will apply to the whole school community which includes pupils, staff, parents and any visitors coming into the school or using the school premises. It will apply while staff and school community are on the premises and during school-related activities and trips.

#### **Rationale:**

It is necessary to devise a policy on Substance Use at this time for the following reasons:

- The world in which we live presents people with many challenges that affect their health and well being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs (including prescribed and over the counter medicines) is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their school community and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.
- The National Drug Strategy, 'Building on Experience' is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place
- This policy links in with other policies in our school which include our Health and Safety and Code of Behaviour Policies.

### **Our School Vision:**

At Mercy Primary School we build on the legacy left for us by the former Sisters of Mercy, of a vibrant Catholic Parish School. We wish our pupils to enjoy learning in an atmosphere of mutual respect, co-operation and positive affirmation. We commit ourselves to enabling each child achieve her full potential, spiritual, moral, physical, emotional and academic so that she may live a happy and contented life in harmony with herself, others and the environment. We seek to promote healthy lifestyles for all in a safe, supportive environment. We also seek to offer support for those who are experiencing difficulty.

This vision is promoted and enhanced by the implementation of an agreed policy on Substance Use.

### **Goals/Objectives of the Policy:**

This policy aims to:

- ensure that our pupils will grow up in a healthy environment, helping them to develop skills, values and attitudes to make positive responses to the problems of substance misuse.
- Provide a comprehensive programme of prevention education for all pupils in substance misuse in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) in the Primary School.
- To equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.
- To manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner.
- To support parents and pupils and staff in understanding and addressing substance misuse.
- To minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within schools/communities.

### **Content of the Policy:**

A substance misuse prevention programme will be implemented at all class levels in accordance with our Social Personal and Health Education Primary Curriculum Programme. Through S.P.H.E., our pupils will practise specific skills and experience a value system which supports primary prevention in a holistic, caring and supportive environment. We will address the content objective relating directly to substance use in an age-appropriate manner using discreet S.P.H.E. time.

#### **The relevant modules include:**

##### *Influences and decisions:*

Evaluating some of the strongest influences on attitude and behaviour and heightening awareness of who influences us and why. Understanding and learning skills to make the correct decisions.

*Substance Use:* Examining the use and misuse of medicines and drugs. Examine ways of avoiding smoking. Understanding the implications of misusing substances.

*Personal Safety:* Examine ways of keeping safe and looking at areas where we might be at risk or where our personal safety might be threatened.

- 1. Education concerning substance use.**
- 2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents.**
- 3. Provision for training and staff development.**

## **1. Education Concerning Substance Use**

Substance misuse prevention education will be taught throughout the school in the overall context of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. The core programme for substance misuse prevention education will be the Walk Tall programme. It will be supported by the Stay Safe, RSE and Alive-O programmes.

The Walk Tall Programme hopes to give children the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices. Social, Personal and Health Education is time-tabled into the curriculum and taught for 30 minutes per week by the class teacher. The methodologies used include discussion, art work, co-operative games, circle work, stories, poems, songs and rhymes, role play and mime, visualisations, group work, project work, brainstorming and movement. Substance misuse prevention education is taught throughout the school as part of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme and parents are notified if/when outside agencies deliver programmes or presentations to support substance misuse prevention education.

### **Best Practice Guidelines:**

- Class teacher has the primary role in the delivery of substance misuse prevention education in the school setting
- Substance misuse prevention education must be delivered in the context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
- Scare tactics are ineffective
- People's drug use must not be normalised
- Information must be age, developmentally, culturally and environmentally appropriate
- An active learning approach is recommended
- Testimonials are not appropriate at primary level
- Consistent implementation is crucial to effectiveness.
- Supplementary education must compliment and not replace or duplicate the school curriculum.
- The teacher must be present and actively involved at all times.
- Expectations of school based programmes need to be realistic.

**NOTE:** Within our school we have a programme in place for 6<sup>th</sup> class which complements the Social, Personal and Health Education programme. This is coordinated and run by members of the School Completion Programme. Substance Use is one of the topics covered on this programme.

## **2. Management Of Alcohol, Tobacco And Drug Related Incidents**

The School premises and grounds are alcohol and tobacco free zones.

Illicit drugs are not allowed on the school premises and grounds at any time.

See Health and Safety Policy for information on solvents such as tippex and deodorants and the use, storage and administration of medicines.

Incidents involving alcohol, drug and tobacco use might include:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco on the school premises or during a school-related activity.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour.
- Disclosure about use.
- Finding these substances and / or associated paraphernalia.

- Possession and/ or supply on the school premises or during a school-related activity.

The school should respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be important in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include referral to a support agency. Where a member of staff requires support, schools may consider facilitating links with an Employee Assistance Scheme.

**Procedures to be followed may include some or all of the following:**

- Assess the situation.
- Seek medical help if necessary.
- Any adult displaying signs of substance abuse will be asked to leave the premises.
- Contact principal.
- Contact Parents.
- All incidents will be recorded on the Report Form for recording Incidents involving Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug use. (See Appendix 1)
- Referral to outside agency.
- It is mandatory to contact Gardaí if an illegal substance is found on the premises.
- Sanctions (See Code of Behaviour).
- Report (Refer to Child Protection Guidelines)

**Confidentiality:**

People will be informed on a ‘need to know’ basis. Parents/guardians will be involved unless reporting would pose a threat to the child. In the case of illegal drugs the Gardaí will be informed by the principal.

**3. Staff Training and Development**

- In our school our staff has a shared understanding of the importance of SPHE and the role played by the supportive classroom environment.
- We will consider inviting guest speakers where it is deemed beneficial, to deal with issues relevant to substance misuse prevention education.
- Drug Information and Awareness Training is provided by the Walk Tall Support Service or Health Service Executive.
- At review, needs of teachers and other staff members will be assessed, and the resources of the Local Education Centre (Laois Ed Centre), Primary Professional Development Service (PPDS) and the Walk Tall support service will be used to access further training and staff development if needed.
- A teacher may not administer medication to a child (except in the case of an epileptic seizure, where buccolam midazolam is administered). For all other cases, the parent/guardian of the child must administer the medication. Alternatively, if there is written permission from the parent/guardian, a child in the senior classes may administer it herself.

***The following cleaning products are in use in our school:***

- Hand Sanitiser Seldon C053
- Tork Premium Soap Liquid in locked dispenser
- Dychem Greasan Bactericidal cleaner
- Dychem Bowl toilet cleaner

- Mister Machine uses V2 Healthcare disinfectant
- Bleach
- Lidl wipes
- Tesco wipes
- Lidl handsoap
- Lidl antibacterial spray
- Tesco antibacterial spray

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Ratified by Board of Management on: \_\_\_\_\_

Review date: \_\_\_\_\_



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**What action has been taken?**

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**What further action is necessary?**

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**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

