**Ardscoil Rís policy on substance abuse.**

**Mission statement.**

In line with the school mission statement, Ardscoil Rís is committed to the maintenance of an environment that is free from substance abuse

For the purpose of this policy, ‘substance’ includes, alcohol, tobacco, medications (prescribed and non-prescribed), illegal drugs ( hereinafter referred to as ‘controlled drugs’ ) and other substances intended for abuse.

A controlled drug is any substance is set out in the schedule to the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 as amended.

**Rationale for policy.**

‘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. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues’. (DES Guidelines)

Alcohol and tobacco are both drugs. Nicotine is a stimulant and is very addictive. While alcohol is seen as a stimulant in social settings, it is in fact a depressant and is also addictive.

Controlled drugs cause emotional, psychological and social problems as well as physical illness. A drug is any substance other than food that alters how a person thinks, feels or acts. (HSE)

**Objectives of policy.**

* The welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
* The education of staff and students concerning substance abuse.
* The procedure for managing incidents relating to these substances.

The policy is designed primarily to educate and protect and is to be seen as part of a more general pastoral effort by the school to ensure the well-being and Christian formation of our students.

**Ardscoil Rís policy on substance abuse**.

Ardscoil Rís does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, sale or supply of any “substances”, by students, in the school, on school tours and outings or during any school related activity.

There is an exception made for the use of prescribed medications by a student when the school has been notified in writing by the parent/guardian of that student.

**Main elements of the school policy.**

1. Education of staff and students concerning substance abuse.
2. Promoting positive strategies for healthy living.
3. Monitoring of the school environment.
4. Intervention in cases of
5. Suspected/known substance abuse and/or substance possession

in or out of school.

1. Intervention in cases of sale/supply of substances in or out

of school.

1. The school and parents.
2. Communication with media
3. **Education.**

The school, within the limited resources available to it, will provide education programmes for all its students on the subject of substance abuse.

**Staff.**

To assist staff in recognising illegal substances and to identify the symptoms of substance abuse by students, specialised training will be provided. This training will be provided to staff by outside agencies and those members of staff who undergo this training will receive funding towards their related expenses.

This policy offers guidelines to staff in the event of controlled drugs being found in the possession of students in the school.

**Students**

In line with the Civic, Social and Personal Education (CSPE), Religious Education (RE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programmes, students will be made aware of the dangers of “substance” abuse, which includes alcohol and tobacco. They will be encouraged to assess the potential risk for themselves and the long term effects of illegal substances and controlled drugs.

Resources will be made available to teachers for these programmes.

From time to time outside expertise will be made available to address students on these matters.

**Parents.**

In liaison with the Parent’s Council, expertise will be made available to parents to enable them fulfil their role in informing and educating their children of the dangers of substance abuse and encouraging them in health lifestyles.

1. **Positive strategies for healthy living.**

The programmes of physical education, religious education, Civic, Social and Personal Education (CSPE), and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) promote personal development in students and encourage them to be positive towards their studies, their ambitions for their future, their hobbies and pastimes and to participate in sport.

The very positive and supportive attitude towards extracurricular activities in our school is helpful in encouraging students to avoid harmful substances and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Affirming good behaviour and concern for others is also very beneficial in promoting positive strategies for healthy living.

1. **Monitoring.**

Staff will be alert to harmful substances in the possession of students as well being alert to signs of substance abuse amongst students. Consideration may be given to confidential polling of the students themselves on the topic of substance abuse. This may form part of SPHE, CSPE, TY or RE classes.

1. **Intervention in cases of substance abuse inside and outside the school.**

In the event of a substance abuse incident occurring, Ardscoil Rís will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student/s involved, the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

* 1. **Intervention in cases of suspected/known substance abuse and/or substance possession in or out of school.**

1. The teacher who suspects that a student is abusing a substance, should notify the Principal/Deputy Principal (P/DP) as soon as possible. In such instances the duty of teachers and staff to the school community precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any student.
2. Where a student is suspected by a teacher of being in possession of a ‘substance’, the Principal/Deputy Principal will be notified immediately. The student should then be kept under the direct supervision of two adults. A reasonable effort should be made to recover the substance concerned. The decision to notify the Gardai in such cases rests with the Principal/Deputy Principal. The parent/guardian of the student should be notified and required to attend the school immediately.
3. Liaising with parents in respect of substance abuse issues is the responsibility of the Principal/Deputy Principal who may request a teacher to be present at any interview with the parents.
4. Medical help must be sought by parents of a student in this situation. Students will be suspended until they are placed under appropriate medical care which may include counselling by an appropriately qualified counsellor. A written medical report stating that substance abuse by the student has ceased will be required before a student is readmitted to school. Parents will be required to submit regular medical notes, confirming that the student is continuing with counselling sessions, when required. Counsellors will determine when treatment will terminate and the school will be so informed by them.
5. Failure to provide a satisfactory medical report to the school authorities will result in the matter being referred to by the BOM for consideration.
6. The school will take all steps required to fully investigate and assess any incident of substance abuse. These investigations should be completed as soon as practicable.
7. Any substance or drug paraphernalia associated with an incident of substance abuse will be taken possession of and given to the Principal/Deputy Principal for safe keeping. A suitable record will be maintained in this regard.
8. In the event of an incident of substance abuse occurring inside or outside of the school, on a school tour, an outing, during any school related activity or within school hours, the Principal/Deputy Principal will initiate an investigation.
   1. **Intervention in cases of sale/supply of substances in or out of school.**
9. Where there is an immediate danger to students or the school community, the school is obliged to take all reasonable steps to address this threat. A student suspected of being engaged in or having been engaged in the sale or supply of controlled drugs, will be suspended from the school, pending the outcome of enquiries and the Board of Management will be informed of the matter.
10. Where it is established that a student was in possession of controlled drugs, inside or outside of the school, for the purpose of sale or supply, this will be regarded as a serious disciplinary breach, the sanction for which includes expulsion from the school.
11. When a student is suspected of having been engaged in the supply or sale of controlled drugs the Principal/Deputy Principal must also notify the Gardaí.
12. As part of the investigation, the Principal/Deputy Principal will put the full particulars of the incident to the student and parent/s. The student and parent/s will be afforded the opportunity to be heard, to reply and make submissions in respect of the matter under investigation. Parent/ will be afforded a reasonable period of time to visit the school and discuss the matter. The school will take into account any response and any other extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the case.
13. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation including the outcome, decisions taken and reasons for same and sanctions imposed, if any. If an appeal is lodged, a similar record of the process and outcome will be kept. Parents and students will be informed of their right to appeal the decision of a disciplinary enquiry.
14. Where, following investigation, a student is found to have contravened school policy regarding substance abuse, the Principal may impose disciplinary sanctions including an oral warning, a written warning or suspension. If the Principal considers expulsion to be the appropriate sanction, he will refer the matter to the Board of management for their consideration.
15. In all cases, the school offers whatever Pastoral Support it has at its disposal, to parents and students affected by an incident of substance abuse.
16. **The School and Parents.**

The school has a duty to students, staff and parents, to provide a safe environment. Parents have a duty to co-operate with the school in its efforts to provide such an environment. Where an individual student is considered to be putting the safety and well-being of other students in jeopardy, the school authorities are obliged to take appropriate measures to protect others.

1. **Media Enquiries.**

School authorities will not comment on any individual matter during the course of an investigation other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing such incidents. In the interest of the school’s reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school’s position regarding an incident on the conclusion of the investigation and determination of sanction, where applicable. All communications with the media in this regard will be the responsibility of the Principal/Deputy Principal.

**Monitoring, Reviewing and evaluating the policy.**

The Board of Management will regularly monitor, review and evaluate this policy and related procedures to ensure compliance with legal obligations and best practice

This policy was approved by the board of management of Ardscoil Rís on the …1st Oct 2013

Signed on behalf of the board of management…Martin Duggan