

# **Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín**

## **Polasaí i leith substaintí a úsáid**

Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín



An Áthaslann  
Sráid na hEaglaise  
Baile Brigín  
Co Bhaile Átha Cliath

## Substance Use Policy

### Introduction

This document is the Substance Use Policy of Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín.

### Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín Ethos

Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín (GSBB) is a National School located in Balbriggan, Co. Dublin.

Our vision at Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín is to create a positive, happy, open learning environment, where every child's individuality is celebrated, encouraged and nurtured.

As a Gaelscoil, we foster a love and understanding of the Irish Language, culture and traditions. Irish is the language of the school and is promoted in a positive way throughout the whole community.

Parents, as partners and stakeholders in education, are welcomed and encouraged to participate openly in all aspects of school life.

This policy attempts to reinforce those ideals through -

1. providing a safe and healthy environment for our children and
2. promoting health awareness among our children and
3. promoting respect and self-esteem in our children and
4. working in partnership with parents and pupils

## Why do we need a policy on Substance Use?

The world in which we live presents children with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs is part of this reality. GSBB needs to reflect on how we can provide for the needs of our students and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

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',<sup>1</sup> is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.

Ireland has the second highest per capita consumption of alcohol in the E.U, being the dominant drug of misuse.

This policy sets out, in writing, the framework within which the GSBB School Community manages issues related to substance use.

This Policy is a '**Living Document**', initially developed out of a series of sessions held with teaching staff (Clodagh and Ríona), parents (Lisa de Nais, Barbara Rooney and Jeff Cathcart), representatives from the Board of Management (Michéal Mac Mathúna, Jeff and Lisa), then to be updated as required over time. Changes to the document should be ratified as required by the GSBB Board of Management. GSBB acknowledges and appreciates the valuable assistance being provided by professionals from the Health Services Executive – Ursula Smith from the Walk Tall programme and Bernie Maguire, the Education Officer in formulating our Substance Use Policy.

As a living document it will continue. It reflects the unique ethos of the school and aim to develop a shared understanding of the term 'drug'

## What is a drug?

A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels. Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín does not differentiate here between legal and illegal drugs.

## Aims and Objectives

In addition to providing and promoting secure environments, respect and health awareness, GSBB strives towards raising awareness of substance abuse amongst the student population

---

<sup>1</sup> Building on Experience – National Drugs Strategy 2001–2008; Department of Tourism, Sport & Recreational, 2001 Available <http://www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie>

We need to develop a framework for education relating to substance use and for the management of incidents that may arise.

We need to provide adequate staff training and development using appropriate outside expertise to ensure early detection of possible substance use. Also where appropriate and possible, training and information sessions will be provided for the parent body.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

- a) The Principal has overall responsibility for the implementation of policy
- b) The class teachers have responsibility for the delivery of the S.P.H.E programme
- c) Parents should engage in the formulation and support of the school policy either directly or through their association and representatives on GSBB Board of Management. The primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with parents
- d) The Board is responsible for all issues relating to Health and Safety in the school
- e) This policy applies to all members of the school community – students, teachers, parents, board members and visitors, when in school or at any school-related activities eg school tour, organised by the school and by Coiste na dTuistí, at which children are present.

## **Internal School Provision/Education Concerning Substance Abuse**

The S.P.H.E curricular programme provides the cornerstone of the school's internal provision. Within the broad context of S.P.H.E, specific programmes such as Walk Tall, Alive O, RSE and Stay Safe are used.

The Walk Tall programme will specifically be used as the timetabled education programme which will be delivered to all students by teachers.

Outside speakers can be used at the discretion of the class teacher, principal and with permission from the Board of Management.(see below for conditions regarding outside speakers)

### **Best Practice**

- All prevention education programmes should be based on proven theory and research (as is the Walk Tall Programme)
- Any information must be factually accurate and credible
- Clear, measurable objectives should be outlined for every programme
- Follow up can enhance the effectiveness and durability of programme outcomes

- One approach will not meet all needs – here the book “Making the Link” should be consulted re integrating all aspects of the SPHE programme
- Programmes should be age and developmentally appropriate
- Prevention education should be culturally sensitive
- A partnership approach between the school, the parents and the wider community should be promoted
- The Walk Tall programme is to be taught by the class teacher
- Education programmes such as the Walk Tall are a timetabled subject and are to be taught within the context of SPHE (again check book Making the Link)
- See below for criteria re guest speakers.

## Guest Speakers

The policy welcomes guest speakers on issues relating to substance use. All guest speakers will work under the following parameters –

- a) The teacher must be present during the talks – the aim of the guest speaker should be to complement the class teacher, not to replace him/her.
- b) The speaker must come with a recommendation from other Principals or relevant professional organisations.
- c) The speaker must have an understanding of the level of maturity of the children
- d) The speaker will be conscious of the fact that a sizeable percentage of parents smoke and drink and will keep this in mind during all interactions with children
- e) The class teacher will be aware of content of talk before the talk takes place to ensure it's suitability.
- f) The principal/class teacher will check training/suitability of speaker
- g) It is vital to ensure before any guest speaker is employed, that the content of the speech is in adherence to the ethos of the school.

The Committee has spoken about the importance of ongoing education in this area. The use of guest speakers is therefore, to be strictly monitored, as once-off talks can lead to sensationalism and inappropriate highlighting of the subject matter. Therefore, the onus is on the class teacher to ensure that there is ongoing, age and developmentally appropriate education being provided in this area.

## **Management of Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-related incidents**

### **Tobacco**

Gaelscoil Bhaile Brigín is a restricted smoking area. Visitors must comply with the restricted smoking policy. Students found smoking on the school premises will be reported to the Principal by the teacher and parents will be informed. The child will be dealt with according to the schools disciplinary procedures. All incidents will be recorded and a report will be logged. Teachers, parents and visitors are also prohibited from smoking on school grounds.

### **Alcohol**

Students are forbidden to bring or consume alcohol on the school premises or during out of school activities. If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence the teacher will talk to and listen to the child in question, assess the situation and then inform the Principal who will decide on what action is required, which will involve contacting parents / guardians. The child will be dealt with as per the school Code of Discipline. Any person with responsibility for children should not be under the influence of alcohol.

### **Drugs and Solvents**

Students are forbidden from being in possession of, using or supplying illicit drugs or solvents on the school premises. The school will endeavour to strike a balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response should an incident occur and support agencies are available to the school should the need arise. An example of such pastoral response would be that of referral to a support agency. It should be stressed here that the ultimate sanction of expulsion can have the effect of alienating a student from mainstream sources of help and may result in this student becoming more involved in the culture of drug misuse.

These support agencies include –

- Health Service Executive
- Family Doctor
- Social Worker
- Gardaí
- Clergy
- Education Welfare Office
- Junior Liaison Officer
- Teachers

- Pharmacist

It is the policy of the GSBB to contact the Gardaí when drugs are found on the school premises. Where there is disclosure, investigation will be left in the hands of the Gardaí. Where there is no disclosure, a meeting with concerned parties will be convened if deemed appropriate. Parents will always be contacted in individual cases. If medical intervention is required a designated teacher will monitor the student until a doctor and/or an ambulance arrives.

Illicit drugs/solvents found on the school premises will be stored in the office under lock and key until handed over to Gardaí.

### **Confidentiality:**

All substance use related incidents will be dealt with in strict confidence.

The Board of Management will not entertain any media enquiries in the event of an issue of national concern occurring on the school premises. There is absolutely no onus on the Principal to deliver a statement on behalf of the school unless the B.O.M, in consultation with the Principal and staff consider it appropriate to do so.

At the discretion of principal and staff, educational programmes can be used to deal with specific incidents, while respecting the confidentiality of individuals.

### **Training and Staff Development**

The school is assisted in professional development by the Primary Curriculum Support Programme (P.C.S.P), the School Development Planning Support (S.D.P.S), the Health Service Executive (H.S.E), the Walk Tall Support Office, the local Gardaí and the S.P.H.E programme.

Where appropriate and possible, training for parents will be provided eg talks, sharing of information re courses etc.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review:**

GSBB will monitor, evaluate and review the policy under the following headings:

- (1) Monitoring of behaviour in classrooms, corridor, yard, and on out of school activities
- (2) by taking appropriate intervention when an incident occurs
- (3) by openness in discussing issues relating to substance use

- (4) by positive feedback from all stakeholders
- (5) by ensuring programmes are active and life in the classroom.

### **Implementation:**

The policy will be ratified on ratification at the June 07 Board of Management and will be implemented from September 2007.

### **Ratification and Review**

The Board of Management approved the Substance Use Policy in June 07 and will review in line with SPHE whole school plan review, or should any incident make such a review necessary.

### **Dissemination**

A summary version will be circulated to all parents in September 07. The summary version will be circulated to all new families every Sept., or as appropriate.

### **Resources**

- Walk Tall
- Understanding Drugs (Health Promotion Unit)
- Stay Safe
- National Advisory Committee on Drugs
- Building on Experience (National Drugs Strategy) E.S.P.A.D (1999)
- S.P.H.E. Curriculum Strands
- Child Protection Guidelines for Primary School (NCCA 1999)
- “On My Own Two Feet” – SPHE guidelines, DES.
- “Drug Use Prevention” – [www.nacd.ie](http://www.nacd.ie)
  - Understanding Substances and Substance Use
  - Information provided by Balbriggan Awareness of Drugs (Parent-to-Parent information

**Questions to be discussed and outstanding issues to clarify:**

- 1) Reporting procedures of drug-related incidents
- 2) Addressing of incidents - see above - and elaboration required
- 3) Involving parents in incidents re own child
- 4) Involving parents in incidents re other children -ie confidentiality
- 5) Do we put in responses to sample issues eg list of sample questions from last meeting - eg a pupil is caught smoking in toilets/a child showing signs of drug use etc

