

## **Presentation Primary, Clonmel Substance Use Policy**

### **Introduction**

The Presentation Primary School, Clonmel is committed to the welfare of all students in its care. The school has a responsibility to promote the personal and social development of students, to provide health education, and a safe and secure learning environment for all students.

This policy on substance use was drawn up in consultation with staff, parents' council and board of management in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines for developing a school substance use policy. This policy sets out a framework within which the school will manage issues relating to substance use. The policy will be implemented in conjunction with other school policies, particularly the school code of behavior, child protection policy and school safety statement. This policy applies to all school-related activities and to all members of the school community – students, parents/guardians, staff and board of management.

### **Aims**

This substance use policy aims to:

- ensure that the school complies with legislation and with the principles of good practice in relation to substance use
- provide information and education to the wider school community about the effects of substance misuse and its prevention
- provide students with the knowledge and skills which would enable them to make informed decisions in relation to substance misuse and to seek support if needed
- manage drug-related incidents in a planned manner
- link effectively with support agencies.

### **Definitions**

For the purposes of this policy, substance use refers to:

- use of alcohol and tobacco
- use of illegal drugs
- use of other substances e.g. sprays, aerosols, chemicals, medicines and many other substances in daily use
- use of any substances such as psychotropic drugs that could adversely affect the health and well being of students.

### **Substance use education**

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs will be provided as part of the school's Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme. Students will be supported to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will keep them safe through discreet lessons in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Religion, and in an integrated manner throughout other subject areas. The school's aims in relation to drug education are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of students
- To enable students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
- To provide age-appropriate information on drugs.

### **Role of parents/guardians**

The school seeks to work closely with parents/guardians to educate children about alcohol, tobacco and drugs. The school will make early contact with a parent/guardian where substance misuse is suspected, and will work closely with the parent/guardian in dealing fairly and effectively with any incidents of substance misuse that might arise.

### **Managing of alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse incidents**

Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse might include:

- Rumour/suspected use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs or other substances
- Unusual behaviours/intoxication
- Disclosure about use
- Finding cigarettes or substances and/or associated paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school-related activity

The school will respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and substance misuse incidents in a planned and considered way. Any concern in relation to substance misuse or suspected substance abuse will be reported to the principal, or in her absence, to the deputy principal. The principal/deputy principal will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any substance misuse incident. Depending on the outcome of the preliminary investigation, appropriate action will be taken by the school management. Advice will be sought from other relevant support agencies when deemed necessary, including the HSE Child Protection Services, HSE Substance Misuse Service and the Gardaí.

### *Staff*

Any concern relating to staff and substance use will be dealt with in accordance with the Teaching Council Codes of Professional Conduct, and Department of Education and Skills Circular 59/2009 Revised Procedures in Relation to Teacher Professional Competency and Discipline.

### *Pupils*

The welfare and well-being of a student/s will be the main focus of managing a student-related incident. The school will take due care in deciding the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. Contact will be made with parents/guardians.

If it is suspected that there is an immediate danger to a student/s or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend from the school (in accordance the school code of behaviour) any student involved in a suspected substance misuse incident, pending a full investigation of the incident. The principal/deputy principal 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.

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 parents/guardians or agencies involved, 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.

If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the student/s concerned and their parents/guardians as follows:

- 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 parent/guardian in time to permit the student and parent/guardian reasonable opportunity to respond to the matters at issue.
- The school will allow the student and parent/guardian reasonable time to respond. 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 will shortly thereafter inform the student and parent/guardian of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that a student has been involved or implicated in an incident, it will outline the sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances. The school may inform the relevant external agencies.
- 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.
- In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the board of management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to a verbal warning, a written warning, a suspension and other sanctions up to and including exclusion in accordance with the school code of behaviour. Any suspension or expulsion will always be in accordance with the provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

#### **Pastoral support**

Pastoral support will be offered to a student/s affected by the incident of substance misuse. Parents/guardians will be offered support to attend to their child's health and well-being. This may include referral to an external support agency.

In the event of a member of staff requiring support, the Employee Assistance Scheme will be considered.

#### **Confidentiality**

The school recognises the importance of limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating a substance misuse incident. Information will only be disclosed on a 'need to know' basis. The school can give no absolute guarantee of confidentiality. In the event of a

