

# Nagle Community College

## Substance Abuse Policy

### Scope

This policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use. It applies, therefore, to all students, teaching staff and ancillary staff, parents/guardians of Nagle Community College and all users of the school building. The policy pertains for the duration of the school day, including all break times and during all school related activities both on the school campus or taking place elsewhere.

### Relationship to the school's mission/vision/aims

*"Nagle Community College is a centre of education which encourages the holistic development of all in an environment that is caring, respectful and just"*

The school, in keeping with the spirit of the mission statement, aims to provide a safe and caring environment for learning, an environment that pursues justice, fairness, positivity and consultation in approach to decision making, making every effort to support those encountering difficulties, while at all times alert to the needs of the student body at large. The school's "Substance Use" policy is in line with and reflects the school's ethos.

### Definition of Substance use:

The agreed definition of a drug is "Any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally." It does not discriminate, therefore, between alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, over the counter drugs, solvents, prescribed drugs or illicit drugs. ***(Understanding Substances and Substance Use-A Handbook For Teachers)*** The terms "substance and "drug" are used interchangeably.

When referring to substances, Nagle Community College defines them as all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act and also reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

***{Nagle Community College's policy on Prescribed Medication is outlined in an addendum to this policy.}***

## **Rationale**

The world we live in presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs, both legal and illegal, form part of this reality. Acknowledging the serious nature of drug misuse in our society, Nagle Community College believes it can make an important contribution in the area of education and prevention. The College's policy on substance use aims to reflect upon the needs of all in the school community and provide for the welfare, care and protection of all on issues relating to substance use, issues that can be both sensitive and emotive in nature. The policy has been devised in line with the following legislation and documentation:

***The Education Act (1998)*** provides that schools promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

***The Education Welfare Act 2000*** and ***Department of Education and Skills Circular 18/02.***

***"Drug Use Prevention" November 2001*** from the ***National Advisory Committee on Drugs***

***The National Drugs Strategy (interim) 2009-2016*** requires every school to have a substance use policy in place.

***Action 21 of the National Drugs Strategy (interim) 2009-2016*** mandates the Department of Education and Skills to monitor the implementation of substance abuse policies in schools through the whole school evaluation process as operated by the inspectorate. It is also mandated to ensure that best practice is disseminated to all schools.

***The 2003 European School Survey project on Alcohol and other Drugs (E.S.P.A.D.)*** report highlighted the seriousness of the problems among 16 year olds in Ireland as compared to 34 E.S.P.A.D. countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland, with girls ranking higher than boys in terms of regular alcohol use. In terms of drug use in Ireland, there was a notable increase in lifetime use of any illicit drug between 1999 (32%) and 2003 (40%), up eight percent.

## **Goals and objectives.**

The Substance Use Policy of Nagle Community College is intended to outline the role the school plays in terms of education, prevention, support and handling of drug related incidents/issues. Other school policies such as The School's Code of Behaviour, Health and Safety Statement, RSE and Wellbeing Policies also contain provisions relevant to substance use.

## **Policy Contents**

The policy content can be divided into three sections:

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

### **Education concerning substance use**

Nagle Community College is committed to providing a comprehensive and timetabled “Substance Use Education Programme” for all students in the following ways:

- As part of the Social and Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE), delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment.
- Through specific modules or programmes such as Wellbeing.
- Within existing subjects such as Science, Home Economics, R.E.,P.E.,CSPE.
- Through partaking in special projects.
- By the use of outside services such as the Gardai, ISPC and the HSE.
- By availing of expert visitors and speakers, whose presentations are undertaken in the presence of teachers and serve to enhance the work done in classes.

#### **The educational aims of the school in relation to substance use are:**

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of the students.
- To equip the students with personal and social skills.
- To enable the students make informed, healthy and responsible choices.
- To provide the students with accurate and age appropriate information on substances.
- To minimise the harm caused by misuse of substances by offering supportive interventions.

### **Management of alcohol,tobacco or drug related incidents**

Nagle Community College strictly prohibits the possession or use of alcohol or drugs in the school or while engaged in school related activities. The college cites the possession or use of drugs and smoking as high level disciplinary incidents in their ***Code of Behaviour policy***.

The school acknowledges that in situations involving substance/drug use, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the whole school community. The school responds in a planned and considered way, taking due care in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response.

**Definition of a drug incident:**

- ❖ Person seeking help from a member of staff.
- ❖ Suspicion of drug use, possession or dealing.
- ❖ Disclosure by another person
- ❖ Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity.
- ❖ Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs.
- ❖ Emergencies when the person may be unconscious.
- ❖ School grounds being used for drug activity.
- ❖ Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- ❖ Intoxication/unusual behaviour.

**Procedures**

- Where there is no immediate danger to the young person, it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding.
- Any teacher or member of staff who encounters a drug incident must complete a Drug Incident Report Form and ensure it is brought to the attention of the School Principal.
- It is important that, in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents, a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a 'need to know' basis.
- Disciplinary procedures will be used if school rules are broken and expulsion will only be an option if all else has failed.
- Confidentiality: Where a student confides in a member of the school Counselling Team regarding drug use with a view to seeking help, it is important to recognise the confidentiality of the student-counsellor relationship.
- The Guidance Counsellor/Chaplain, in conjunction with the School Principal will then decide on the involvement of parents/guardians at an appropriate time.
- The Principal will liaise with the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of any drugs found on the premises.
- In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.
- If a person has a serious drug problem then referral to a G.P. and /or Drug Treatment Centre will be recommended.
- Staff involved in the incident will be offered support.

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

## **Provision for Training and Staff Development**

Nagle Community College's Board of Management and School Trustees have an ongoing commitment to staff development and training. The school is assisted in providing opportunities for staff training on drugs/substance use and on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of a substance incident by the SPHE Support Service (Post Primary), by the HSE and the Garda Siochana.

The school will provide opportunities for parents/guardians to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to substance use and policy.

Appropriate information, guidance and support will be offered to the Board of Management related to the investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

## **Implementation Arrangements,**

### **Roles and Responsibilities.**

#### **The Principal**

The Principal holds ultimate responsibility for all matters relating to the enforcement of this policy. The Principal will work closely with the **Student Support Team** and may delegate to the Deputy Principal/ Assistant Principals 1 or relevant others, to act on her/his behalf in investigating specific incidents.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (or nominated delegate) will include the following:

1. Dealing with all substance related incidents occurring in the school.
2. All reports of incidents must be advised immediately to the Principal.
3. Making all decisions regarding investigation of an incident; communicating with and liaising with all relevant parties; and making decisions on disclosure.
4. Keeping all parties apprised of developments regarding any investigation.
5. Securing and confidentially storing all documentation and records.
6. Taking possession and temporary storage of all confiscated material and making decisions on disposal.
7. Dealing with all media queries.

### **Teaching Staff/ SNAs/Ancillary staff**

All staff members should be involved in the development, implementation and evaluation of the substance use policy. They may have the initial contact with substance users and may have to make initial moves to control any given situation, pending notification and arrival of the Principal/Deputy Principal/Substance Co-ordinator/Gardai, as appropriate. The Principal and staff must prioritise their own and student safety in determining the level of control required for any given situation.

### **The role of parents/guardians**

The school is a supportive organisation based on a partnership model. Parents should play a participative role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the substance use policy. The school appreciates the role of parents/guardians as primary educators and recognises that efforts to provide education, guidance and support to students, in its various forms, are most meaningful and effective when parents / guardians both understand and support the aims and activities and participate (as appropriate) in the school's work in relation to substance use. The school thus will provide opportunities to attend drug workshops, information evenings and sessions on the School Drugs' Policy as appropriate. It is the responsibility of parents to attend where possible and to work closely with the school in regards to the prevention of substance misuse in the school community.

Parents/guardians should support and assist the school in its efforts to manage substance use. They should contact the school regarding incidents of substance use/abuse which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children, other parents/guardians or through other sources.

### **The role of students**

The student should play a role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the substance use policy. They should participate fully in all drug education programmes provided for them. They should seek help, if needed, through all channels available to them in school. Students should discuss any incident of substance use/with a parent / guardian or teacher or another trusted adult within the school system. This is responsible behaviour rather than "telling tales".

### **Success Criteria**

That substance misuse incidents are eliminated in the school and on school related activities.

### **Monitoring**

The Principal, in conjunction with the Student Support team, will monitor the implementation of this policy.

### **Review Procedures**

This policy will be regularly reviewed.