



MOUNT TEMPLE SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

The central objective of our school's substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The National Drugs Strategy, 'Building on Experience' is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place. The policy addresses both education concerning alcohol, tobacco and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

Scope

Our substance use policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use. It reflects the unique ethos of the school and aims to develop a shared understanding of the term 'drugs'. 'A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels'

The policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents /guardians and uses of the school building. The policy applies to all concerned during school time (including breaks) and also applies to all school related activities.

Relationship to the school's ethos

The characteristic spirit of Mount Temple is one of mutual respect. Our motto is "All Different All Equal". We aim to provide a safe but caring and secure environment for learning. The school makes all reasonable efforts to support those who are experiencing difficulties – but must at all times, be conscious of the needs of the student body at large.

Mount Temple Comprehensive School strives to be a welcoming place for all its students. We endeavour to be fair and just and to have a positive approach in our structures and behaviour management strategies and to be consultative in decision-making. This 'Substance Use' policy is in line with our overall approach and reflects the school ethos.

Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that 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 student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

Goals/Objectives

1. We are clearly setting out our policy on Substance Use
2. The central objective of the school's substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. The policy addresses both education concerning alcohol, tobacco and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.
3. We are acknowledging the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. We believe that schools can make an important contribution in the area of education and prevention.

Policy Content

The policy content is divided into three sections:

1. Education concerning substance use.
2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents.
3. Provision for training and staff development.

1. Education concerning substance use

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & RSE programme, which is developmental and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment.

- The SPHE programme is compulsory for all students. It is part of the core curriculum and is delivered on the basis of one class period per week. It contains a module at junior cert, in each of the 3 years, on substance use.
- The SPHE programme has a key role in developing an informed and sensible attitude to substances.
- In challenging students to avoid the use of illegal substances, this school will strive to provide a drug free environment.
- The SPHE programme also makes use of peer education approaches. “Drug talk” from a teacher may be viewed with suspicion by students; from specially trained peers or older students it can have a greater impact and credibility.
- The use of an outside visitor/ speaker to enhance the work done in class will always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and will be undertaken in the presence of a/the teacher. (See circular C10043/18) Talks at Assembly will also be undertaken.

2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents

The school will respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be exercised in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include referral to a support agency. Where a member of staff requires support, school may consider facilitating links with support agencies provided by the state and teachers unions.

- The school’s rules outlined in the student’s journal and are very clear on the issue of substance abuse/use:

“Possession of any illegal substances and abuse, misuse or unauthorised possession of legal products is completely prohibited. Any transgression of this regulation will warrant removal from class and the imposition of further sanctions. A final decision on the severity of the sanction rests with the Board of Management”.
- The school rules also outlined in the student’s school journal concerning smoking:

“In accordance with Department of Health regulations, smoking is strictly prohibited, inside or outside the school, in the school grounds. To smoke or be in the company of smokers within the school complex is considered a serious offence and serious sanctions will be imposed”.

Our understanding of a drug related incident would include:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco on the school premises or during a school-related activity
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school related activity.

- The reporting procedure for such incidents is for the teacher /student /parent /other to report the matter to a teacher /year head /deputy principal /principal. While a verbal report will be investigated, a written report may be required.
- Parents will be notified in relation to incidents involving their own child.
- The involvement of parents in incidents relating to another child will be a matter for the discretion of the Principal.
- Mount Temple comprehensive school is an educational establishment and only has very limited facilities for dealing with incidents requiring medical intervention – basic first aid. Where we believe that a medical intervention is required, we will notify the parents of the student involved and may decide to call for an ambulance.
- We may also involve the Gardaí in a proactive approach (through, for example, the pastoral care programme).
- We encourage parents to avail of any support agencies available at local level –where students involved in substance misuse might be referred.
- Where a substance related issue leads to an enquiry from the media, only the Principal (or Deputy Principals in the absence of the Principal) should respond. No other person is authorised to speak on behalf of the school.
- There are various mechanisms in place which facilitate the following up of incidents which take place – Guidance Counsellors internally and externally, Chaplain, Year Heads.
- The Board of Management reserves the right to request a medical report verifying that the student is drug free, before allowing a student to return to school and tests may be required to continue if the student is to stay.

3. Steps with dealing with Substance Use/Distribution

Categories

Substances affecting someone's behaviour

Symptoms may include a fall off in work over time, dilated pupils, erratic or uncharacteristic behaviour. Any staff member who is worried about the behaviour of a student should consult immediately with the counselling staff or Year Head. The aim should be to seek help for the student as soon as possible. After consultation with the student, the counsellor will give appropriate feedback to the referring member of staff and the tutor. Parents/guardians may be involved and the student may be referred for external treatment.

Substances which are in someone's possession for his/her own use.

The member of staff who finds a student in possession of any substance should accompany the student to the Deputy-Principal's office. They ask the student to hand over the substance and give it to the Deputy Principal. If a student refuses to hand over the substance, the Deputy Principal telephones the parents. The student will be kept in school, out of circulation, under supervision, until the parents/ guardians arrive to discuss the situation with the Deputy Principal.

The student will be obliged to enter a behaviour contract which will be reviewed. In addition, the student may not participate in school trips. The Principal may inform the JLO to ensure that additional support is available to the student. The student will be assigned to a member of the monitoring team and a school counsellor will see the student. A case review will be held after a three month period.

Substances which are being taken in school or on school related activities

The care and management of a student in this category is dependent on the pattern and severity of the misuse. School medical attention should be sought immediately for a student in this category and an ambulance should be called. The student should be accompanied to hospital by a member of staff appointed to do so. The student will be suspended from school. Return to school will be dependent on a medical and/or treatment report being received. The duration of the absence from school will be determined by the nature of the drug taken, the level of dependency, recommendations from outside professionals and contact with parents/ guardians. If parents are unavailable for an extended period of time, and there is no functioning guardian, a student in this category may attend school, but remain out of circulation, under supervision. On return to school, the following system of care and management will apply: The in-house consequences will include the student being cautioned strongly concerning his/ her long-term future in the school. A letter confirming this will be sent to parents/ guardians. The student will be obliged to enter a contract. If necessary, the Principal will inform the JLO to ensure that additional support is available.

Any negotiations made involving substances

The Year Head, Deputy Principal and any other appropriate member of staff, should investigate any incident which arises that involves pupils, in a school context, in negotiations concerning substances. A full report should then be given to the Principal. The parents/ guardians will be called to the school by the Principal and informed of the situation. The student will be suspended from school pending an investigation by the appropriate authorities and action taken according to the prevailing legislation.

Substances being given or sold

Any student involved in the selling or distribution of substances on school premises or school-related activities may be reported to the Gardai and may be expelled from school.

All suspensions/expulsions must be ratified by the Board of Management (the Principal is authorized by the board to suspend or to engage in the support of managed moves).

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