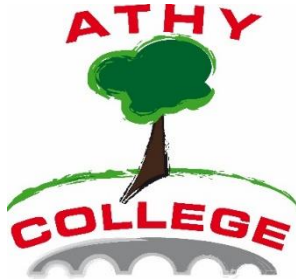


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# Athy College Kildare

## Substance Use Policy

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

Chairperson of Board of Management

Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Principal

Approval Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

In a caring school we are dedicated to fostering educational excellence empowering all students to reach their full potential – academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and cooperation, we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual’.

## **ETHOS**

Athy College is a caring school. The staff are dedicated to fostering educational excellence and earnestly endeavour to empower all students to reach their full potential – academic and social, physical and spiritual. Through partnership and cooperation, the staff of Athy College respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of everyone.

Athy College defines education as the on-going development of all students so that they may realise their true and best selves. The college motto is “Fas agus Foghlaim” (Lifelong Learning). From the outset students are taught they are partners in their own education. The school aims to prepare students for public examinations, in an age when academic qualifications are indispensable for admission to further education and entry into employment. The school recognises that its students are of varying cultural and social backgrounds and have a wide variety of aspirations and abilities.

The school embraces the vital role that parents, and guardians play in the overall education for their children. The school also recognises the importance of the community in which the student lives. For this reason, every effort is made to ensure that the student is aware of his/her role in the community and is encouraged to be positively involved in the wider community.

## **SCOPE**

This policy applies to all students all members of staff and personnel within Athy College. Students will be governed by this policy throughout the school day, when representing the school or involved in any school activity both during and outside normal school hours including school break time and lunch time and including going to and coming from school or when wearing the school uniform . It also applies to all those using the premises.

## **RATIONALE**

This policy has been formulated to protect all the students and staff in the school. Many issues outside our school have an impact on our school community. The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse pose challenges for the school as a social partner. The Board of Management of Athy College recognises that the issue of substance abuse is very serious and can impact on staff and students. In arriving at a policy to deal with the possession of, distribution of, the use of and the abuse of substances, the school is conscious that each situation is unique and so a flexible response is required.

When referring to substances the Board of Management of Athy College defines them as follows - All substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, the misuse of solvents, the use and misuse of matches, lighters and fireworks, bangers all alcohol and tobacco s used contrary to the law of the land.

Athy College also reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance. The school policy aims to cooperate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for school in DES circular 18/02. The Education Act 1998 provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

## **SCHOOL POLICY**

The school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or prohibited substances and or drug paraphernalia by any student, staff or visitor in the school or school trips/outings, during any school related activity or going to and coming from school, when wearing the school uniform or wherever our school Code of Behaviour applies.

## **ROLE OF PARENTS**

Parents are expected to acknowledge the importance of all school programmes that the school provides for the students. They should attend where possible talks and courses provided for parents in relation to substance use/ abuse. They should recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing their children regarding substance abuse. They should assist and cooperate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist the parents in their role the school will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes, encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation. In the event of an incident of substance abuse, Athy College will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community.

## **STUDENTS AND ILLEGAL SUBSTANCE USE OUTSIDE SCHOOL**

When the school authorities are made aware that a real concern exists where a student may be involved in illegal substance use outside school, the following procedure is followed. The parents of the student will be informed in writing or by phone by the Principal about the concern. It will be stressed that the school is not accusing the student of using illegal substances but is relaying its concern that this might be the case. The parents may be invited into the school to meet with the Principal and discuss the concern. The Principal will make them aware of any support services in the school, and the need to make contact with their GP or the Drug Awareness Unit (which may offer testing for illegal substances and follow up counselling).

## **PROCEDURES IN MANAGING AND INVESTIGATING AN INCIDENT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

- Athy College reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school, any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident. This applies particularly where there is a threat to Health and Safety of students or the school community.
- An Incident Report Form will be completed.
- School personnel will then fully investigate and assess any abuse incident in a timely manner.
- School personnel will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances or paraphernalia associated with the abuse incident, and carefully record all such items. They will retain them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.

- In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, and concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident. They will record this statement as part of the investigation.
- The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident including records referred to in the above steps, records of 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. The school will also keep a record of any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- Athy College at its own discretion will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- If circumstances merit and an investigation is continuing the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents/guardians in the following manner.
  - Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his/her parents/ guardians at the discretion of the school. This will be done in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representation that he/she would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf.
  - The school will allow the student concerned and his 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.
  - The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or has been involved in/or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
- In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the school and/or the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, detention, a suspension of

three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration other sanctions short of expulsion and expulsion.

- The school 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 school should also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the student/students and parents affected by an incident of substance abuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a tutor, counsellor, Year Head, School Completion Programme etc. will be made available. External sources of support may also be recommended. Return to school may depend on participation in an appropriate counselling /addiction programme. Parental involvement and guarantees may also be required.

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

### Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that it is reviewed as specified.
- To support staff in the implementation of this policy, including up-to-date staff development/training.
- To decide on appeals by parents or students with respect to decisions made by the Principal.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

### Role of the Principal/Deputy Principal

- To formulate a draft policy in consultation with the teaching staff, students, parents, Board and KWETB.
- To monitor the implementation of the policy and to ensure that it is reviewed as specified.
- To support other staff in their implementation of the policy and arrange relevant staff training.
- To ensure all referrals are investigated in accordance with this policy and the schools Code of Behaviour.
- To liaise with parents and outside agencies including An Garda Síochána and local authorities.

- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement were appropriate.

#### Role of Teaching Staff

- To advocate positive and healthy lifestyles decisions.
- To treat the possibility of substances abuse as a serious threat to the welfare of students.
- To inform themselves regarding the signs, symptoms and effects of substance abuse.
- To be alert to disclosure by students regarding their own or other's involvement in substance abuse.
- To implement the policy & bring any information/concerns to the attention of the Principal immediately.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement were appropriate.

#### Role of School Counsellor(s)

- To offer advice and support to any student who any be involved in substances abuse.
  - To advise parents/guardians where further support and information may be found.
  - To liaise with outside agencies concerning counselling and related support
- Role of Students
- To cooperate fully with the school in the implementation of the policy.
  - To bring any such information or suspicions to the attention of a member of staff immediately.

#### Role of Parents

- To support the policy and to cooperate fully with the school in its implementation.
- To inform the school authorities of any information/concerns they have in relation to substance abuse.
- To appraise this policy with regard to its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement were appropriate.

## **REPORTING OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE RELATED INCIDENTS**

Substance Abuse related incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use might include;

- Disclosure about student(s) substance abuse
- Use or suspected use on the school premises or during school-related activities, including intoxication / unusual behaviour.
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia.
- Possession of alcohol or an illegal/harmful substance during school time or during a school-related activity.
- Supply of alcohol or an illegal/harmful substance to other students whilst in the school's care. All reasonable suspicions and/or incidents relating to smoking, alcohol or drugs must be reported to the Principal / Deputy Principal. Written records should be kept at each stage of any investigation.

## **TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

We aim to provide education on substances abuse through; -

- Our ethos and mission which promote self-respect and confidence in our young people. Through this we aim to develop in each student the ability to make informed decisions when faced with situations where they may be at risk from substance abuse.
- SPHE - Students currently receive education on drugs, alcohol & tobacco through the Junior SPHE programme, and through some areas of the Senior Religious Education programme.
- Subject specific areas which lend themselves to opportunities to inform students about the harmful effects of such substances. eg;- Science – effects of substances abuse on the human body. Home Economics – identifying risks related to domestic/toxic substances. Construction – developing awareness of safety hazards including solvents / glues. Physical Education to develop a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle. English – exploration of relevant issues through literature, role play, drama etc.
- Outside speakers from relevant bodies such as An Garda Síochána and Local Health Authorities. All external speakers/groups will be pre-approved by the Principal Future Development of Substance Abuse Education 1) Formalise the Senior programme on Substance Abuse Education 2) Develop further links with external groups in order to strengthen these programmes with outside speakers and workshops. 3) Development of a training programme for staff, based on how to deal with drugs related incidents and providing Substance Abuse Education.



## **PROCEDURES FOR SUBSTANCE ABUSE RELATED INCIDENTS**

### **Prescribed Medicines**

- Prescribed medicines/tablets must not be brought to school unless accompanied by a letter from a parent/guardian.
- All medication must be handed into the school office and will only be administered when it is absolutely necessary as per written instruction from parents.

### **Chemical Substances / Solvents**

- School personnel will ensure that potentially harmful substances are stored safely and students are supervised carefully in the event of them having to be used in the course of their work.
- Students' use of correction fluid and aerosol sprays will be always discouraged.
- Misuse of such substances will be dealt with inline with the "Illegal/Harmful Substance" procedure below.

### **Tobacco / Cigarette Smoking / Vapping**

In the event of students being found with tobacco/cigarettes/Vapping utensils on their person the items will be confiscated, the parents/guardians will be informed and action will be taken in line with the school's Code of Behaviour.

### **Alcohol & Illegal/Harmful Substances**

The school will seek, as far as possible, to support for those who are experiencing difficulties with substance abuse. However, we are also dedicated to the care of the whole school community and this must be considered when sanctions are applied. Incidents involving possession, use of, or intoxication from alcohol, drugs or illegal/harmful substances will necessitate the following;-

- Student(s) will be removed from class immediately.
- Parents/guardians will be sent for.
- Such incidents will result in suspension pending a full investigation, after which further sanctions may be applied. This may include a further period of suspension or exclusion. Each individual case will be assessed and different levels of sanctions will be used according to the seriousness of the incident and the student's involvement. 'Any substance which changes the way the body functions – mentally, physically or emotionally.'
- The Juvenile Liaison Officer of An Garda Síochána will be informed of all drugs or substance abuse related incidents.
- Where appropriate relevant support agencies will also be contacted.

- Students involved in alcohol/substance abuse related incidents may also be required to speak with the school counsellor.

### **Advice for School Personnel**

All school personnel should be aware of the legal implications of discovering a young person in possession of drugs/illegal substances and how they are expected to deal with such an event. In relation to dealing with alcohol or drugs-related incidents, staff are advised that:

- Any concerns or suspicions should be reported to the Principal / Deputy Principal.
- Searches of student's personal belongings should only be carried out with the student's consent, and in his/her presence and that of another adult witness.
- Lockers are school property and as such do not require students permission to be search. However it is important that the student(s) and another adult witness are present when any search takes place
- Teachers should never guarantee confidentiality in relation to a disclosure by a student, as we have a legal obligation to pass information regarding a criminal activity to the police. Students disclosing information should be told that relevant personnel/agencies may have to be told in order to protect students from harm, but that all efforts will be made to help those involved

### **ADULTS**

A staff member presenting under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be allowed take part in his /her normal duties. The matter will be reported to the chairperson of the BOM. Such an incident would be regarded as professional misconduct and a breach of contract.

A parent or other adult presenting under the influence of alcohol or drugs will not be afforded a meeting with any member of staff. He/she will be asked to leave the premises by the Principal/Deputy. Failure to do so will result in Gardai being called.

The school operates a no smoking policy in accordance with the present national legislation. Staff should not smoke in view of students or on outside activities including sporting events and school related activities.

### **REVIEW**

Athy College will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practises.