

Ballinteer Community School

School Policy on Substance Use

Scope

This policy has been developed following a consultative process with The Parents' Association, teachers, students and the Board of Management. It applies to the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building.

Relationship to schools mission, vision, aims

This policy is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. It has been developed in line with our mission statement which has at its core, care of the student.

School Ethos and Rationale

Ballinteer Community School is committed to providing quality education to its students. The school is dedicated to imparting to them strong moral values, a love of learning, concern for others and the skills necessary to lead purposeful and meaningful lives in their community. The ethos of the school is Christian and is nurtured in an inclusive way so that students of all religious traditions have a strong conviction of Faith as well as the intellectual curiosity and religious commitment to develop and deepen their knowledge of it.

Ballinteer Community School sees itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to increase control over and improve their health. The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education. The Board recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and in particular, alcohol misuse. The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs strategy 2001-2008. The Education Act ('98) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

Within the limited resources available to it, the school will provide appropriate education programmes for all its students. The programme of education offered will be appropriate to the age of the students and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes

already being taught in Ballinteer Community School – Science, Home Economics, SPHE, RE, PE, CSPE and in association with youth services so that

- Students will 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ballinteer Community School acknowledges the contribution of all members of the school community. Each member, Parents, Staff and Principal has responsibility for the promotion of good health and a role in dealing with and minimising negative behaviour.

Content

Policy

The school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school related activity. Whilst it is noted that the number of young people who misuse substances appears to be rising, it is important to recognise that the majority of young people choose not to do so.

An exception to the above will be made for the use of properly prescribed drugs. Parents of students taking prescribed medication must inform the school in writing of that fact.

Programmes for Alcohol, Tobacco, Volatile substances and Drug Education

Ballinteer Community School is committed to providing a comprehensive and timetabled drug education programme for all students which will be incorporated into the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme currently running in the school.

Our educational aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of 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

These aims will be achieved by:

1. SPHE teachers are offered Drug Awareness training and all staff are made aware of the signs and symptoms that may indicate drug or alcohol abuse.
2. Outside speakers are used when appropriate to reinforce the work done in class.
3. Parents/Guardians will be consulted on the need for drug education and will be informed of what is happening in the school.
4. Student Drug Education will be achieved through:
 - SPHE Programme
 - Science
 - First Aid course in Transition Year where possible
 - Outside speakers where appropriate
 - Drug Education week

Staff Training:

Ballinteer Community School will facilitate staff training where possible. This may involve general information sessions for all teaching and support staff. There is specific in- service training for SPHE teachers, Guidance counsellors, Chaplain etc.

All staff will be informed of proper procedures for dealing with such an incident in the school.

Efforts will be made to seek out cross-curricular activities which would reinforce what is learnt in SPHE.

Parent Education

Parents should familiarise themselves with the SPHE programme as outlined on the school website.

Managing a drug or alcohol incident:

A limited number of people are involved in all suspected or confirmed drug and alcohol incidents. People will be informed on a “need to know” basis. All written records will be held confidentially by the Principal or Deputy Principal. Parents/Guardians will be involved. They will be informed sensitively and support will be offered to them. In the case of illegal drugs, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact Gardaí- Juvenile Liaison Officer and appropriate action will be taken by both parties. In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.

If a student has a problem, then referral will be recommended. Parents/ Guardians, staff and other students involved in the incident will be offered support. Confidentiality is a complex issue. It is important that the limits of confidentiality are discussed with students before any disclosure is made. The wellbeing and welfare of the student and teacher must be a primary focus. The care team may be notified and counselling may be offered.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will handle all media enquiries. They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.

Disciplinary Procedures:

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules on drugs are broken, sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence. These will be consistent with school rules and dealt with by the Principal or Deputy Principal (see the Code of Conduct)

Managing a tobacco incident:

In the case of tobacco related incidents, procedures will be followed as per the school Code of Conduct.

Review

This policy is subject to review by various stakeholders.