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Proposed Post -Primary Schools Drug Policy For The North East Region

**Developed by: Healthy Schools Project
Health Promotion Department
North Eastern Health Board**

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Introduction

A drug can be defined as a chemical which causes changes in the way the human body functions either mentally, physically or emotionally. 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 and drugs which the taker may become physically or more often psychologically dependent. In the North East it is generally accepted that alcohol and tobacco are the most widely abused drugs, however, substances such as Cannabis, Ecstasy, Magic Mushrooms and Solvents are increasingly becoming a problem in our area.

The school sees itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to increase control over and improve their health. We endeavour to promote the well being of students by:-

1. *Providing a safe and healthy environment*
2. *Promoting positive health behaviours*
3. *Increasing knowledge about health*
4. *Promoting the self esteem of students*
5. *Working in partnership with the parents and students*

To this end, in response to the encroaching drug culture in our society we feel the need to implement a comprehensive policy in our schools to address the problem of substance misuse.

The Policy will focus on:-

1. *Strategies for prevention of substance misuse problems*
2. *Procedures for dealing with drug incidences in the school*
3. *Guidelines and information for teachers to improve their response to the problem of substance misuse.*

This document should be read with the discipline and pastoral care policy of the school.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS
STEERING GROUP
11/11/11

1. Policy Development

This policy has been developed through the Healthy Schools Steering Group, following a consultative process with Parents Associations, Teachers, Boards of Management and Principals.

The Healthy Schools Steering Group recommends that individual schools would either adopt this policy as their own or refine it in their own school by consulting with the appropriate partners (Parents, Teachers, Management and Students).

The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated where necessary.

2. Implementation Of The School Policy

Once the school's policy has been formulated, The Board of Management, the Principal, Deputy Principal, Year Heads and all Staff will be given a copy of the policy. Parents and Guardians will be given a copy of the policy on enrolment of their child in school. Enrolment will be on acceptance of this and other school policy documents by them.

Teachers will be briefed on the policy by the Principal and training needs may be identified. Training may be carried out in conjunction with the Health Promotion Department of the North Eastern Health Board.

3. Prevention

3.1. Education:

It is accepted amongst professionals working within the addiction field that education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is best carried out by teachers the students know, and within the overall context of a healthy living programme. This school implements a Social, Personal, and Health Education programme, such as the Healthy Schools programme developed by the North Eastern Health Board, to ensure that:-

- Students have clear information about the effects of the various drugs.
- Students examine their attitudes to alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances in their lives and in the environment in which they live.
- Students are equipped with the skills to make informed and healthy decisions around substance use.

3.2. Counselling:

Substance misuse rarely occurs in a vacuum and where a student has been in difficulties because of their use of any drug, it is usually discovered they have been using it to help them cope with or avoid some other problem. By enabling the student to identify more positive sources of support when they need it, we can help prevent the inappropriate use of substances. This also assists them in developing more long-term skills to cope with traumas or problems they encounter.

3.3. Parents:

Regular information evenings will be held at the requests of Parents Associations to help them deal with the problem at home. These evenings may be addressed by the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer, The Home School Liaison Service, Local Youth Service, the Drugs Outreach Service/Drug Counsellor from the North Eastern Health Board, or whoever is deemed appropriate by the school.

4. Smoking

4.1. School Policy:

- The school is a smoke-free area.
- Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on the school premises.
- Staff should not permit pupils to smoke on any school trip and should actively discourage smoking in public places.
- Staff may only smoke in the area designated a "smoking zone".
- Visitors will comply with restricted smoking policy.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the Year Head
- Repeated and blatant offending will result in the instigation of the school disciplinary procedure.

4.2. Support:

Smoking is an addictive habit, generally acquired in childhood. The school recognises some students may have difficulty stopping smoking. Staff from the North Eastern Health Board are willing to run smoking cessation groups in schools where demand makes a group feasible and where a designated teacher will co-operate.

5. Alcohol

5.1. School Policy:

- The school is an alcohol-free area, except for designated staff and parent functions where prior notice is given to the Principal.
- Students will not be allowed to bring alcohol into school or to consume alcohol in school.
- Students will not be allowed to consume alcohol on school trips or tours.
- Alcohol will not be available at discos or any other 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 at a more appropriate time.
- Students breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's disciplinary procedure.

6. Illicit Drugs And Solvents

6.1. School Policy:

- Students are prohibited from being 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 Gardai contacted to dispose of them. Teachers are advised not to transport illicit substances at any time. An investigation by a designated teacher 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 Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer/Community Garda will be sought.
- The school management will expect parents to inform the 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.

APPENDICES

Schools Policy Appendices

For Teachers:

Appendix 1

Dealing with the student.

Having observed the behaviours of concern and verified it with others, the teacher should consult with the Principal/Deputy Principal. Following the consultation the teacher may talk with the student. In talking with the student, the teacher should be aware of the following:-

1. Focus on concrete behaviour. Directly telling the student what you have observed and expressing concern for the consequence of this behaviour is the most appropriate response.
2. Don't accuse. It is important to be calm, caring and to create a supportive atmosphere.
3. Listen.
Be aware of lying, deceit and manipulation. A young person who is using alcohol or other drugs is very likely to deny using them or to suggest that what was observed was "once off situation" when in fact this may not be the case. This is very common as the student may want to continue using, and admitting would make it more difficult.
a Beware of the trap of confidentiality. Students sometimes ask for confidentiality and then admit to drug use. This is something to be very careful about when asking if a student is using drugs. In handling this situation it is important to let the student know that you will help them resolve the situation, you will support them through it and you will let them know when you are going to involve others.
Consult with relevant others and work out strategies using the guidelines set out in the school policy.
4. Attitude - drug taking stops now!!!. Other issues can be worked out over time.

Appendix 2

Dealing with the student under the influence of drugs or whose behaviour indicates potential overdose.

1. Don't leave alone. Comfort, reassure.
2. Attempt to determine drug taken.
Important sources of information include:
 - (i) Student
 - (ii) Friends
 - (iii) Locker/clothing
 - (iv) Odours
3. Contact parents
4. Seek medical help
5. Postpone further discussions until the student is clear of drugs, then implement school policy.

Appendix 3

Guidelines for Interview with Parents.

1. Setting up the Meeting
 - Arrange place
 - Make sure there is enough time set aside for the meeting
 - Decide who attends

2. Setting parents at ease.
 - Be aware of the fears/anxieties they may have
 - What baggage do they carry?
 - Recognise the responsibility and expertise of parents
 - Build alliance with parents

3. Content of meeting
 - Talk about the specific things you have noticed
 - Share the concerns of school
 - Seek the concerns of parents
 - Treat the parents supportively. This is a crisis for them
 - Inform them of the support services available to them and their child outside school. (see contact list Appendix 4)

4. Offer parents advice regarding discussion with student - at home or at school
 - It is necessary, where possible, for both parents to act together.
 - It is necessary for parents to have thought about and discussed the problem beforehand so as not to be at a disadvantage
 - Concern for the child must be communicated repeatedly

5. Conclusion
 - Decide on an action plan
 - i.e.* setting of limits
 - time to be in
 - access to money
 - rules of the house
 - Arrange follow-up meeting to assess improvements in situation or to discuss further action.

Appendix 4
NEHB Contact Numbers

Louth:

Outreach Workers	041 43531
Drug Counsellors	042 32287
Alcohol Counsellors	041 42368 042 26156

Meath:

Outreach Workers	046 71872
Drug Counsellors	046 71872
Alcohol Counsellors	046 71872

Cavan/Monaghan:

Community Addiction Counsellors	047 72100
Alcohol Counsellors	049 61399 (Cavan) 047 81811 (Monaghan)

List of Contacts for Trained Smoking Cessation Counsellors in N.E.H.B. Region

Hospitals

Louth County Hospital, Dundalk	042-34701 or 37389
Cavan General Hospital	049-61399
Monaghan General Hospital	047-81811
Our Lady's Hospital, Navan	046-21210
Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital , Drogheda	041-37601