



## **BALLYOWEN MEADOWS SPECIAL SCHOOL**

### **SUBSTANCE USE POLICY**

## Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	2
RATIONALE .....	3
RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL.....	4
AIMS .....	4
SCHOOL GUIDELINES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SUBSTANCE USE.....	4
TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT.....	5
ROLE OF PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S) .....	5
ROLE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT .....	6
MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING PUPILS .....	6
MANAGEMENT OF PERSONS IN THE WORKPLACE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL .....	7
IMPLEMENTATION .....	8
TIMEFRAME.....	8
MONITORING AND REVIEW OF PROCEDURES.....	8
APPENDIX 1: IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS.....	9
APPENDIX 2: SIGNS OF DRUG USE.....	10

## **INTRODUCTION**

At the outset of this policy document, the Board of Management (See Note 1 below), would like to reassure parents that substance use is not nor has been an issue in Ballyowen Meadows Special School. However, the Board of Management aims to provide a safe and secure school environment and therefore, approaches substance use as an extremely serious issue. The central objective of this substance use policy is to provide for the welfare, care and protection of every student in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

This policy applies to pupils, teachers, special needs assistants, ancillary staff members, parents, users of the school premises, visitors, i.e. every person who enters the building. It is applicable during school-time, including breaks, and to ALL school related activities. It applies to the school building and grounds and to any area where a school related activity takes place, e.g. school outings/tours.

This policy addresses both education concerning alcohol, tobacco, E-Cigarettes and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

Parents and guardians will be given a copy of the policy on the enrolment of their child in the school. Enrolment to the school will be conditional on acceptance of this and other school policy documents by the child's parents. The school wishes to make clear that the primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with the parents/guardians.

Note 1: In this policy, reference to the Board of Management includes the position of Interim School Manager in place on the date of ratification of this policy.

## **RATIONALE**

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges, which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, E-Cigarettes and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their pupil cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

The Education Act 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them. The National Drugs Strategy '*Building on Experience*' is now government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place. The report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled '*Drug Use Prevention*' (2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug misused in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.

For the population as a whole, alcohol consumption per capita in Ireland has increased, while the other EU Member States showed either a decrease or a modest increase. Ireland now has the second highest per capita consumption of alcohol in the EU.

In addition, the school authority in Ballyowen Meadows Special School has a moral and legal obligation to ensure compliance with criminal law. This policy will enable the school to provide suitable developmentally-appropriate education for our pupils on the subject of drugs.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO THE CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL**

The characteristic spirit of this school has been developed and agreed with our partners in education. This substance use policy reflects the school policy by:

- Drawing together Staff, Parents and Board of Management
- Including reference to substance use in the Admission and Participation Policy
- Including reference to substance use in our Code of Behaviour

## **AIMS**

The aim of the substance use policy of Ballyowen Meadows Special School is primarily prevention. We aim to protect our pupils from the harmful effects of substance misuse and try to prevent them from using tobacco, E-Cigarettes, alcohol, solvents and illegal drugs. We aim to develop in our pupils' better self-esteem, through

- providing a positive school climate and atmosphere
- giving our pupils appropriate information for each child's developmental age from educational programmes
- helping the children to develop strategies to assist in the prevention of substance misuse.
- ensuring that the school has correct procedures in place for dealing with any substance misuse incident which may arise in the school

## **SCHOOL GUIDELINES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SUBSTANCE USE**

The following comprises the school guidelines in relation to school guidelines relating to the use of alcohol, tobacco, E-Cigarettes and drugs in the school building and grounds.

### **TOBACCO/SMOKING**

- **The school building and grounds are designated as non-smoking.** In accordance with the Public Health Tobacco Act 2002, it is **ILLEGAL** for anyone to smoke in the school building or on the school grounds.
- No smoking signs are displayed at the school entrance for the purpose of communicating this policy to everyone.
- Staff are not permitted to smoke in the school building and grounds.
- Students are not permitted to smoke or be in possession of cigarettes on the school premises or on any other school related activity.
- Visitors to the school will comply with the non-smoking policy.
- Pupils found smoking or in the possession of cigarettes, will be reported to the Principal and parents/guardians will be informed.
- Tobacco will not be permitted as a prize for a school raffle.

### **ALCOHOL**

- **The school building and grounds is an alcohol free area.**
- Nobody will be allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home.

- Students breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's disciplinary procedure.
- Alcohol will not be used as prizes in school raffles.
- Were a staff member comes to the school under the influence of alcohol, the Principal will take appropriate action, as outlined later in this policy document.

### **ILLICIT DRUGS AND SOLVENTS**

- Students, staff and all visitors are forbidden to be in possession of or using illicit drugs or solvents on the school premises.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them.
- Staff are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time.
- If a member of staff is of the opinion that a pupil or adult is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out where warranted. Parents of any students involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer will be sought.
- The Board of Management expects parents to inform the Principal or Class teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking. It is felt that in this school, the response to incidents involving substance misuse would be largely of a pastoral, rather than a disciplinary nature. It may be considered necessary in certain circumstances to seek legal advice.
- A written account of all incidents will be kept by the school

### **TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

The Board of Management has an ongoing commitment to training and staff development. At all times teachers are encouraged to:

- Engage in professional development by accessing courses offered by the Special Education Support Service and the Blackrock Education Centre.
- Appreciate the contribution that the SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance abuse through the delivery of the Stay Safe programme
- Develop a supportive classroom environment
- Be aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse
- Become aware of the laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how they relate to themselves and their pupils.

### **ROLE OF PARENT(S)/GUARDIAN(S)**

- Parents will be involved by accepting the school's Code of Behaviour and Admissions and Participation Policy.
- Parents will be informed of an incident involving their own child and will be asked to accept responsibility, co-operate with the school authorities and with the Gardai, if necessary.
- Parents will be involved in incidents involving another child only if deemed necessary by the school authorities. If parents are aware that another child is involved in drug-related incidents under the scope of this policy they should inform the teacher, Principal or a Board member.

## **ROLE OF THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT**

The role of the Board of Management is to:

- Ratify this policy
- Implement this policy
- Monitor and evaluate it
- To sponsor/provide training for staff members
- Make decisions involving critical incidents

## **MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENTS INVOLVING PUPILS**

Incidents relating to alcohol, tobacco, E-Cigarettes and drug use are addressed in the school's Code of Behaviour and the Admission and Participation Policy and pupils may be suspended or expelled if involved in any drug related incident. The school's shared understanding of a 'drug related incident' is:

- Any unusual or unbecoming behaviour resulting from intake or use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs
- The sale or passing on of any illegal substance,
- The possession of alcohol, tobacco, E-Cigarettes or illegal drugs on school grounds or at school related activities
- Disposal of drugs or related items (e.g. syringes) found on school property

## **REPORTING PROCEDURE**

The reporting procedure for such incidents is:

**Step 1:** Witness to drug related incident informs teacher/staff member/Principal and complete the School Incident Report Form

**Step 2:** Principal inform parents/guardians

**Step 3:** Principal informs Chairperson of Board of Management

**Step 4:** Gardai informed depending on seriousness of incident

**Step 5:** Area Health Board informed for disposal of items

## **WHEN MEDICAL INTERVENTION IS NECESSARY THE FOLLOWING WILL APPLY:**

This policy puts the following procedures in place to deal with an incident requiring medical intervention:

- 'Universal Precautions' will be applied; e.g. wearing of proper protective gloves etc., washing and making safe an area after an incident; provision of a yellow bin to dispose of needles or other unsuitable appliances
- First Aid training is provided for all school staff on a bi-annual basis. Therefore, all school staff are trained to assist with medical emergencies.
- Copies of all relevant phone numbers are contained in Appendix 1.
- In the event of a medical emergency either an ambulance will be called to the school or the person in need of emergency medical attention will be transported to the Accident and Emergency Department of the nearest hospital that caters for the age of the person concerned.
- The school has established an excellent rapport with the local Garda station. Whether or not to inform the Gardai of minor incidents will be at the discretion of the Principal and the

Chairperson of the Board of Management, but they will be involved in any serious substance abuse incidents.

At local level the following support agencies are available to which students involved in substance misuse might be referred:

- N.A. (Narcotics Anonymous)
- Child Care & Family Support Services
- Drug Education Officer
- Drug Helpline (**1800 341 900**)
- Juvenile Liaison Officer
- Community Garda

In the event of media interest in relation to a 'drug related incident', the matter will be referred to the Board of Management and the Chairperson will issue a prepared statement to the media.

#### **MANAGEMENT OF PERSONS IN THE WORKPLACE UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS AND/OR ALCOHOL**

- The Board of Management shall ensure, in so far as is reasonably practicable, that pupils and other persons in the workplace are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare from persons under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The term "in the workplace", in the preceding sentence includes all school related activities taking place under the supervision of a teacher and special needs assistant with the Board's approval, and both within and away from the school premises.
- Every school employee shall, while at work, ensure that he or she is not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.
- Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace, in the interests of the safety, health and welfare of the employee and others. In the case of employees who are at work under the influence of an intoxicant, disciplinary procedures may be implemented.
- Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that an employee of any contractor is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask the contractor to remove his/her employee from the workplace.
- If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe any person, other than a staff member or employee of a contractor, is unfit to be on the premises, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the staff member shall report his/her belief promptly to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal, who shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the school premises.
- If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe that a parent or adult collecting a pupil from school or presenting themselves on the premises for another reason is unfit to be on the premises or to take care of the said pupil, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal will be informed and the duty of care will apply to the pupil. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the pupil and safeguard their best interests.

- In the event that a staff member or any other person, referred to above, refuses a reasonable request to remove him/herself from the premises, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal may call the Gardaí to forcibly remove the person in question.
- The Board of Management acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of teachers and special needs assistants. An Employee Assistance Service is available to teachers and special needs assistants. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the school staff, the Board of Management may request such staff member to contact the Employee Assistance Service.
- The Board of Management also acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of all other staff members. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the non-teaching staff, the Board of Management may request such staff member to seek counselling or other professional intervention.
- All incidents, relating to the presence of persons at school, under the influence of an intoxicant, shall be recorded and reported as soon as possible to the Board of Management.
- The Board of Management shall consider all such reports and decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances of each particular case.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

Copies of the policy were distributed to Board of Management members for ratification on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2015. When ratified and amended, copies were made available to:

- All staff members via cloud storage
- The school community on the new school website
- Parents, on request from the School Office

#### **TIMEFRAME**

This policy was circulated to staff members, parents and Board of Management and procedures will be reviewed annually.

#### **MONITORING AND REVIEW OF PROCEDURES**

- A record will be kept in school of all substance use incidents by using the BMSS School Incident Form
- A copy of this policy will be available to all staff members and the Board of Management member will monitor procedures annually and ensure they are being adhered to.

**DATE OF NEXT REVIEW: June 2020**



## APPENDIX 1: IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

- Drugs Advisory and Treatment Centre  
Trinity Court, 30/31 Pearse Street, Dublin 2 016771122
- East Coast Area Health Board,  
Centenary House, Dun Laoghaire 01 280 3335
- Alcohol Services 01 660 7838
- Substance Misuse Prevention Programme 01 4528017
- Shankill Garda Station 01 6665945
- Freephone Drugs /HIV Helpline: 1800 459 459  
The Eastern Health Authority has set up a helpline, which is designed to provide support, information and guidance in respect of alcohol and drug misuse. It operates from Monday to Friday between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.

## **APPENDIX 2: SIGNS OF DRUG USE**

Very often there are no clear signs attached to irregular experimental drug use. It is usually when drug use becomes problematic for the young person that some of the symptoms may manifest themselves. The sign and symptoms must not replace careful observation, listening to and talking with the young person. Many of the sign and symptoms listed are normal aspects of growing up.

### **CHANGES IN BEHAVIOUR THAT MAY INDICATE DRUG USE**

- Erratic mood swings
- Lying and secretive behaviour
- Changes in appearance and, in serious cases, the person may begin to look unwell, mixed with periods of more energetic behaviour
- Changes in eating habits
- Regular use of some drugs can lead to a loss of appetite
- Gradual loss of interest in school, hobbies and friends
- Changes in friendship patterns, e.g. If a young child is misusing drugs, s/he will tend to mix with older children and drop former friends
- Involvement in stealing and 'bartering' personal and family possessions for money
- Possessing unusual items and apparatus; Apart from tablets, powders, aerosols etc. which may be found, some forms of drug taking require equipment, e.g. pieces of foil, syringes, straws, plastic bags, cigarette papers, "Wraps" square folds of paper
- Unusual smells around the child, or on his clothing e.g. smells of solvents and glues, the characteristic smell of cannabis.