

ATHY COLLEGE

Substance Use Policy

(Reviewed in 2008/2009 – BOM – Autumn 2009)

Introduction:

An Interim Policy on Substance Use was devised by school management and brought to the Board of Management in 2003. Subsequently, in 2003 and 2004 this document was brought by the SPHE Coordinator to the Parents' Association, the Home, School, Community group (the HSCL's Local Committee) and the Student Council for discussion.

In 2008, it was decided to review the policy with input from Esther Wolfe, Education Officer with the HSE's Community Addiction Services, the SPHE Coordinator, parents, staff and students.

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 co-operation, we openly respect and nurture the dignity and uniqueness of each individual.

The Purpose of the Substance Use Policy:

As reflected in our mission statement, the welfare, care and protection of the students and the school community is central to all our policies, including this Substance Use policy. Substance use, which includes nicotine, solvents, alcohol and other drugs, is an area of concern for all in our school community – parents/guardians, staff and the students themselves - and will not be tolerated.

Definition of a substance:

Any substance which, when introduced into the body, has a mind or mood altering effect, creating a change in perception and/or how the body functions. It may also have a social/psychological effect.

The School's Stance on Substance Use

- Athy Community College does not support the use of, or the supply of, nicotine, solvents, drugs or alcohol by any member of the school community and this includes students, staff, both teaching and non-teaching, parents, members of the Board of Management and visitors. As social functions arise, alcohol may be permitted for adult use as deemed appropriate by the Board of Management.
- The school is committed to the health and safety of the whole school community.
- The school will seek to educate students about the dangers connected with the use of substances. They will also be made aware of the site www.drugsinfo.ie.
- The school recognises that it has a duty to inform and educate young people on the consequences of drug use and misuse and will take a proactive stance on the matter believing that such Health Education is a vital element of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme delivered to every student by the teachers of this subject and through the pastoral care team.
- Whilst it is noted that the number of young people who use nicotine, alcohol and other substances appears to be rising, with alcohol as the biggest problem, it is important to recognise that the majority of young people choose not to do so. We need to continue to support the differing needs of young people on this issue.

- Fundamental to our school's values and practice is the principle of sharing the responsibility for education of young people with parents/guardians by keeping them informed of any significant known involvement by a student with substances.

The School's Stance on Substance Use continued:

- Co-operation and communication between parents/guardians, students and the school is essential for the effective implementation of this policy. We encourage parents/guardians to inform the year head or tutor in the school when students are required to take prescription medication during the school day.

Aims of this policy:

- To develop a Substance Use policy in accordance with Action 43 of the National Drugs' Strategy (See appendix three).
- To ensure consistency of approach with other school policies that may have implications for this policy e.g. the school's Code of Behaviour, Pastoral Care, Home/School Support and Communication etc.
- To create a community which promotes good relationships and mutual respect and which encourages positive social and personal development of each person's potential.
- To develop the school's role within the wider community and to prepare our young people for a constructive role in society.

Objectives of this policy for staff:

- That management and the SPHE Coordinator ensures that the whole staff team, both teaching and non-teaching staff, is familiar with this policy.
- To ensure that there are opportunities for Substance Use awareness training for all staff.
- To ensure that planned, developmental material for each class and year is available to all SPHE teachers.
- To provide a clear framework for all staff for dealing with incidents of substance use in school.

Objectives of this policy for students:

- To enable students to make healthy and informed choices.
- To develop decision-making skills and knowledge about factors which influence the process of making decisions, including choosing between alternatives, and considering long and short-term consequences of decisions for one-self and others.
- To understand the importance of feeling positive about oneself and others and being able to express one's feelings confidently.
- To increase students' understanding of situations in which legal drugs may be used, including over the counter and prescription drugs, and to develop responsible attitudes towards their use. To develop skills for remaining in control in such situations.
- To provide opportunities for students and parents/guardians to acquire knowledge and understanding about the dangers of solvents, nicotine, alcohol and other drug use.
- To help students appreciate ways in which they can control aspects of their own behaviour and resist peer pressure.
- To provide students with ideas and practice in resisting peer pressure.
- To ensure that parents/guardians and students are aware of the law relating to the use of drugs.
- To provide knowledge about how to use the support agencies.

Many of the above objectives can be met by ensuring a planned, developmental Substance Use module is included within the school's Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme and offered to every student. (See appendix one).

Parents/guardians will receive information from speakers and through courses organised by the SPHE Coordinator in liaison with the HSCL Coordinator.

Procedural Objectives

- To set out clear procedures to be followed by staff who suspect that substance use is taking place or that substances are being brought on to school premises.
- To provide an agreed framework for liaison with parents/guardians and outside agencies, including the Gardaí.
- To set out a clear statement of the disciplinary measures which may be applied to substance-related incidents.
- To set out the support and counselling which will be part of the response to substance-related incidences in the school.
- To ensure that all members of the school community and parents/guardians understand the very serious view which the school takes of all instances of possession, use or supply of substances.
- To ensure that all staff are aware of the agreed procedures.
- To ensure that all staff involved in specific Substance Use education have access to regular training.

This policy has the theme that individuals who have a good sense of self-worth and who possess the necessary knowledge and skills to make thoughtful decisions about their behaviour will be best equipped to take their place in the adult world.

The Roles of the Principal and Board of Management. .

- The Principal takes overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the Board of Management, the SPHE Coordinator, parents/guardians, the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and appropriate outside agencies.
- The Principal should report cases to the Gardaí where drugs are being supplied to others.
- Parents/guardians should be informed at all times when a substance-related incident occurs. Each incident will be covered on an individual basis.
- The SPHE teachers (mostly members of the Pastoral Care team at present), will teach the curriculum aspects of the policy up to Junior Cert. level. (See under Substance Use Programme for details of the curriculum at Leaving Cert. level).
- The Principal will encourage all staff dealing with Substance Use issues to avail of training and support.

Staff Development, Training and Support Issues:

Staff, in whom students confide, need to consider their responsibilities carefully. They may need to warn students that certain information cannot be kept in confidence by a teacher (e.g. details of a student who may be supplying drugs to other pupils).

However, staff will want to be sensitive to the needs of individuals to speak and gain advice from adults they trust. In so doing, students may disclose some drugs' involvement. This conversation

needs to be documented in writing, dated and may need to be referred to the Principal, depending on the seriousness of the involvement and its location.

In all cases, where substance use is known to have occurred on the school premises (or on a school outing), the facts must be reported to the Principal. Detailed procedures are set out below.

The School's Response to Substance-Related Incidents

Although each incident will be considered on an individual basis, and it is recognised that a variety of responses will be required to deal with different incidents, there are certain minimum requirements related to specific situations, which may occur:

Help and support for any student who is influenced by substance use in any way is provided through the Pastoral Care system in place within the school and links with outside agencies may be set up.

Students will be made aware that the **use** of nicotine, solvents, alcohol and drugs on the premises will lead to appropriate disciplinary measures e.g. a substantial fine, a week of one hour long detentions, an immediate suspension and could lead to permanent exclusion. Written records will be kept of who, and what, was involved in the incident.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a parent/guardian will be informed in any case where their son/daughter is involved in a substance use incident and worked with, rather than against.

In some cases, the student may be accepted back into the school only if linked to an appropriate counselling service or a substance use information and support group. (See appendix two).

Cases involving the **supply** of substances on the premises are considered to be very serious infringements of school regulations and students will be disciplined as outlined above and with reference to the school's Code of Behaviour. Written records will be kept of who, and what, was involved in the incident. The Principal will inform the Gardaí, the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Chair of the Board of Management.

The Principal may discuss the matter with the Year Head, the SPHE coordinator, the tutor, the Guidance counsellor, the parents/guardians, the HSCL coordinator and the SCP coordinator.

However, these individuals will be informed on a need-to-know basis.

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, a parent/guardian will be informed in any case where their son/daughter is involved in a substance supply incident and worked with, rather than against.

The Duty Social Worker should be informed.

In some cases, the student may be accepted back into the school only if linked to an appropriate counselling service or to a substance use information and support group. (See appendix two).

Confidentiality will be maintained at all times to protect the reputation of the school and that of the young person.

The Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) will be contacted where appropriate and, in particular, where there is a confirmed incident of substance use, distribution or supply.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) may be informed if already working with the family.

Permanent exclusion as an appropriate response to substance supply or distribution in the school will be considered seriously as an option.

The Media:

A sole spokesperson, usually the principal or someone appointed by him, will be appointed to deal with the media.

This person will not comment on the individual case but will clarify, where necessary, that “the school has a policy in place to deal with any drug-related incident and, in all cases, the appropriate support services will be provided or accessed”.

The School’s Response to a Specific Incident

No member of the school community may smoke on school premises or on school tours. Parents/guardians and students will be notified of this upon enrolment and before school outings.

If any student is found under the influence of alcohol on school premises, the parents/guardians will be informed immediately and requested to remove the student. The school regulations extend to all school outings.

Alcohol, cigarettes or tobacco found on school premises will be confiscated and kept in a safe place.

Substances, other than nicotine and alcohol, which come to the attention of school staff, or which are found on school premises, will be confiscated, kept in a safe place and may be brought to the attention of the Gardai. Each incident will be considered from an individual point of view.

A member of staff, having good reason for believing that a student may be in possession of a substance, should report the matter to the Principal.

If any student is found intoxicated through solvent use, first aid will be administered as appropriate and urgent medical attention set up. The solvent will be confiscated and kept in a safe place.

If any student, or any other person, is found supplying, or offering to supply, a substance, the Principal must be informed immediately. The Principal will inform the Gardaí, the Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Chair of the Board of Management. The Principal may discuss the matter with the Year Head, the SPHE coordinator, the tutor, the Guidance counsellor, the parents/guardians and the Chair of the Board of Management, the HSCL coordinator and the SCP coordinator. However, these individuals are informed on a “need-to-know” basis.

Any equipment involved in substance use found on school premises will be disposed of with due regard to Health & Safety regulations. The Gardai will be contacted.

Any member of staff involved in dealing with substance-related incidents must keep detailed written records of who, and what, was involved in each of the incidents listed above. Help and support for any student who is influenced by substance use in any way is provided through the Pastoral Care system in place within the school. Parents and students will be linked to an appropriate counselling service or to a substance use information and support group. (See appendix two).

In addition, in response to substance-related incidences, the school Code of Behaviour will be implemented. (See Appendix four).

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, parents/guardians will be informed, in a sensitive manner, in any case where their son/daughter is involved in a substance use incident and worked with, rather than against.

The Gardai and the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) will be contacted where appropriate and, in particular, where there is a confirmed incident of substance use.

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) may be informed if already working with the family.

Substance Use Programme:

The programme for Substance Use education is partially cross-curricular but is drawn together in the Junior School by work in the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) classes and the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) classes,. At present, these classes are taught by each class tutor who is a member of the school's Pastoral Care team. The class tutors, under the direction of the Year Head and the SPHE coordinator, deliver this programme.

The CSPE programme is delivered in a similar manner under the direction of the Year Head and the CSPE Coordinator.

At Senior level, liaison takes place between the SPHE Coordinator, Leaving Certificate Applied Coordinator, the Deputy Principal who is tutor to the Leaving Certificate Established classes and the relevant teachers.

Substance Use education is delivered to students taking the Leaving Certificate. Applied programme through the Social Education module. On occasions, speakers on Social, Personal and Health Education are brought in to work with the students in the Leaving Certificate Established classes. The topic of Substance Use education is usually covered in the Religion class. Senior staff members are also available at tutorial times and may, as the occasion demands, contribute to the programme.

Visiting Speakers:

The approach taken by outside speakers and their purpose in speaking is carefully monitored by the SPHE coordinator, Year Heads, tutors and teachers as we believe speakers have the greatest chance of being effective when they are invited to make a presentation as part of an ongoing and planned comprehensive programme to gain maximum effect.

Links with the Parents and the wider Community:

- Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the support agencies are available in school. These are brought to the students' attention by the tutors and at appropriate times during the CSPE and the SPHE programmes and are on the student notice boards. (See appendix two).
- Help and support for any student who is knowingly influenced by substance use in any way is provided through the Pastoral Care system in place within the school. The local Gardai and/or the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) may be consulted. Parents/guardians and Social Services will be informed if it is considered that the student may be at risk. Parents/guardians may avail of support from the Home, School, Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator where their sons/daughters have been involved in substance use and linked with support agencies.

Training and Staff Implementation:

- All teachers of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) are informed by the SPHE coordinator of relevant Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training days and encouraged to attend. There is a strong commitment by management to on-going staff training.
- The SPHE Coordinator passes on up to date information and developmentally appropriate material to the SPHE teachers on the Substance Use module.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Policy:

The policy will be monitored by the school management, parent and student representatives and the SPHE Coordinator on an annual basis or in response to specific need, changing information etc.

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Appendix 1:

With reference to the Social, Personal and Health Education Policy:

The structure of the SPHE programme: Through participating in the SPHE programme, the young person will encounter a wide range of issues through a variety of learning experiences. These issues will be addressed in **ten modules**, each of which appears in each year of the three-year cycle, often under different headings and from a variety of perspectives. The emphasis will be on building skills, understanding, attitudes and values important in all these areas.

The ten modules are:

- Belonging and Integrating
- Self-management:
- A sense of purpose
- Communication Skills
- Physical Health
- Friendships
- Relationships and Sexuality
- Emotional Health
- Influences and Decisions
- **Substance Use**
- Personal Safety

The SPHE programme will be presented to our students in ways that aim to be in tune with their emotional, moral, social and spiritual growth, as well as their intellectual and physical development. Due to the fact that the socio-economic background of the students, as well as their physical and cultural environment, can have a significant impact on the range of choices and options that our students may face, the SPHE team will give due regard to these contextual factors when planning for SPHE.

A supportive school environment is essential if Social, Personal and Health Education is to be effective. In such an environment the curriculum guidelines stress the need for a supportive school environment in which:

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| • People feel valued | Self-esteem is fostered |
| • Fairness and tolerance are evident | Communication is open |
| • Initiative and creativity are encouraged | Social, moral and civic values are promoted |
| • High expectations and standards are promoted | |
| • Those experiencing difficulty are supported | Effort is recognised |

- Uniqueness and difference are valued Conflict is handled constructively

Appendix Two:

Health Services Executive (HSE) Counsellors in the Addiction Service:

Ring Robin Thompson at 087 7987356 to make an appointment to see him at the Health Centre, Woodstock Street, Athy. Robin is available on Mondays to Thursdays from 2 – 4 p.m.

Ring Kay Conlon at 086 8065017 to make an appointment. Kay is the Outreach Worker with the Community Addiction Service. She is available on Thursday afternoons from 2 – 4 p.m. in the Community Services centre (behind Fingleton & Company, just before Lidl).

Kildare Youth Services Counselling Service:

Counselling available for 11 to 25 year olds.

9 Priory Street. (Road opposite the Post Office on the way up to the Dominican church. Turn left into the courtyard behind Rachel's shop and the next shop).

Health Service Executive (HSE) Child and Adolescence Guidance

Counselling may be accessed up to age 16 years at The Manse, Woodstock Street, Athy.

Appendix Three:

Action 43, 'Building on Experience' National Drugs' Strategy 2001 – 2008; 116

"To develop guidelines in cooperation with the Health Boards to assist schools in the formation of a drugs' policy and ensure that all schools have policies in place by September 2002".

Appendix Four:

Code of Behaviour, Athy College

The full range of sanctions as outlined in the Code of Behaviour will be applied in the event of any infringement in relation to substance use, or distribution, on the school premises.