

Substance Abuse Policy



Ardscoil Mhuire

Corbally

Limerick

School Mission Statement

Ardscoil Mhuire aims to provide a Christian environment where all persons are valued and assisted to reach their full potential.

As expressed in its Mission Statement above, Ardscoil Mhuire adopts a holistic approach to the education of the individual and believes that the personal and social development of each member of the school community is important. Education flourishes in an environment where good relationships are encouraged, people feel valued and respected and there is genuine tolerance, fairness and support for those in difficulty. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work done by the school and is central to this policy document.

Rationale

“In a society where drugs, legal and illegal are widely available, it is important for schools to develop policies and procedures in advance of drug-related issues coming to attention.”

(Department of Education 1997)

Therefore, in keeping with the ethos of the school and mindful of the advice of the Department of Education, the Ardscoil Mhuire Drug Policy aims

- to support a healthy school community
- to provide an education programme in drug awareness and drug prevention
- to set up school procedures regarding drug related issues

“No school or parent can afford to be complacent or think that their children are not at risk.”

(Department of Education 1997)

Consultation Process

Those involved in the drafting of the school drugs policy were representatives from the partners in the school community, parents, teachers, students, Board of Management and the school Principal. This has ensured a comprehensive response, which has been thought through in consultation with all those involved. This consultation process was facilitated by Mid-Western Health Board personnel.

Definition of a Drug

The word drug is understood as a chemical, legal or illegal, which causes changes in the way we think, feel or act. For the purpose of this policy we are concerned with drugs which have the power to change a previous mood and the way a person thinks about things and drugs on which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent. It is generally accepted that alcohol and tobacco are the most widely abused drugs, however, illicit substances such as cannabis, ecstasy, magic mushrooms and solvents are increasingly becoming a problem.

School Approach in dealing with substance abuse issues

Ardcoil Mhuire does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs on the school premises, grounds or on school trips by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school must be informed by parents/guardians in writing.

The Administration of Medicines

While the Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of pupils when they are engaged in authorised school activities, this does not imply a duty upon teachers to personally undertake the administration of medicines. The Board of Management requests parents to ensure that Principal/Deputy Principal/Year Heads be made aware in writing of any medical condition suffered by any children. Parents of a pupil requiring regular medication during school hours should write to the school management towards arranging storage of emergency medication e.g. inhalers. Written details are required from the parent/guardian giving:

1. the name of the child, name and dose of medication
2. whether the child is responsible for his/her own medication
3. the circumstances in which medication is to be given to the student and consent for it to be issued
4. when the parent is to be notified and when s/he can be contacted.

Where children are suffering from life-threatening conditions, parents should outline clearly in writing, what can and can't be done in a particular emergency situation, with particular reference to what may be a risk to the child. In emergency situations qualified medical assistance will be secured at the earliest opportunity.

Parents/Guardians should ensure that these procedures are clearly understood before submitting any request to Management.

This policy is focused on six key areas:

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes.
2. Parental Involvement
3. Training and Staff development.
4. Managing Drug Related incidents.
5. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation.
6. Storage and Disposal

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

While schools alone cannot solve the problem of drug misuse in society, Ardscoil Mhuire believes that an effective programme of drug education in schools can be an important step in tackling it.

Aims

The aim of drug education is to equip students with the knowledge and the skills to make informed responsible choices.

The School Position

Ardscoil Mhuire's educational aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of the young people.
- To equip young people with personal and social skills.
- To enable young people to make informed healthy and responsible choices.
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions.

Ardscoil Mhuire is committed to providing a comprehensive and time-tabled drug education programme for all students. The drug education programme will be taught through the curriculum on a cross-curricular basis:

- The Health Education Programme - 1st to 3rd years
- Civic, Social and Political Education - 1st to 3rd years
- Home Economics - all 1st years
- Home Economics, Social and Scientific – depending on subject choice
- P.E. – all students
- Religion – all students
- The Social Education programme of Leaving Certificate Applied (core choice).

Visiting Speakers

Visiting speakers will be introduced as a support to the existing school Programme.

2. Parental Involvement

Since parents are the primary educators of their children, they have a crucial role to play in any prevention strategy.

To support them in this role, Ardscoil Mhuire will:

- Inform and make parents aware of what is happening in the school with regard to drug education on an ongoing basis.
- Organise talks by visiting speakers.
- Offer drug education courses through the Home School Scheme.
- Provide information leaflets in the Parents Room on an ongoing basis.
- Make relevant literature available through the school library, to which parents have access.

- Provide a listening ear through the school Pastoral Care programme and the Home School Liaison Scheme.

3. Training and Staff Development

Ardcoil Mhuire is committed to ongoing staff training and development in this area.

- All teachers involved in SPHE are given the opportunity to avail of training in group facilitation skills and personal development.
- The school will support staff in the delivery of substance use education by providing resource materials in the staff room.
- All teachers will be offered Drug Information and Drug Awareness training through regular in-service training.
- The training needs of new teachers will get particular attention through informing them of, and releasing them to, in-service.
- Outside speakers and agencies will be involved as appropriate to reinforce work done in the classroom

4. Managing Tobacco, Alcohol and Drugs Related Incidents

The school acknowledges that in all situations involving drugs, there is a need for a balance between the needs of the young person, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school.

Mindful of the duty of care which applies to school personnel and that teachers act in loco parentis the school will fully investigate any matter brought to the attention of school authorities in relation to tobacco, alcohol, drugs and solvents. Listening, establishing the facts and providing support will be the schools initial approach to the situation. Disciplinary procedures will be necessary if school rules are broken. Procedures as outlined in this policy will be followed.

Smoking

- Ardcoil Mhuire is a smoke-free area. In accordance with the Health Act 2001, students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes/e-cigarettes on the school premises. Every member of the school community has an obligation to uphold the law as it pertains in this situation.
- Staff should not permit pupils to smoke on any school trip and should actively discourage smoking in public places.
- Visitors will comply with restricted smoking policy.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal and suspended for one day.

Alcohol

- Students will not be allowed to bring alcohol into school or to consume alcohol in Ardcoil Mhuire.
- Students will not be allowed to carry or consume alcohol on school trips or tours.

- Alcohol will not be available at any after hours activities arranged by the school.
- Where a student comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents will be called in to take them home. This will be followed up by the Year Head/Deputy Principal/Principal at a more appropriate time.
- Students breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's disciplinary procedure.

Illicit Drugs and Solvents

- Students are prohibited from being in possession of, or using illicit drugs or solvents on Ardscoil Mhuire's premises.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardai contacted to dispose of them. Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time. An investigation will be made into the origin of illicit drugs found.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out. Parents of any student involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Gardai will be sought.
- The school management will expect parents to inform the Principal/Deputy Principal or Year head if they suspect their child of drug-taking.
- Students suspected of taking drugs or solvents outside school will be monitored and every effort will be made to support them and ensure they get the counselling and help they need.

The procedure for dealing with behaviour which leads to suspicion of a substance misuse problem is outlined, step by step below. Any incident of intoxication will also be followed-up in this way.

- Having observed the behaviours of concern and verified it with others the Year Head/Principal/Deputy Principal will meet with the student. Concern will be expressed for the consequences of this behaviour and as much information as possible elicited from the student.
- A meeting is then arranged with the parents informing them of the behaviour and of the school's concern. The parents will have the opportunity to voice their own worries and fears.
- Parents will be required to bring their daughter immediately to the local GP for drug testing.
- In the event that drug misuse has been identified the school will recommend that a referral be made by the GP to the various support services and/or an Addiction Counsellor for a full assessment of the extent of the problem. Support Services include Slainte Addiction Services [(061) 318633] and The Community Substance Misuse Team [(061) 317688]
- Sanctions up-to and including the expulsion of the student maybe considered. However regardless of the sanction imposed the Board of Management will recommend that the student receive external counselling or follow-up support.
- The Board of Management reserves the right to expel any student in breach of Ardscoil Mhuire's Substance Abuse Policy for Health and Safety reasons..

5. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

Ardcoil Mhuire recognises that in light of changing needs this policy will be subject to regular reviews and evaluations.

6. Storage and Disposal of suspected alcohol, tobacco and drug finds.

Where a member of staff or a student finds or is alerted to the existence of a suspicious substance, such findings must be reported immediately to the Principal. Any suspicious substance will be stored by the school in a secure location. The Gardaí will be contacted in order to remove the substance; establish its nature and arrange for its disposal.

Signed: _____

Bridget Herbert
Chairperson
Board of Management

Date: _____

Reviewed on: _____

Date of Review _____

APPENDIX 1

APPENDIX 1

Procedure

- (a) Emergencies when the person may be unconscious or incoherent.
- (b) A situation where a person exhibits unusual behaviour possibly due to drugs or alcohol.
- (c) Response to use or suspected use.
 1. Secure the person's safety.
 2. If possible ascertain what he/she has taken/consumed.
 3. If the person is unconscious or incoherent call an ambulance.
 4. Inform the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Head.
 5. Inform Parents and require that they take responsibility for the person by taking him/her home.
 6. If a parent/guardian is not immediately available the person may be left with a responsible adult providing that adult agrees to assume the responsibility.
 7. Refer to Procedures (Appendix 2 a, 2 b) which while invoking a spirit of support and advice will have due regard for the school code of discipline as outlined under The Management of Alcohol, Tobacco, Solvents and Drug Related Incidents – The School Approach.
 8. With regard to (c) above, such procedures as outlined in Appendix 2a, 2b will be applied as necessary.

APPENDIX 2(a)

Procedure re: Actual Possession of Drugs, Solvents, Alcohol.

1. Confiscate substance where possible in the presence of another teacher.
2. Students are accompanied to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head.
3. Mindful of obligations regarding Storage, Preservation and Disposal the school will:
 - (i). Take possession of the substance, record details and ascertain whether the student has taken/used the substance.

N.B. If the situation is deemed serious enough as to constitute an emergency, then the procedure outlined in **Appendix 1** is to be followed.

 - (ii) Seek to verify the exact nature of the substance. This may involve the Gardaí or outside expertise available to the school.
 - (iii) Contact parents, inform them of the circumstances and all procedures regarding possession of drugs, solvents, alcohol as per school policy.
 - (iv) Contact Social Services/Gardaí as appropriate.
4. The student will be required to meet with the school Guidance Counsellors and may be required to undertake specific tasks e.g. linking with outside drug addiction counsellor, doctor, Gardaí, project as necessary to fit the circumstance. Parents and students to be advised as to specific services available locally.
5. Mindful of the school's duty of care and while invoking a spirit of support and advice, disciplinary procedures will be necessary if school rules are broken. The

school reserves the right to exclude a student from the school. In such circumstances parents/guardians have the right to appeal such exclusion, under Section 29 of the Education and Welfare Act 2000.

6. The school will keep a record of all details regarding the incident

APPENDIX 2(b)

Procedure re: Suspected Possession of Drugs, Solvents, Alcohol

1. Student is accompanied to the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head.
2. The Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head will outline the allegation to the student and seek his/her co-operation in establishing the truth.
3. Parents will be contacted.
4. Mindful of the schools duty of care, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action to investigate the allegation and establish the truth.
5. Should possession be confirmed, then reference will be made to Appendix 2(a) relating to actual possession of drugs, solvents or alcohol.

APPENDIX 3

Procedure re: Disclosure of information pertinent to any substances referred to in this policy.

5. Managing Incidents.

Every staff member, including ancillary staff, visiting facilitators and service providers has a role when an incident involving substance use, discovery or possession occurs. Discovery of legal/illegal substances must be dealt with in a rational and consistent manner, in accordance with legal requirements. In the event of a pupil being caught possessing or under the influence of legal/illegal substance the school will respond in the following way:

- The school will adopt a calm, rational and caring approach at all times.
- The pupil's safety and the safety of others must be taken into account.
- The child will be isolated and supervised in a caring and supportive manner, if found to be under the influence of a substance.
- If found in possession of a substance, the child should be escorted to the Principal's office with the substance and supervised closely. Teachers should not handle or hold the substance.
- The parents/guardians of the child should be called and informed of the incident.
- If illegal substances are involved the gardai must be immediately contacted.
- The incident will be assessed in consultation with class teacher and whoever made the discovery.
- The child will be advised, counselled or sanctioned in accordance with the school's code of behaviour.

Where suspicion is based on disclosure, the rights and anonymity of persons will be upheld.

The Board of Management will be informed and may decide on further action.