

# **DAVITT COLLEGE, CASTLEBAR**

## **SCHOOL POLICY ON SUBSTANCE USE**

### **1. Scope of this Policy**

This Policy applies to all students enrolled in Davitt College *at all times* whether on the School Grounds or engaged in school related activities or not and to all other users of the School Grounds and visitors to the School.

### **2. Rationale of Policy**

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 and the School seeks to prepare them for these challenges in the light of our ethos. This Policy is complementary to the School's Social, Personal and Health Education Programme and to the Code of Behaviour.

The Education Act, 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them

The National Drugs Strategy, '**Building on Experience**', is now Government Policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.

The report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled 'Drug Use Prevention' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.

Drugs and their misuse is an area of concern for Students, Parents/Guardians and Teachers. Drugs have the potential to undermine good order and discipline in the School and it is essential that appropriate steps are taken to ensure that this does not occur.

In the course of their second level education many pupils are likely to find themselves in situations where they may be offered drugs. It is important to reassure and support the majority of young people who choose not to have drugs in their life, to reassure them that their choice is responsible and positive and to support them in choosing a healthy and health-sustaining lifestyle.

### **3. Relationship to the School Mission/Vision/Aims**

The community of the School works in a holistic manner to ensure that dependence is gradually replaced by responsibility for self, society and the world. The dignity of each Student, Staff Member and Parent/Guardian is honoured and reflected in school policies and structures, including this Policy. While educational excellence is promoted, it is the needs of the learner that direct the development of the School.

**The School's Mission Statement recognises the right of all its students to learn in an educationally conducive environment.** It sees the work of the School as providing for the educational, spiritual, psychological and moral welfare of each individual.

#### **4. Goals and objectives**

- (a) To ensure that the characteristic spirit of the School is protected and not undermined by inappropriate, harmful, destructive habits of drug or substance abuse.
- (b) To safeguard the health and safety of all in the School Community.
- (c) To encourage young people to make informed and positive life choices and to adopt a drug-free lifestyle by providing appropriate modules in health education.
- (d) To promote a collective and individual responsibility and shared ownership amongst pupils, school staff and parents to maintain the School free of drugs.
- (e) To make explicit the School's expectations regarding substance abuse and the procedures for dealing with any breach of those expectations.

#### **5. Definitions**

- (a) **A drug is any legal or illegal substance** which when introduced into the body has a mind or mood altering effect, creates a change of perception and/or how the body functions.
- (b) **Drug paraphernalia** is any item or items, which may be used in association with a drug as defined above to produce the effects described.
- (c) **Substance abuse** is any act of possession, supply or use of drugs or drug paraphernalia.
- (d) **A reasonable suspicion** is a suspicion backed by evidence such as statements or comments made by other persons, graffiti advocating drug use or behaviour consistent with substance abuse.

#### **6. Content of Policy**

This policy is divided into three sections as follows :

##### **I. Education concerning substance abuse**

##### **II. Management of substance abuse allegations/incidents**

##### **III. Provision of training for staff development**

## **I. Education Concerning Substance Abuse**

Davitt College is a **Health Promoting School**. It seeks deliberately to promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and to provide education for them, in consultation with their Parents/Guardians. The School will provide **education for students and in-service for staff** in areas relating to healthy living and substance abuse.

The School will also arrange relevant talks for Parents/Guardians from time to time. In particular the School has introduced and promotes the S.P.H.E. programme. The School will provide appropriate health education modules at senior cycle also.

Outside speakers with appropriate knowledge and experience in the area will be invited to address groups of students from time to time, normally in the presence of their teachers. These will include the Gardai, Local Drugs Task Force, C.N.Y.P, I.S.P.C.C. and other community services.

## **II. Management of Substance Abuse Allegations/Incidents**

In the event of an abuse incident the School will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the School Community as a whole and the reputation of the School.

### **General Rules**

- (a) **Possession of**, use of, **supply** of and offering to supply, drugs or drug paraphernalia in the school, on school trips or in non-school time by any member of the school community is strictly prohibited.
- (b) Students who are in **possession of prescription drugs** should ensure that they carry prescriptions or a note from his/her Parents/Guardians referring to same. In the case of a student who requires medication on an ongoing basis, Parents/Guardians must **inform the School in writing** at the time of enrolment of this. Parents/Guardians must ensure that the School is kept fully informed of the medical needs of students and update this information as necessary.
- (c) The School's zero-tolerance approach to substance abuse applies to all incidents regardless of when and where they occur.

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### **Reporting procedures**

- (a) The School is committed to working with staff, parents/guardians, students and community groups in keeping the School free of drugs. Any person who has **information or a reasonable suspicion** that another person or group of persons is engaged in the possession, use or supply of drugs or drug

paraphernalia should inform the Principal/Deputy Principal or a member of staff of their choice, who will inform the Principal/Deputy Principal.

- (b) Any information given to the School Authorities regarding the use of drugs and/or drug paraphernalia will be treated as **confidential** and handled as sensitively as possible.
- (c) Deliberately misleading the School Authorities will be treated as a serious breach of the School Code of Behaviour.

### **Investigation procedures**

- (a) Teachers will **note and date any evidence** of possible substance abuse, including comments made by students in class, comments of other students, behaviour, graffiti advocating substance abuse etc.
- (b) The Principal, Deputy Principal or appropriate Year Head will investigate all allegations of substance abuse. As part of any investigation students may be requested to give a written statement outlining their knowledge of any given incident or allegations.
- (c) The School will maintain a **written record** of all stages of the investigation.
- (d) Where, as a result of any investigation, it is appropriate that disciplinary measures be utilised the Code of Behaviour will be applied. As in all instances in which the Code of Behaviour is applied, the student concerned and his/her Parents/Guardians will be afforded every reasonable opportunity to respond to the matters at issue. **The Principal may suspend a student with immediate effect in the following circumstances specified in the Code of Behaviour :**
  - (i) Where he or she considers that the student's behaviour is a threat to the safety, welfare and/or property of other members of the school community.
  - (ii) Where he or she considers that suspension of the student is necessary to maintain discipline within the school.
  - (iii) Where the student is guilty of serious misbehaviour as defined elsewhere in the Code of Behaviour
- (e) Where, as part of an investigation into alleged substance abuse, it is necessary to apply a **search procedure** the following procedure will be applied :
  - i. **Under no circumstances will staff attempt to effect a search of the person or property of a student.**
  - ii. **Parents/Guardians** of the student will be contacted and requested to come to the School. Pending arrival of a Parent/Guardian the

student will be kept under permanent supervision by school staff in an appropriate place.

- iii. When Parents/Guardians have arrived the student will once again be requested to permit a search of his/her property and/or to give up possession of the suspect material in the presence of the Principal/Deputy Principal, another adult nominated by the Principal/Deputy Principal and the student's Parents/Guardians.
  - iv. If the student continues to **refuse** to permit a search of his/her property and or to **voluntarily** give up possession of the suspect material the **Garda Síochána** will be contacted. The student and his/her Parents/Guardians will be requested to remain at the School pending the arrival of the Garda Síochána.
  - v. The School may also contact the Garda Síochána in the event that the student's Parents/Guardians are unable to come to the School within a reasonable period of time from being requested to do so.
- (f) Any reasonable suspicion that a student or young person visiting or involved in the School is or has been involved in substance abuse will be brought to the attention of that student's Parent/Guardians, notwithstanding the outcome of investigations by the School.

### **Managing Incidents of Substance Use**

Where students are found in possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia or under the influence of drugs the following procedures will apply :

#### **Smoking**

- (a) Students in possession of tobacco or tobacco related items on school property or while engaged in school activities may have the **offending substance or item confiscated.**
- (b) Appropriate disciplinary measures will be implemented in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
- (c) **Parents/Guardians will be informed and a full written record of the incident will be kept**

#### **Alcohol**

- (a) Where alcohol is found on school property or in the possession of students while engaged in a school activity the following procedure will apply :
  - i. Students in possession of alcohol on school property or while engaged in school activity will have the **offending substance confiscated.**

- ii. The Principal/Deputy Principal will be informed.
  - iii. **Parents/Guardians** of students concerned will be contacted.
  - iv. The student will be referred to the **Care Team** and to appropriate support groups.
  - v. Appropriate disciplinary measures will be implemented in accordance with the **Code of Behaviour**.
  - vi. A full written record of the incident will be kept
- (b) Where students are found under the influence of alcohol while on school grounds or engaging in a school activity the following procedure will apply :
- i. Medical assistance will be sought immediately.
  - ii. Staff will assess whether first aid is necessary and if so provide first aid.
  - iii. If the incident occurs on school grounds and the School Office is open the students concerned will be brought to the Office for supervision. Otherwise students will be placed under **supervision by staff** in an appropriate place, depending on when and where the incident occurs.
  - iv. **All of the measures specified above** with regard to students found in possession of alcohol may be implemented.
  - v. Appropriate disciplinary measures will be implemented in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.

### **Other Substance Abuse**

- (a) Where students are found under the influence of other drugs or in possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia the following procedure will apply :
- i. Medical assistance will be sought immediately.
  - ii. Staff will assess whether first aid is necessary and if so provide first aid.
  - iii. **The Principal/Deputy Principal** will be informed.
  - iv. **Parents/Guardians** of the students concerned will be informed.
  - v. Members of the Care Team will be informed and the student(s) concerned may be referred to appropriate support groups.

- vi. **The Garda Síochána** will be informed.
- vii. Appropriate disciplinary measures will be implemented in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
- ix. A full written record of the incident will be kept.

The School will investigate fully all incidents of substance abuse following the implementation of the above procedures.

### **Pastoral Approach**

The School's approach to tackling the issue of substance abuse is based on the fundamental principle that the School **acts *in loco parentis*** – that the primary concern must be the well-being and safety of all students in the School.

The School will, in the first instance, make efforts to assist in the rehabilitation of students who engage in substance abuse. **Students who have engaged in substance abuse may be required to attend counselling and/or provide evidence by testing that they no longer so engage as a condition of their continued participation in the School.** However, substance abuse is regarded as extremely serious and the School reserves the right to react appropriately and in accordance with the Code of Behaviour in terms of disciplinary sanctions which may be imposed, including suspension and/or expulsion from the School.

Where a reasonable suspicion arises that *any* person is or has been engaged in substance abuse, that suspicion will be reported to an Garda Síochána. The School will liaise with other outside agencies as appropriate.

### **External Legal Proceedings**

Where students are the subject of legal proceedings relating to alcohol, drugs and/or drug paraphernalia, the School **may suspend students concerned or otherwise restrict their participation in the School in accordance with the School Code of Behaviour pending resolution of legal proceedings.**

On the resolution of legal proceedings as described above sanctions may be imposed in accordance with the School Code of Behaviour.

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

The School is also committed to providing training for staff in related areas. **Teachers of SPHE are/will be supported by the SPHE support service.** They will be asked to identify their training needs from time to time and the School, through the Co-ordinator of the SPHE programme, will take steps to provide for same. Whole-staff training will also be provided from time to time. The School will liaise with support agencies including the H.S.E. as appropriate.

This policy will be reviewed every two years.

This policy was approved by the Davitt College Board of Management on:

**Signed:**        *Cllr. Blackie Gavin*  
                         **Chairperson of the Board of Management**

**Date:**         9<sup>th</sup> May 2017