



CARLOW VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

KILKENNY ROAD
CARLOW

Student Support Policy – Alcohol, Drugs and Solvent Abuse / Misuse

Scope

This policy sets out the framework within which Carlow Vocational School issues relating to alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse. All students have a personal responsibility to present themselves for school in a manner fit to perform their studies. Our objective is the welfare, care and protection of each student of the school.

The policy addresses two major areas

1. The education we will provide to students relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs
2. The management of incidents that relate to these substances.

The term ‘alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse’ is defined in the broadest possible terms, to include alcohol, tobacco, legal / illegal drugs, over the counter / prescription medicines and other dangerous or mind / mood altering substances.

This policy is applied in conjunction with our Code of Conduct policy.

Although this policy primarily addresses alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse in respect of our students, the policy also applies to all teaching and other staff, parents / guardians and others, insofar as the policy may relate to them. The policy will apply during school-time and to all school related trips and activities, whether occurring inside or outside normal school hours.

Relationship to the School’s Mission / Vision / Aims

This policy derives from the Mission Statement of Carlow Vocational School and is directly linked to its aim, in particular our aim to treat every person equally and to help all students to achieve their full potential at the school.

Carlow Vocational School believes that the Personal and Social Development of each member of the school community is important. Education flourishes in an environment

where good relationships are encouraged, where people feel valued and respected and where there is genuine tolerance, fairness and support for those in difficulty. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work we do and is central to this policy document.

Rationale

- 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. Carlow Vocational School has reflected upon how it might provide for the needs of the student cohort 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.
- Government policy as set forth in the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008, highlights the important contribution that schools can make in the area of education and prevention, and requires them to have substance use policies in place.
- The Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools, Section VI, states that all schools should be actively engaged in the process of developing and agreeing a Substance Use Policy in line with action 43 of the National Drugs Strategy and DES guidelines as set forth in Circular Letter 18/02.

Goals

- To provide a safe learning and teaching environment for all our students and staff.
- To provide a comprehensive programme for all our students in alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse issues.
- To ensure that the Carlow Vocational School / Carlow Institute of Further Education deals with incidents relating to alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse in a planned and considered way and in accordance with our statutory responsibilities.
- To manage incidents of alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse in a clear and consistent manner.
- To contribute to local and national strategies in relation to alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse education and prevention.
- To minimise the dangers to our young people caused by alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse within our community.
- To support our parents and pupils in understanding and addressing alcohol, drugs and solvent abuse / misuse.

Policy Content

Carlow Vocational School does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia by any student or staff member, in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school related activity.

No medicines will be administered by the staff of the school to any student.

The Student Support Policy – Alcohol, Drugs and Solvent Abuse / Misuse is divided into three sections.

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes.
2. Managing Drug Related Incidents.
3. Training and Staff Development.

1. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

The School Position

Carlow Vocational School is committed to providing a comprehensive and timetabled alcohol, tobacco and drug education programme for all students, which will be incorporated into the Social, Personal and Health Education Programme currently running in the school.

Our educational aims in relation to Drug Education are as follows.

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of the students.
- To equip students with personal and social skills.
- To enable students to make informed, healthy and responsible choices.
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs.
- To minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions/referral.

These aims will be met through the following actions.

- All teachers involved in SPHE will be given the opportunity to avail of training in group facilitation skills and personal development.
- Staff teaching the Drug Education Programmes will be given the opportunity to avail of training from the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health and Children.
- All school staff will be offered, where practicable and relevant, Drug Information and Drug Awareness training.

Outside Speakers

We believe that trained teachers particularly in S.P.H.E. are in the best position to carry out drug education but sometimes it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in the class.

Parents / Guardians

Parents / Guardians will be made aware and informed of what is happening in the school with regard to drug education. This will happen on a yearly basis. Parents will also be consulted regularly on the need for drug education and where practicable community courses will be facilitated to meet these demands by the school.

2. Managing Drug Related Incidents

The School Approach

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the young person, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school. The school's Code of Conduct describes how incidents are dealt with and investigated (see Code of Conduct). Disciplinary procedures will be followed if school rules are broken and expulsion will be an option when all else has failed. Procedures are in place to handle specific drug incidents.

Drug Incidents

The following are examples of a drug incident.

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

Assessing a drug incident

In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the students, it will be important to take time to assess the situation before responding. Complete the Incident Report Form for recording incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use.

Recording Procedure

All staff need to be aware of the signs of drug use and alert for changes in behaviour. Adolescence is a period of great change and rumour must not be taken as evidence of drug use.

In situations of confirmed use/possession or supply then all the details will be recorded and acted upon. A written recording procedure will be used. This procedure will ensure that fair process of challenging the student about behaviour of concern is in place.

Managing a drug incident

It is important in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. People will be informed on a 'need to know' basis.

The Principal, Guidance Counsellor and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the school.

Where a member of staff of Carlow Vocational School finds drugs on the premises or in the possession of students while away on any school related / organised activities they have an obligation to take them to the Gardaí. The staff member will take possession of the drugs as soon as possible following the discovery of the drugs. If the drugs are to be destroyed this will be done in front of a reliable witness e.g. another staff member or reliable adult and the students concerned.

Parents

In all cases the school will want to involve the parents / guardians. This needs to be handled sensitively and wherever possible support offered to them. In the first instance, this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor.

Gardaí

It is agreed that the Principal or a designated person will contact the Garda / Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed drug incident and any drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.

Counselling / Pastoral Care

The pastoral care system is our first response to a drug incident. For some young people their involvement with drugs may be masking some underlying difficulties and for others it may be a phase of experimentation, which they will pass through safely.

- In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.
- If the person has a serious drug problem then referral to an appropriate service will be recommended.
- Parents and staff involved in the incident will be offered support.

Disciplinary Procedures

Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the school rules regarding drugs are broken, the sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the offence. These will be consistent with school rules regarding other breaches of conduct (refer to the Code of Conduct Policy).

Confidentiality

Teachers cannot offer total confidentiality to a student who discloses drug involvement. We recognise the need for care in this area as the student may be coming to the teacher because they trust him / her and need help. How this situation is handled will have an important

bearing on the outcome. Information must remain private and only disclosed on a strict 'need to know' basis. The student must be informed about what is happening and why.

The well-being and welfare of the young person and the teacher must be the prime focus. Carlow Vocational School recognises that the issue of confidentiality and its limits are discussed with students before an incident arises. A planned module will be incorporated into the SPHE programme.

Media

The Principal or a nominated spokesperson will handle all media queries. Carlow Vocational 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.

3. Training and Staff Development

We will provide training and staff development where practicable.

Staff

- Carlow Vocational School will endeavour to make available training to staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes.
- All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training on an ongoing basis.
- We will endeavour that training will be made available to key staff in relation to managing drug related incidents.
- We will endeavour to provide First-aid training to staff.

Parents & Board of Management

- Carlow Vocational School will facilitate opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops on issues relating to drugs misuse and these opportunities will be offered as part of the induction course for parents of new students to the school.

Students

- Carlow Vocational School will offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE classes.

Evaluation

Teachers, parents, students, Board of Management members and other relevant groups will be involved in the evaluation of this policy when it has been in place for one year and any changes incorporated into the amended policy.

The three main areas of the policy will evaluate:

1. Drug Education Programmes
2. Managing Drug Related Incidents
3. Parent, Staff and Management Training and courses offered to the school community.

Review

Carlow Vocational School will monitor, review and evaluate this policy and all related procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practice.

Timeframe

This policy was reviewed in October 2013.
Modifications were made and ratified by Board of Management November 2013.
Published and circulated November 2013.

The above Policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Carlow Vocational School / Carlow Institute of Education at a meeting

In: _____ (venue) On: _____ (date)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Secretary, Board of Management)