

# ST.FELIM'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

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## Substance Use Policy

### **Introductory Statement**

This policy was formulated by the staff of St. Felim's N.S. in consultation with members of the Board of Management and Parent's Association. St. Felim's N.S. is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school regarding Substance Use.

This policy applies to students, teachers, auxiliary staff members, users of the school premises, visitors, i.e. every person who enters the building. It is applicable during school-time – including breaks and to ALL school related activities. It applies to the school building and grounds and to any area where a school related activity takes place, e.g. School Tour.

### **Definition of a Drug**

A 'drug' can be defined as 'any substance, which alters how the human body works, or how the person behaves or feels.

### **Rationale**

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges, which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. While parents/guardians have a primary responsibility with respect to substance use education. St. Felim's N.S. acknowledges that we too have an important role in terms of the education, prevention, support and handling drug related incidents.

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. St. Felim's N.S. endeavours to promote the well-being of pupil's in a structured approach as part of Social, Personal and Health Education by:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment.
- Promoting positive health behaviours.
- Increasing knowledge about health.
- Promoting pupil's self-esteem.
- Working in partnership with parents/guardians and pupils
- Adopting a pro-active rather than a reactive approach.

Having a policy that offers guidance on managing an incident involving alcohol, tobacco or drug use will ensure that the school responds in a planned and considered way.

### **Relationship to School's Mission, Vision and Aims**

St. Felim's N.S. aims to provide a safe and secure learning environment where not only the children's educational needs are addressed but that their spiritual, moral and cultural needs are also catered for thus nurturing the holistic development of every child. We help build each

child's self-esteem by encouraging them and giving them the opportunity to reach their full potential. We endeavour to help them to develop good communication skills having respect for themselves, their peers, their parents/guardians, the staff and the wider community. St Felim's N.S. has a positive school climate and warm atmosphere, enabling pupils to have a sense of belonging to a group they can trust and in which their thoughts and feelings are valued.

### **Aims of Policy**

The aim of the substance use policy of St. Felim's N.S. is primary prevention. We aim to protect our pupils from the harmful effects of substance misuse and try to prevent them from using tobacco, alcohol, solvents and illegal drugs. We aim to develop in our pupils' better self-esteem, through providing a positive school climate and atmosphere and through giving our pupils age appropriate information from educational programmes.

## **Policy Content**

### **Education concerning Substance Use**

St. Felim's N.S. is committed to providing a comprehensive Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs Education Prevention Programme for all pupils. This will be provided within the broad context of the subject of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) by following our two-year plan as outlined in our whole school plan for SPHE.

Its main aims are to:

- Increase the self-esteem and confidence of the young people.
- Equip the pupils with personal and social skills.
- Enable the pupils to make informed, healthy and responsible choices.
- Provide honest and age appropriate information on alcohol, tobacco and legal/illegal drugs.
- Minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions.

Active learning strategies are advocated in the SPHE curriculum will inform our selection of methodology. Our work may be reinforced by project work and the possibility of talks from local Gardaí and Public Health Nurses as long as the content of their talk is in keeping with the school curriculum on the topic.

### **Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Related Incidents**

Young people are most at risk in relation to substance use in St. Felim's N.S. in recreational areas, on the way to and from school and at out of school related activities supervised by staff members of St. Felim's National School.

### **What is a Drug Related Incident?**

The following are examples of a drug incident:

- Possession, selling or supplying alcohol, tobacco and legal/illegal drugs on the school premises or on a school related activity.
- School grounds being used for alcohol, tobacco and drug activity.
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property.
- Suspicion of alcohol, tobacco, and drug use, possession or dealing.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour.
- Disclosers about alcohol, tobacco or drug use, possession or dealing.
- Individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs including emergency situations where the individual may be unconscious or seriously ill.

## **How do you spot drug taking?**

Due to the similarities, the symptoms of drug use can be mistaken for someone who is merely off form. However, the following list provides a useful guide.

- Abnormally sleepy or drowsy.
- Sudden mood changes.
- Lack of concentration, memory loss, black-outs, hallucinations.
- Lack of interest in work, friends and hobbies.
- Keeping unusually late hours.
- Secrecy about activities and whereabouts.
- Telling lies and/ stealing.
- New and strange friends.
- Unusual smells, strains or marks on body and/or clothes.
- Unusual powders, capsules, tablets, syringes, needles and or scorched tin-foil.

It is important to consider all possibilities before concluding that someone is taking drugs.

## **The School Response to a Drug Incident**

The response the school makes will address the needs of the student(s)/person(s) involved, the other students and the school. The appropriate balance between care and discipline is essential. Incidents will need to be handled sensitively and issues of confidentiality will need to be addressed.

### **Assessing a Drug Incident**

- Assess the situation and decide if the person involved is in an acute/emergency situation.
- Seek medical help if necessary.
- Any adult displaying signs of substance use will be asked to leave the premises.
- In all cases it is important to assess whether the incident is confirmed or suspicious use/possession/supply of alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

### **Managing a Drug Incident**

#### **1. Who needs to be informed?**

Details should be reported to relevant members of staff. The Principal, class teacher, parents/guardians and health services if necessary will be informed. The Principal will inform all parties of any drug incident. All details will be recorded on an Incident Report Form. In the event of a confirmed drug incident, the Principal will contact the Gardaí and the Juvenile Liaison Officer, in order to clarify what the legal position is and what support can be offered to the school. HSE may also be contacted in regard to the disposal of items.

#### **2. Confidentiality:**

The well-being and welfare of the young person will be the prime focus. Total confidentiality cannot be offered but the information will only be disclosed on a strict “need to know” basis.

#### **3. Disciplinary:**

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding alcohol, tobacco and drugs are broken the sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the offence. These will be consistent with the school rules regarding other breaches of conduct. See our Admission and Code of Behaviour Policies.

#### **4. Administration of Medicine:**

##### **Management of school drug related issues:**

###### **Smoking**

- The school is a non-smoking area.
- Students are not permitted to smoke or possess cigarettes on the school premises or in any other place.
- Visitors must comply with the restricted smoking policy.
- Adults who have tobacco products in their possession for their own use, must keep them in their possession at all times and out of sight and reach of children.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises will be reported to the Principal and parents will be informed. A period of suspension will ensue. (Please see Code of Behaviour)

###### **Alcohol**

- The school is an alcohol free area.
- Pupils will not be allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken. Parents will be notified. In such instance, our Child Safeguarding Statement and our Code of Behaviour will be consulted.
- If alcohol is required for an adult only school function, permission shall be sought from the B.O.M. (an exception to this is when donations of alcohol are made to the school for raffles or other fundraisers)

###### **Illegal Drugs and Solvents**

- Students, staff, parents and visitors are forbidden from being in possession of or using illegal drugs or solvents in the school premises.
- Illegal drugs found on school premises will be locked away and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illegal drugs or solvents, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken. The D.L.P. should be informed as per child safeguarding statement. Parents will be notified.
- Where the school suspects trafficking of illegal 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 will be sought.
- It may be considered necessary in certain circumstances to seek legal advice.

###### **Prescription Drugs and Administration of Drugs:**

- The school must be informed in writing by parents or guardians of any special requirements that students may have regarding all medication. See our Administration of Medication Policy.

###### **Solvents and cleaning agents:**

- All cleaning agents must be stored out of children's view in appropriate cupboards and store rooms.
- Markers with a solvent base, tippex and other such products should be used under teacher supervision.
- Aerosols are not allowed; roll-on antiperspirants are permitted.

## Parental Involvement

Parents will be involved by accepting the school's Code of Behaviour and Admission Policies. They will be informed of an incident involving their own child and will be asked to accept responsibility, co-operate with the school authorities and with the Gardaí if necessary.

## Role of the Board of Management

- Ratify this policy
- Implement this policy
- Monitor and evaluate it
- To sponsor/provide training for staff members
- Make decisions involving critical incidents
- To deal with the media in the event of a critical incident.

This policy puts the following procedures in place to deal with an incident requiring medical intervention:

- 'Universal Precautions' will be applied; e.g. wearing of proper protective gloves etc., washing and making safe an area after an incident
- Staff have received first aid training
- The school has a Critical Incident Policy.

The school has established a rapport with the local Garda station and will invite representatives from the local Garda station to speak with senior pupils. Whether or not to inform the Gardaí of minor incidents will be at the discretion of the Principal and the Chairperson, but they will be involved in any serious substance abuse incidents.

At local level the following support agencies are available to which students involved in substance misuse might be referred:

- N.A. (Narcotics Anonymous)
- Child Care & Family Support Services
- Drug Education Officer
- Drug Helpline
- Juvenile Liaison Officer
- Community Garda

**1800 341 900**

Other useful number include:

Drugs Advisory and Treatment Centre, Trinity Court, 30/31 Pearse Street, Dublin 2	01 6771122
Substance Misuse Prevention Programme	01 4528017

In the event of media interest in relation to a 'drug related incident', the matter will be referred to the Chairperson and he will issue a prepared statement to the media.

A written account of all incidents regarding substance use will be kept by the school.

## **Management of Persons in the Workplace Under the Influence of Drugs and/or Alcohol**

The Chairperson shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that pupils and other persons in the workplace are not exposed to risks to their safety, health or welfare from persons under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The term “in the workplace”, in the preceding sentence includes all school related activities taking place under the supervision of a teacher, with the Chairperson’s approval, and both within and away from the school premises.

Every school employee shall, while at work, ensure that he or she is not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace, in the interests of the safety, health and welfare of the employee and others. In the case of employees who are at work under the influence of an intoxicant, disciplinary procedures may be implemented.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that an employee of any contractor is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask the contractor to remove his/her employee from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe any person, other than a staff member or employee of a contractor, is unfit to be on the premises, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the staff member shall report his/her belief promptly to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal, who shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe that a parent or adult collecting a pupil from school or presenting themselves on the premises for another reason is unfit to be on the premises or to take care of the said pupil, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal will be informed and the duty of care will apply to the pupil. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the pupil and safeguard their best interests.

In the event that a staff member or any other person, referred to above, refuses a reasonable request to remove him/herself from the premises, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal may call the Gardaí to forcibly remove the person in question.

The Chairperson acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of teachers. An Employee Assistance Service (telephone: 1800 411 057) is available to teaching staff. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the teaching staff, the Chairperson may request such staff member to contact the Employee Assistance Service.

The Chairperson also acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of all other staff members. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the non-teaching staff, the Chairperson may request such staff member to seek counseling or other professional intervention.

All incidents, relating to the presence of persons at school, under the influence of an intoxicant, shall be recorded and reported as soon as possible to the Chairperson.

The Chairperson shall consider all such reports and decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances of each particular case.

## Training and Staff Development

The Board of Management has an ongoing commitment to training and staff development. The following supports are available to the school:

- PDST
- Walk Tall Support Office
- HSE
- Local Gardaí and Junior Liaison Officers
- Tusla

At all times teachers are encouraged to:

- Appreciate the contribution that the SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance abuse
- Develop a supportive classroom environment
- Be aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse
- Become aware of the laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how they relate to themselves and their students.

### Roles and Responsibilities:

- The policy will be available to the B.O.M., teachers and to the school community on our school website or through the school office
- Parents and guardians will be informed about this policy and its availability upon application for admission for their child into the school. Admission will be on acceptance of this and other policy documents by them.
- The policy will be implemented by all members of staff and any adult working within the school.
- The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated where necessary.

### Monitoring and Review

The Principal will monitor aspects of the policy to ensure that it is practical benefit to the school. The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner in light of changing information, development in the educational programme and feedback from parents/guardians or the local community. Teachers/staff, parents/guardians, pupils and Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy.

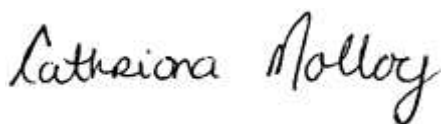
### Ratification

The BOM officially ratified this policy at its meeting on 16/06/2020.



Signed \_\_\_\_\_  
Gerry Sheanon (Chairperson B.O.M.)

Date 16/06/2020



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cathriona Molloy – Principal

Date: 16/06/2020

