

ABBAY VOCATIONAL SCHOOL DONEGAL TOWN



Policy on **Drug/Substance Abuse**

This Policy document is divided into seven sections:

1. Introduction
2. School Policy Statement
3. Programmes for Alcohol, Tobacco, volatile Substances and Drug Education
4. Procedures for Managing Alcohol, (Tobacco), Drug Related and Substance Abuse Incidents
5. The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation
6. Training and Development
7. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation
8. Definitions (Appendix)

1. Introduction

The aim of this policy is to educate the students in our care concerning substance abuse and misuse, outline how the school will deal with drug-related incidents and educate the staff by the provision of some training on issues related to substance use/misuse.

This policy applies to the students, teachers, staff, parents/guardians and all users of the school building.

2. School Policy Statement

Abbey Vocational School asserts its right to protect and promote its ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

The school recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and, in particular, alcohol misuse.

The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in Circular 18/02.

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

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

3. Programme for Education in relation to Drugs

Abbey Vocational School, in conjunction with North Western Health Board Social, Personal and Health Education Training Programme, or other recognised authority, will provide knowledge and personal development training to all students to assist them in their ability to make informed decisions in relation to drug use.

Abbey Vocational School, in conjunction with Co Donegal V.E.C., will provide the staff with adequate training to assist and up-skill them in techniques best suited to develop young teenagers in dealing with the pressures they are under to experiment with drugs. This training will be provided in conjunction with the North Western Health Board or other recognised authority.

Parents are asked/expected to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes;
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse;
- Assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist the parents in their role the school will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes (e.g. SPHE, etc.);
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

4. Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Drug-Related and Substance Abuse incidents

When a drug-related incident occurs in Abbey Vocational School, the following procedure will take place:

- (a) The students involved will be interviewed by the Principal or someone designated by him/her;
- (b) Where appropriate the Juvenile Liaison Officer will be informed;
- (c) Depending on the seriousness of the case the Principal, under his/her duty of care, may suspend one or all of those involved and/or recommend that the Board of Management expel a student from the school. (*Appendix 2*)

5. The Involvement & Roles of Various Parties involved in the Incident Investigation

Abbey Vocational School Will immediately inform parents – particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a child – and share any available information that may help parents in attending to their child’s health and well-being and will keep students informed about what is happening and why.

The policy states that the school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident and that it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, it should ensure that students and their parents accept that:

1. The duty of teachers and staff to the school community precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident.
2. The school may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Garda Síochána, Health Board, Probation Service or Officers of the Courts;
3. The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
4. The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations or DES guidelines.

6. Training and Development

Where it is the belief of the school that substance use/abuse has occurred, the Principal may require the students to undergo counselling in relation to drug use/misuse. This may be provided by the school through teachers trained in the area, the Guidance Counsellor or outside professionals. Those who are required to take this will be expected to pay for the counselling. (Appendix 3)

7. Review & Evaluation

The responsibility for drafting and reviewing the drug use /misuse policy will be that of the Principal, Deputy Principal, Guidance Counsellor and others trained in the area of Social, Personal and Health provision.

The policy will be approved by the Board of Management and forwarded to the V.E.C. for analysis by its Legal Advisor and ratification by the committee. The procedures will be reviewed each year and effectiveness adjudged.

The school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. However, it should also make clear that, in the interests of the school's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

8. Definitions

See Appendix 4.

Appendix 1 – Procedures in School

1. The completion of an Abuse Incident Report Form.
2. The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
3. The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
4. In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
5. The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
6. The school, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
7. A statement that if the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
 - (a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the students concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his/her parents – at the discretion of the school – in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
 - (b) The school will allow the student concerned and his/her parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response so made and any other

relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.

- (c) The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his/her parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
8. In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions of short expulsion and expulsion.
 9. The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
 10. The school should also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the student(s) and parents affected by an incident of substance abuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a tutor, counsellor, chaplain, etc., would demonstrate the school's Christian commitment at a time of personal crises.
 11. There will be an acknowledged acceptance for the use of properly prescribed drugs where the school has been informed in writing by the parents/guardians of such drugs.

Appendix 2 – Duties of the Principal

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or his/her nominee) in this regard include the following:

1. The Principal is responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school;
2. All reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal;
3. The Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of an incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation;
4. The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments;
5. The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident;
6. The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice;
7. The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, Year Head and/or Guidance Counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

Appendix 3 – Training & Development

The school will provide training for Staff, Board of Management, Parents and Students.

In relation to staff, the school will:

- Provide training in delivering education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drugs;
- Provide specific training on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of an abuse incident.

In relation to Parents & Board of Management, the school will:

- Provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and Policy;
- Provide appropriate information, guidance and support to the Board regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

In relation to Students, the school will:

- Offer all students programmes relating alcohol, tobacco and drug education within the context of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes.

Appendix 4 – Definitions

The aim of this section is to provide definitions for specific and technical phrases that appear throughout the policy document so that these do not have to be defined within the body of the policy. This approach helps make the main document clearer to a reader and easier to formulate for the school. It also conforms to the guidelines for School Development Planning that a Policy Statement should be “clearly structured, concise and specific and written in jargon-free language”. The following definitions should be highlighted:

The School	The “School” includes school buildings, grounds, play areas, public areas where students congregate coming to and going from school, school buses and any other specific area that might apply.
Banned or Prohibited Substances	This defines what constitutes a banned or prohibited substance and includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. The School reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.
Drug Paraphernalia	This includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances.
An Abuse Incident	This is defined as any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occurs in the School or during school functions or outings or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned, to other students, or to the Policy or reputation of the school. The school reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the Policy.
Parents	Parents are defined to include natural parents, foster parents, step-parents or guardian of the student concerned as applicable or any person acting in loco parents, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of an abuse incident.
Principal	The Principal should be taken to mean the Principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education Welfare Act (2000) or the Deputy Principal where the Principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy Principal.