

Coláiste Ghobnait Inis Oírr



Substance Use Policy 2023/2024

Adopted by the Board of Management on ??/??/20??

Approved by Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETB) on
??/??/20??

This policy has been prepared in consultation with Parents, Students, Staff, The Board of
Management and GRETB

THIS POLICY APPLIES TO:

Pupils, School Staff, Parents, the school's Board of Management as well as Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission at Coláiste Ghobnait is to encourage the educational, intellectual, physical and cultural development of the school's students in a pleasant and healthy environment that prioritises the self-esteem, independence and development of all members of the school community.

SCHOOL VISION

"Growing and learning together diligently through the medium of Irish, in which balance, respect for well-being and integrity are given priority, with the spirit of co-operation among the whole school community."

ETHOS

Introduction

Coláiste Ghobnait is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance use. It is vitally important that parents/guardians work actively, in association with the school, in safeguarding the health and safety of their children.

In this policy, a “drug” means any substance which alters the way the body functions – mentally, physically and emotionally. The school recognises that drugs, both legal and illegal, are available in the local community and that the school, as part of that community, has an important role in the education, prevention, support and the handling of drug related incidents.

The National Drugs Strategy sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government Departments and Agencies, in combating the serious problem of drug abuse in our society. The strategy, which is Government policy, highlights the important contribution schools can provide in the area of education and prevention and requires them to have a substance use policy in place.

Due to the easy availability of substances in our society the school needs to develop a substance abuse educational policy. The aim of the policy is to provide our students with information, skills and the appropriate mindset in a society focused on substance abuse and ensure that clear Rules are laid down to respond to cases of substance abuse.

Young people face many challenges in today’s world which affect their health and well-being. Coláiste Ghobnait endeavours to respond to the needs of our students so that they will be in a position to make the best decisions in relation to their health and their personal and social lives.

The Gardaí will be contacted immediately in all events relating to illegal substance abuse of a criminal nature as they are in charge of enquiries of a criminal nature.

If any member of the school staff come upon any substance in the school environment they will inform the Principal and the Principal will contact the Gardaí. The substance will be stored in a box. It will be labelled and the date and time written on the outside. It will be kept under lock until the Gardaí arrive.

Rationale

Why is it necessary to have a Substance Use Policy?

- To ensure students get a broad education on substance abuse
- Coláiste Ghobnait fully complies with and follows the National Drugs Strategy in line with the requirements it places on schools
- The 1998 Education Act requires schools to promote the personal and social development of students and provide them with health education.

Policy material

The intention is to provide the students with information on drug use whilst also placing emphasis on a healthy lifestyle. The students will also get appropriate information, views and skills thus enabling the making of responsible choices in the future on the temptation of drugs, as well as information on the dangers associated with illegal and dangerous substances, and emphasis will be placed on healthy lifestyles.

Events relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco on the school premises or during school related

activities

- Intoxication/Unusual behaviour
- Disclosures about use
- Locating these substances and/or other associated paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply of these substances on school premises or during school related activities
- Other.

Implementation of the Policy

As stated in the School's mission statement, Coláiste Ghobnait is committed to enabling students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural and physical potential. The school is also committed to fostering the development of personal responsibility.

- The school does not condone the possession of illegal drugs by any member of the school community, or the use or supply of illegal drugs by any member of the school community, in the school, during activities outside of school or outside of school time
- The school does not condone the possession or supply of alcohol or tobacco by any student in the school while in the school environment
- No student or teacher may give another student either a prescribed or an "over the counter" medicine
- Chemicals in school laboratories will be kept under lock. Students will only handle or use such substances under the teacher's supervision
- Students and everyone else who uses the school building or the yard are prohibited from being under the influence of illegal substances or having them in their possession
- If an incident occurs involving the use of illegal drugs, it is school policy to respond in a fair and strict manner, taking into consideration the health and safety of the person/persons involved as well as that of the whole school community. The school will make an effort to handle such an event discreetly and sensitively while complying with any legal responsibilities (i.e. informing the Gardaí)
- Smoking is prohibited in the school, in the school environment and at events (i.e. trips) organized by the school for the students
- Students are prohibited from possessing alcohol or consuming alcohol in school or during school events
- Students, both in school and at school events, are forbidden from possessing or using illegal substances or any other substances which could be harmful to their health.

The policy focuses on the following key areas:

1. Educational Programmes on Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs

The school is committed to the provision of an Educational Programme on Alcohol, Tobacco and Drugs for all students. Our educational objectives are as follows:

- Increase the self-esteem and self-confidence of our students
- Equip our students with personal and social skills
- Enable our students to make informed, healthy and responsible decisions
- Provide clear, age appropriate information on drugs
- Minimize harm caused by drug abuse by offering supportive interventions
- Two SPHE classes weekly for Years 1, 2 and 3. One class for Years 4, 5 and 6
- Where relevant external speakers will be asked to reinforce the work done in class
- Parents/Guardians will be consulted on the need for drug related education and told what is taking place in the school.

2. Managing events related to Drugs, Tobacco and Alcohol

In all drug related instances we recognize the need for balance between the needs of the student, the

needs of the school community, the good reputation of the school and legal issues.

- Take time to listen and assess before responding to the event
- Separate facts from rumours
- In instances where use or supply of drugs is confirmed, all details must be recorded and action taken
- The drug related incident report must be completed at that point
- Media – while enquires are taking place the school will not issue any statements to do with any individual person, but will comply with crisis management policies and guidance. (See Crisis Management Policy)
- Only a limited number of people will be involved in any drug related incident, whether it's a confirmed or suspected case
- People will be informed as necessary
- All written records will be in the hands of the Principal or Deputy Principal and will be confidential
- Parents/Guardians will be informed in a sympathetic manner and will be provided with support
- The Principal or Deputy Principal will contact the Gardaí in instances of illegal drugs and any drugs found will be dealt with by the Gardaí
- If a student has a problem, referral will be recommended
- Support will be provided for Parents/Guardians, staff members and other students involved with the incident
- Confidentiality is a complex issue. It is important to discuss the limits of confidentiality with the students prior to the disclosure of any information. The main focus will be on the wellbeing and welfare of the student and teacher
- In the case of a serious incident the Board of Management and/or the Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board will be informed.

Administration and Use of Medicine

Where a student has to take medicine regularly the parents/guardians have to let the school know in advance.

Parents have to send a written letter to the school Principal stating:

1. Student's Name
2. The name of the medicine and the dosage
3. Whether the student is responsible for their own medicine
4. If a teacher has to administer the medicine a written consent from the parent is required
5. Contact details for Parent/Guardian.

The Board of Management implores parents/guardians to inform the Principal and Deputy Principal in writing of any health problems affecting a student.

Searching

- School Management have the right to search the whole school if they suspect that there are illegal substances in the school. The student will be given an opportunity to hand up the substance voluntarily
- If there is reason to believe a student has an illegal substance in their possession the student will be asked to hand it up voluntarily. If the student refuses Gardaí may be called to conduct the search. Two members of the school's staff must be present while a search of any kind is taking place.

Disciplinary Process

Drug related incidents are complex and when the school's rules regarding drugs are broken sanctions will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence. These sanctions will be consistent with school rules (see Code of Behaviour).

3. Staff Training and Development

- Training and Development for the school community
- The Board of Management will be provided with the relevant information relating to any investigation or incident that occurs
- Specific training will be available for relevant teachers
- Any resource material received by school management will be forwarded to the teacher by the school
- The school will facilitate training for staff members involved in SPHE programmes
- Parents/Guardians
 - Coláiste Ghobnait advises the Parents' Committee to organize a guest speaker to provide parents with information on drugs
 - Where a student is involved in drug abuse the parents/guardians will be made aware of this as soon as possible as their support will be required. Parents/Guardians will be invited to the school to discuss the issue and the student will be informed of this. Parents/Guardians requesting more support will be provided with information on available services
 - Parents/Guardians are encouraged to contact the school if their child has any concerns about substance abuse
 - Parents/Guardians are asked to fully support and co-operate with the school if an incident occurs.
- Regular First Aid training will be provided for staff
- Through regular in-service training teachers are given drug awareness training, SPHE training and any other relevant training.

4. Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed regularly and as required. These areas will be evaluated: Educational programmes on drug prevention

- Management of drug related incidences
- Staff Training and Development.

Evaluation

Teachers, Parents/Guardians, Students and the Board of Management will be involved in the evaluation of this policy.

Dissemination of Policy

Copies of this policy will be distributed to all of the school's community.