

HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

DRUGS EDUCATION POLICY

Rationale

Holy Family Primary and Nursery School is committed to protecting and promoting the health and safety of all members of the school. Consequently, we condone neither the misuse of drugs or alcohol by the members of the school nor the illegal supply of these substances on school premises. Any instances of possession, use or supply will be regarded with the utmost seriousness. A distinction will be made between those using the drug and those engaged in drug trafficking. It is hoped that primary prevention and the protection of all school members will be achieved through the general ethos of the school, through an effective pastoral care programme and a comprehensive Drugs Education Programme.

Drugs are any substance which, when taken, have the effect of altering the way the body works or the person behaves, feels, sees or thinks. They include alcohol, tobacco, legal medicines, prescribed drugs such as antibiotics or tranquillisers, substances such as correcting fluids or glues, controlled drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy, heroine or cocaine and other substances such as poppers.

Aims and Objectives

The central aim of the policy is to assist all pupils develop the attitudes and social skills necessary to enable them to resist the pressures and influences that could lead to drug misuse. The school therefore aims:

- To ensure a consistent approach to drugs-related issues by all members of the school community.
- To promote the physical and psychological health and well-being of the pupils and staff.
- To help pupils acquire the social and personal skills needed to combat the need for the use of drugs and to resist the pressures on them to participate in activities that could have serious consequences for their health and well-being.
- To provide pupils with factual information about substances and drugs and their effects on health and to equip them with the skills necessary to make informed decisions in relation to drugs.
- To help pupils develop an understanding of the implications and possible consequences of the use and misuse of drugs - physical, social, moral, ethical, legal and economic.
- To seek to minimise the risks involved in drug misuse and to identify sources of appropriate support.

Since drug abuse is often a symptom of poor self-esteem. Much of the school's pastoral and curricular programme is designed to enhance students' self-esteem through commitment to and a sense of belonging to the school community, academic success, positive social behaviour and good relationships at all levels.

Education

It is the school's policy that a drugs education programme features in the learning experience of all pupils. The programme does not confine itself to the issue of illegal drugs but encompasses also misuse of alcohol, tobacco and solvents and builds on the work covered in Key Stage 1.

Across the Key Stages the pupils will be:

- made aware of the school's rules relating to drugs (legal and illegal)
- informed about legal and illegal drugs, the different categories of drugs, their effects and associated health risks
- informed about the law relating to drugs
- helped to identify and understand pressures and influences relating to drugs
- given the opportunity to assess personal strengths and weaknesses and attitudes towards drugs and drug users
- given the opportunity to develop communication skills and assess the consequences of actions and manage conflict and aggressive behaviour
- given the opportunity to explore alternative social and leisure pursuits

A variety of teaching strategies will be utilised to ensure pupils acquire a full understanding of the issues and dangers associated with drugs. In addition, pupils will acquire a range of skills to deal effectively with peer pressure related to drugs misuse. At both key stages the content of the lessons are appropriate to the age, maturity and experience of the pupils concerned and the teacher seeks to deal sensitively with issues raised.

Staff Training and Responsibility

All staff receive a copy of the Drugs Education Policy and have the opportunity to discuss any issues with Senior Management. Inset in Drugs Education will be provided as appropriate by the Health Education Co-ordinator and/or external agencies. This may include drugs awareness, safe storage of harmful substances, teaching methodologies, procedures for managing drugs-related incidents, first aid training and communication with parents and pupils.

Parents

Parents are informed of the content of school policies on a regular basis and they are regularly audited for their views. All school policies are available on request to all parents and we welcome parents views on the content of policies. As a school we fully recognise and value the key role of parents in ensuring pupils are fully aware of the implications of the misuse of drugs. In the event of drug misuse, parents will be informed immediately.

Administration of Prescribed Medication

The school will not administer any medicines to pupils except:

- to retain for the pupil an inhaler for asthma to be administered by the pupil
- to allow pupils to self administer appropriate medication

and in both cases will do so only with the written permission of parents/guardians.

Storage of medication

Where a child is receiving medication, the medicine can be stored in school. When medicine is stored in school it will be kept under lock and key. The administration of the medicine will be the responsibility of the child and will only be permitted when the parent produces an authorisation letter to permit administration of the medicine.

Roles and responsibilities

The Health Education Co-ordinator (Mr Murray) is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the Drugs Education programme. He will be the contact point for outside agencies working with the school.

The principal will contact the parents of any pupil suspected of involvement in a drugs-related incident before referring the matter to the PSNI if appropriate. The principal will consult with the Board of Governors regarding any disciplinary action involved as a result of any incident.

Any teacher using potentially harmful substances in class is responsible for the supervision of pupils in the class. The supervisor of the cleaning staff is responsible for ensuring that all potentially harmful substances used are safely stored.

Procedures following a drugs-related incident

All staff are aware that when they respond to a drug-related incident, the first priority should be ensure the safety of the pupil(s). Appropriate first aid proceedings should be followed in the case of a suspected drugs incident.

It is the school policy that all incidents involving controlled drugs will be reported to the PSNI but every effort will be made to contact parents of a pupil involved in any such incident before contacting the police.

Pupils involved in any such incident are subject to the disciplinary code of the school but will also be referred to counselling as appropriate.

Only the principal may communicate with the media in the event of any such incident and he will also communicate to other staff, parents and pupils as appropriate for any such incident.

Review

The Drugs Education Policy follows the guidance in the Department of Education Circular 2004/9 and the booklet "Drugs: Guidance for Schools" (CEA, 2004). Responsibility for the review and implementation of the policy lies with the Health Education Co-ordinator, Mr Murray.

The next review of the policy will be in December 2007.