

SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This Substance Misuse Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every two years.

This Substance Misuse Policy was agreed on: 16/11/2022

Signature: Adrian Henchy

(Chair Person to the Board of Management)

Principal: Anthony Creevey

Date for Review: 16/11/2024

Donabate Community College

Donabate Community College is a post primary college which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of County Dublin VEC, now DDLETB. The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment.

As Donabate Community College will be catering in the foreseeable future to an ever-increasing population growth within its catchment area, the Board of Management will review the Enrolment Policy on a yearly basis.

The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

College Mission

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our college will seek to instil integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

Introduction

The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025

The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, “Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery”, sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government departments and agencies to tackle substance misuse, based on the four separate pillars of:

1. Supply Reduction
2. Education and Prevention
3. Treatment
4. Research

The second of these pillars relates specifically to the role to be played by the educational sector. One objective in this area is to create greater societal awareness regarding the dangers and prevalence of drug misuse. Another objective is to equip young people and other vulnerable groups with the skills and supports necessary to make informed choices about their health, personal lives and social development.

The DES Position

As part of its role as a government agency committed to implementing The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, “Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery”, the Department of Education and Science now requires that all colleges have a Substance Misuse policy in place.

Research has shown that colleges that have a developed strategy for responding to the issue of drug misuse, in all its forms, are best equipped to respond to drug-related incidents as they arise and are most successful in terms of drug prevention and education.

Given this fact, the best approach to developing such a strategy is through a formal policy formulated within the context of the college ethos and the framework of the college plan and centred on the well being of the young person and the college community. The National Drugs Strategy (2017-2015) recognises the importance of college based interventions.

Circular 18/02

Circular 18/02 and the Guidelines (October 2002) set down the rationale, objectives and the process to be observed in regard to formulating a policy on Substance Misuse.

‘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. colleges need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues’ (Guidelines, P1).

The Objectives

The Department recommends that the main objectives of a college policy should be:

- The welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- To address education relating to tobacco, alcohol and drug use
- The procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

The Process

The optimum policy formulation framework is one that includes and involves all of the college partners—college management, teachers, board of management, students, and parents—to produce a comprehensive written policy that would be made known to everyone to whom it applied.

Both the circular and the guidelines suggest a 7-step approach based on the ‘whole college’ model.

The Seven Step Approach

The process described here is an edited version of the guidelines issued by the DES, following consultation with various health and education bodies as a basis for good practice in policy development. The core of these guidelines is a seven-step approach involving the following:

1. Establish a steering committee representative of the whole college community to develop the policy and then agree on how this committee will operate.
2. Carefully study relevant resource documents and legislation. To this end, the department provides a list of recent resource materials relating to education on Substance Misuse and tips on other sources of information. In addition, it recommends that colleges develop a good working relationship with local Gardai and Environmental Health Officers to gain a full understanding of laws relating to tobacco, alcohol & drugs.
3. Review the existing situation in the college regarding such Substance Misuse policy issues as education programmes, existing college policies in the college plan and code of behaviour that could be relevant to Substance Misuse, and the current understanding, awareness and attitudes among the college partners in relation to drugs.
4. Prepare a draft policy statement. The department outlines a framework that could be used in drawing up the draft policy statement.
5. Publicise, revise, amend and finalise the draft policy. The draft policy should be circulated as widely as possible to gain the views of all the college partners, with revision of the policy being informed by feedback from this process.

6. Ratify, circulate and implement the agreed policy. The final policy ratified by the board of management becomes the college's agreed policy and should be circulated throughout the college community to ensure that everyone is aware of it. Staff must become familiar with the policy and prepare to put it into practice, and everyone needs to understand any changes that the policy implies for the college curriculum, rules, sanctions, and code of behaviour. In addition, it is recommended that parents and students sign a statement affirming that they have read the policy and agree to be bound by it.
7. Monitor, review and evaluate the policy.

Substance Misuse Policy in Donabate Community College

This policy applies to: the entire college community, including all staff personnel, and those who use the college building.

The policy is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by the college to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. The Substance Misuse Policy is one among many that serve to promote the college's ethos.

The college asserts its right to protect and promote its particular ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

The Rationale

- The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol, and drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the college community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.
- The Board recognizes and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and, in particular, alcohol misuse.
- The college policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for colleges in circular 18/02.
- The Education Act (1998) provides that colleges promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

Donabate Community College's Position on Drugs

The College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia including the misuse of prescribed medication by any student in the college on college grounds, on college trips and outings, or during any college-related activity.

The College acknowledges that the only exception is for the use of properly prescribed drugs and requests that parents of students taking prescribed medication inform the college in writing of that fact.

Programme for Alcohol, Tobacco, Volatile Substances & Drug Education

The college, within the limited resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all its students.

This programme of education will be age-appropriate and will be incorporated into subjects/programmes already being taught in the college, SPHE, RE, Science, PE, and CSPE.

From 2019 this work will be reflected in the College's Well Being Strategy.

Parents are asked / expected to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the college in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance misuse.
- Assist and co-operate fully with the college as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist the parents in their role the college will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the college regarding education programmes (examples include Well Being Programme , SPHE etc)
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the college in its programme and policy implementation.

Procedures for Managing Alcohol, (Tobacco/Vaping), Drug Related, or Substance Misuse Incidents

In the event of a substance misuse incident, the college will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the college community as a whole and the reputation of the college.

The College in managing and gathering data in relation to a substance misuse incident will take the following steps:

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the college community, the college reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the college any student involved in a suspected substance misuse incident pending a further and complete gathering of data in relation to the possession of substances or the means to use substances which pose a health and/or safety risk to the student and /or the school body.

2. The completion of a Substance Misuse Incident Report Form. see Appendix 1
3. The college will take all the steps required to fully collect data and assess any substance misuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this. Furthermore, the college may liaise with appropriate outside agencies to assist with the collection of data.
4. The college will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a substance misuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of data being gathered, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
5. The disposal of drug paraphernalia will be conducted in consultation with the Gardai or other relevant agencies.
6. In the event of an incident, the college will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these written reports.
7. The college will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, 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, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
8. The college, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to the handling of the matter.
9. If the circumstances merit and the process is continuing, the college will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents 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—at the discretion of the college—in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
 - The college will allow the student concerned and her/his parents reasonable time (up to a maximum of 3 school days) to respond to the matters at issue. The college will take in to account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
10. The college shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his/her parents of the college's findings and their reasons for these. If the college finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.

11. Following the presentation of data collected to the Board of Management, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to:
 - An oral warning, a written warning, a suspension in line with the schools code of positive behaviour other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
12. The college 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 college asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
13. The college will endeavour to provide pastoral supports to the student / students and parents affected by an incident of substance misuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a counsellor or relevant body would demonstrate the college's commitment to caring for all students at a time of personal crisis.

The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident/Investigation

The Principal or his delegate is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area. He or she may nominate the Deputy Principal or Year Head or other nominated staff to act on his or her behalf in the gathering of data relating to a substance misuse incident.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or his/her nominee) in this regard include the following:

- a) The Principal is responsible for dealing with substance misuse incidents arising at the college.
- b) All reports of substance misuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal.
- c) The Principal makes all decisions regarding the collection of data of an incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.
- d) The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed of their nominees findings.
- e) The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
- f) The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice.
- g) The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head, and/or college Guidance Counsellor in conducting the data gathering on a reported incident.

The previous section has dealt with the procedure for communicating with parents and students in the event that a substance misuse incident continues to be investigated, and the college is required to put the particulars of the matter to the student or students concerned.

However, independent of such a development, the college may wish to contact the parents of a student for a variety of reasons regarding a suspected substance misuse incident.

In such an event, the college will immediately inform parents - particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a student - and share any available information that may help parents in attending to their child's health and well-being and will keep parents and students, where appropriate, informed about what is happening and why. It is important to clarify that such actions will be undertaken without prejudice to the college's separate and independent obligation to gather data and manage any substance misuse incident.

The college recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in gathering data and managing a substance misuse incident and that it is the aim of the college only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, it should ensure that students and their parents accept that the duty of teachers and staff to the college community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with a substance misuse incident or suspected substance misuse incident.

The college may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Gardai, Health Board, Probation Service, Tusla or Officers of the Courts.

The college may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident. We will inform Parents / Guardians should this course of action be taken.

The college may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an incident under statute, regulations, or DES guidelines.

As our college is under the DDLETB patronage. The DDLETB Head Office deals with all media issues. Notwithstanding this, the College will handle media inquiries involving a substance misuse incident in the following way:

The Principal, or her/his representative will be the point of contact in relation to all media inquiries.

The College will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents.

In the interests of the college's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the college's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

Training & Development

The College will provide training for Staff, Board of Management, Parents, and Students.

In relation to staff, the College will:

- deliver training in delivering education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs
- deliver specific training on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of a substance misuse incident.

In relation to Parents & the Board of Management the college will:

- provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and this Policy
- provide appropriate information, guidance, and support to the Board of Management regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

In relation to the students the college will:

- offer all students programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco offer drug education within the context of the Junior Certificate, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate programmes.

Monitoring, Reviewing & Evaluating

The College will monitor, review, and evaluate the Policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

Appendix 1



Substance Misuse Incident Form

Name of Initial Reporting Staff Member:

Date of Initial Observation :

Report:

(Brief Details of Allegation / Incident and Possible Student Involved / Area or Location incident took place)

Name of Staff Member this Report was given to: