

**Why do we need a policy?**

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges, which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their students.
- The Education Act '98 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- Report from National Advisory committee on Drugs entitled 'Drug Use Prevention' underlines the importance of schools developing and maintaining substance use policies

**“A drug is any chemical which  
alters how the body works,  
or how the person behaves or feels”**

*-definition from Dr. Des Corrigan  
Trinity College Dublin  
Faculty of Pharmacy*

In recent years many resource materials related to education on substance use have been developed. Some of these include:

- Walk Tall Programme
- S.P.H.E. –Primary School Curriculum & Teacher Guidelines
- Child Protection Guidelines for Primary Schools D.E.S. (2001)
- Stay Safe
- HSE Information & Circulars

which are currently in use in classrooms in our school.

**Note:-** This document should be read in conjunction with the schools Code of Behaviour/Discipline Policy. St. Tiarnach's also makes clear that the primary role of substance misuse prevention remain with parents/guardians.

**RELATIONSHIP TO SCHOOL ETHOS:**

This policy is informed by and in harmony with the school's ethos of developing each child personally, academically, socially and spiritually. The building of each child's self-esteem is of prime importance. We aim to provide a safe and secure environment for our pupils and also for all in the school community.

**AIMS:**

**The aims of our Substance Use Policy are as follow:**

- The development of a framework for education concerning substance use.
- The development of a framework for the management of alcohol, tobacco and drugs related incidents.
- The provision for training and staff development. OBJECTIVES: The objectives of this policy are as follow:
  - To develop positive self-esteem in our pupils and to give them the confidence, skills and knowledge necessary to make healthy life choices.
  - To help the children to appreciate their worth and the worth of others.
  - To inculcate in the children a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.
  - To help the children to develop strategies to assist in the prevention of substance misuse.
  - To ensure teacher training in the various education programmes which relate to substance use.
  - To provide guidelines and information for teachers to guide their response to an issue relating to substance misuse.
  - To support parents in their primary role as educators of their children in relation to substance use.
  - To ensure that the school has correct procedures in place for dealing with any substance misuse incident which may arise in the school.

**Substance Use Policy****EDUCATION REGARDING SUBSTANCE USE**

We believe that education in school about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). A substance misuse prevention programme will be implemented at all class levels in accordance with our Social Personal and Health Education Primary Curriculum Statement. Through SPHE, which is spiral in nature, our pupils will practise and develop specific skills and experience a value system which supports primary prevention in a holistic, caring, nurturing environment.

The content objectives relating to substance use will be addressed in an age appropriate manner using discrete SPHE time.

Our programme will draw on a wide range of resources – Walk Tall Programme, Bí Folláin Programme, Stay Safe Programme, RSE Programme, Alive O Programme – to teach the content. In addition, the school will draw on the expertise available within the community, parents, gardaí.

When inviting speakers to talk to the pupils, the school will take care to ensure that all speakers are suitably qualified, have experience working with primary school children and work within the parameters of the school's SPHE programme and the school's ethos.

The Class Teacher is always present during visits of outside speakers.

**MANAGEMENT OF SUBSTANCE-RELATED ISSUES IN THE SCHOOL****• Smoking**

- The school building is a non-smoking area.
- 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 premises 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.
- If alcohol is required for an adult only school function, permission shall be sought from the B.O.M. –
- Alcohol will not be used as prizes in school raffles. –
- Were a teacher or other adult to come to the school under the influence of alcohol, the Principal will take appropriate action. –

**• 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. Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time.
- If a member of staff is of the opinion that a student 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.
- The school B.O.M. will expect parents to inform the Principal or teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking.

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- 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.

### Procedure:

All suspected or confirmed incidents will be communicated to the Principal or in her absence, deputy Principal, logged and held confidentially stored by the Principal. Parents / Guardians will be informed sensitively, and support will be offered to them. Provisions may be made for professional help such as Gardaí or health professionals. Where illegal substances are involved, the Gardaí will automatically be involved. The Board of Management will be notified.

“It must be remembered that within the school setting it is not just students who may be involved in substance use but also any individual who is part of the school community whether Principal, Teacher, Support Staff or Parent.”

(cf. Understanding Substances and Substance Use – A Handbook For Teachers p.81 )

Any concern a staff member may have regarding a Parent or Guardian related to substance misuse will be brought to the attention of the Principal.

### Disclosures

If a pupil voluntarily discloses information about substance use it is important to:

- take time to listen and assess before responding
- separate fact from rumour
- record details and act accordingly

### Confidentiality

It is important that the limits of confidentiality are discussed with students before any disclosure is made. **The well being of the child and teacher must be a primary focus.** It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a **limited** number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a 'need to know' basis.

### Media

The Principal, or in his absence, his representative, will handle all media enquiries. They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures in place.

This policy applies to pupils, teachers and all users of the school building. It applies to the school premises and all school related activities.

The Policy will be taught in the context of S.P.H.E./School Curriculum 30 mins. Per week

- A wide selection of content & methodologies
- Age appropriate
- Reflecting culture
- Rehearsing with children the language of refusal
  - Say **NO**
  - How to say **NO**

The school accepts no responsibility for storage of medicines or administration of same under any circumstances.

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**Inhalers** are of necessity to some pupils but must remain with the class teacher during school hours and available on request. No other tablets, medicines should be taken while at school without written consent from parents and/or parental presence for this. (Administration of Medication Policy)

In Conjunction with our **Health & Safety Statement** all toxic cleaning agents, spray paints, glues etc. will be kept out of reach of children. If deemed necessary for usage, appropriate precautions i.e. masks, protective gear will be used.

This policy envisages enabling St. Tiarnach's to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

Indicators of a problem may include

- unusual behaviour
- a disclosure about usage
- finding actual substances
- possession and/or supply

In exceptional circumstances because of definite medical reasons and in consultation with school Principal some pupils may be allowed take some forms of medication but ultimately parents will be responsible for this request.

Skills children/adults need when confronted with drug misuse are

- Self-esteem
- Communication
- Assertiveness
- Ability to deal with feelings
- Coping with conflict
- Coping with other peoples responses
- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Development of positive relationships
- Keeping safe

All the above are components/strands of the S.P.H.E. policy. These will be taught/developed on an ongoing basis, monitored and reviewed within the classroom context by teachers.

c/f S.P.H.E. Policy as this is strongly integrated.

Policy Revised/Updated Oct. 2015

Available on School website

Implemented –ongoing/immediately

Review & evaluation will take cognisance of changing information legislation, development in the school based programme and feedback from parents/teachers and students.