

SHIMNA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

DRUGS POLICY

This policy is based on the drugs guidance document “Drugs: Guidance for Schools in Northern Ireland,” provided jointly by the CCEA and the Department of Education (DE), DE Circular 2004/9 and the advice to provided by the SEELB.

1. Introduction [See CCEA/DE guidance document pages 1-9]

- **Drugs: a definition**

The term “drugs” includes any substance which, when taken, has the effect of altering the way the body works or the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks. As well as tea and coffee drugs include alcohol and tobacco; “over-the –counter” medicines such as paracetamol; prescribed drugs such as inhalers and Ritalin; volatile substances such as gas lighter fluids and aerosols; controlled drugs such as cannabis and Ecstasy; and other substances such as amyl butyl nitrite(“poppers”) and unprocessed magic mushrooms.

- **Rationale**

The issue of drugs will continue to be addressed by the college for a number of reasons, including the following:

- children and young people are exposed to messages about drugs from an increasingly early age.
- by age 11 years, an increasing number of young people are likely to have tried substances such as tobacco, alcohol or solvents and/or to have misused prescribed medicines and other drugs.
- young people now have more spending power than previous generations and drugs are increasingly available within local communities;
- there is a growing social acceptance of what are called “recreational drugs” such as cannabis;

It is important, therefore, that our approach to drugs takes proper account of the world in which young people live and provides them with the knowledge and skills that enable them to make informed choices about their personal health and well being.

- **Research**

Research, in general, cites personal inadequacy, a lack of self-esteem and peer pressure as major factors for the misuse of drugs among young people.

- **Principles**

This policy is based on the following principles:

- the presence of controlled drugs, solvents and other volatile substances, and the use and misuse of other drugs on the college premises, is unacceptable;
- the fundamental importance of the good health and well-being of each of our students;

- the right of students to be educated in a safe and secure environment;
- an holistic approach to pastoral provision within the college;
- an approach that treats reported or actual drugs incidents seriously and deals with them in a manner that respects the students involved, and takes account of the importance of confidentiality; and
- the involvement of parents/guardians and external support agencies at appropriate stages in dealing with drugs-related incidents within the college.

- **Links with Pastoral Provision**

The college's pastoral provision, including a taught pastoral programme, is designed to equip the students with a range of knowledge and skills that enables them to deal confidently with their various personal and social needs. It also provides support for students with more acute personal and social needs via its counselling provision. Thus, drugs-related issues are not dealt with in isolation but, rather, in the context of the college's pastoral provision.

2. Drugs and the Law in Northern Ireland

The law in Northern Ireland in relation to drugs is set out clearly in the SEELB document, pages 6-7. College staff will take their responsibilities in relation to drugs seriously and within the scope of the law.

3. Aims

The following are the aims of the college's approach to drugs:

- to ensure that the college is free from illegal drugs;
- to provide a safe and secure learning environment;
- to protect and support vulnerable students and those at risk;
- to inform and educate students;
- to provide students with a range of personal, social and other skills;
- to work cooperatively and supportively with parents/guardians;
- to work cooperatively with external support agencies including the PSNI; and
- to ensure that members of staff are aware of their pastoral and legal responsibilities.

4. Drugs Education in the College

a. Drugs Programme

The aims of the drugs programme are:

- to promote positive attitudes towards personal health;
- to develop self-discipline and self-respect;
- to increase each student's self-esteem;
- to help the students acquire a range of personal, social, problem-making and decision-making skills;
- to inform the students about the effects of drug abuse and the risks involved;
- to help the students understand how they might have a positive effect on their peers;

- to encourage the students to support and encourage one another; and
- to help the students to know and understand themselves and others as individuals.

b. Context

The context in which the college deals with the issue of drugs includes:

- Student/teacher relationships;
- mutual respect;
- academic success;
- commitment and sense of belonging to the college;
- positive social behaviour;
- clear consistent message about drugs;
- the acquisition of skills – communication, problem-solving, decision-making and interpersonal; and
- assemblies, form teachers and class teachers.

c. The Curriculum

The issue of drugs is dealt with in the curriculum through:

- the taught pastoral programme;
- the particular contributions of subjects such as English, science and religious education;
- the “CASE Programme”, delivered by local PSNI officers to year 9 students; and
- the “Chrysalis Project” provided by the SEELB for students in years 8-10.

5. Roles, Responsibilities and Legal Duties of Staff [See CCEA/DE guidance document, pages 28-30]

The roles and responsibilities of individual staff members, the designated teacher for drugs, the principal and the Board of Governors are clearly set out on pages 28-30 of the CCEA/DE guidance document. These various groups are aware of their particular roles and responsibilities and will fulfil them when dealing with drugs-related incidents.

6. Legal Responsibilities and Involvement of the PSNI [See CCEA/DE Guidance Document, page 30]

The college’s legal responsibilities include:

- ensuring that all members of staff are aware of their legal responsibilities;
- notifying the PSNI where it has been alleged or suspected that a crime has been committed;
- establishing and maintaining contacts with Community and Schools Involvement officer; and
- in exceptional circumstances, permitting the PSNI to the interview students on the premises.

7. Staff Responses to a Suspected Drugs-related Incident [See CCEA/DE guidance document pages 31-33]

It is important that members of staff respond to suspected drugs-related incidents in a manner that:

- ensures the safety and protection of the student/s in their care;
- is within the law; and
- follows the college's agreed procedures.

Members of staff will not search a student's personal belongings such as coat or school bag without his/her consent, and in the presence of the student and another adult witness. Members of staff will not carry out a personal search of a student.

8. Managing a Drugs-related Incident

Drugs related incidents will be handled as set out in the CCEA/DE guidance document, page 39. *These details are displayed on the staff notice board.*

9. Involving Parents/Guardians

Shimna College values its links with parents/guardians. Consequently, the principal and staff will keep parents informed of any drugs-related incident/s involving their children and will work cooperatively with them in resolving matters. In doing so, they will adhere to the guidance provided in the CCEA/DE guidance document, pages 23 and 36. Through the "Chrysalis Project", the college works closely with parents/guardians as well as students.

10. Support for Students at Risk

The college will do all that it can to support students identified as being at risk. Support is provided via:

- the college's pastoral structures;
- the college's counselling provision;
- support provided by the SEELB through its welfare and psychological services; and
- referral to external counselling/support agencies

11. Confidentiality

It is recognised that dealing with actual and alleged drug-related incidents, calls for considerable sensitivity and, on occasions, confidentiality. The college staff dealing with any such incidents will maintain the necessary levels of confidentiality to protect students involved in any way, together with their parents/guardians. The welfare of the student/s and the demands of the law take precedence over confidentiality, thus absolute confidentiality can never be guaranteed to either students or their parents/guardians. Members of staff dealing with drugs-related incidents will explain the limits of confidentiality to the students and the parents/guardians involved. *The principal has sole responsibility for dealing with the media in relation to drugs-related incidents.*

12. Staff Development

The college will maintain a programme of staff development in relation to drugs education to ensure that the all staff members are well equipped to undertake their curriculum, pastoral and legal responsibilities in this area. Identified members of staff

will also attend appropriate in-service courses provided by voluntary and statutory agencies.

13. The Administration of students' "Over-the-Counter" and Prescription Drugs by Staff

In dealing with students' medication, members of staff will follow the college's medical policy. It is stressed that:

- members of staff will provide support for students with a known medical condition;
- although no member of staff is medically qualified, a number of them have emergency first aid qualifications;
- a student's medication is the responsibility of his/her parents;
- where possible, medication should be taken at home;
- members of staff cannot, under any conditions, provide students with pain killers on request;
- it is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to make any necessary arrangements with the college in relation to their child's particular medical condition and the required administration of medicine/drugs.

14. Reporting and Recording Drug-Related Incidents [See CCEA/DE Document, page 33]

All drugs-related incidents will be reported to the appropriate college personnel. *Records of all statements provided by students and staff involved in/or witness to such an incident will be carefully stored as they may be required by the police if the incident becomes a criminal investigation.* The following points should be taken account of when drugs-related incidents are being recorded:

- incident report forms should be completed in a factual manner;
- sensitive information about students should be treated in a confidential and secure manner;
- reports provided by witnesses should be recorded carefully and accurately.

All drugs-related incidents will be reported to the designated drugs officer in the SEELB.

The procedures for referral/reporting are displayed on the staff notice board.

15. Links with External Support Agencies and the Police

In dealing with drugs-related incidents, the college will, as appropriate, involve external statutory and voluntary support agencies. In addition, guidance will be sought from the local PSNI Community and Schools Involvement Officer. **In circumstances where a crime may have been committed, the matter must be reported to the PSNI.**

16. Shimna College Response [See CCEA/DE document, page 34-35.]

The principal retains responsibility for deciding how to respond to particular incidents, taking account of factors such as the seriousness of the incident; the identified needs of the student/s involved, the other college students and the community; the age of the student/s; and the level of their involvement. At all times, however, the needs of individual students will be considered and appropriate interventions and support mechanisms put in place. The principal will use the range of

sanctions at his disposal via the college discipline policy, including suspension and expulsion. The fact that certain behaviour may be a violation of the law will not, in itself, be taken as automatically leading to the suspension or exclusion of a student. However, particularly in the case of a student supplying or intending to supply drugs to others, the need to protect the other students from unhealthy exposure to potentially dangerous substances will be an important consideration by the principal when deciding his response.

NB Suspensions and expulsions will be carried out in accordance with the college's procedures in relation to these sanctions.

17. Health and Safety of Students: Premises Issues

If it becomes known that the college premises or grounds are being used out of hours for drug or solvent misuse, the PSNI will be notified and the principal will ensure that arrangements are in place to check the premises and grounds for signs of such misuse. If necessary, the principal will arrange for the local council's Environmental Services Department for the safe and secure disposal of dangerous matter. Should further measures be required to enhance the security of the premises, the principal ensure that they are implemented.

18. Monitoring and Evaluation

The college planning group will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy. They will review it as appropriate to take account of changing circumstances and the guidance and advice from the Department of Education and the South Eastern Education and Library Board. They will also take account of the approach suggested in the CCEA/DE document, pages 42-49.

19. Complaints Procedure

Parents/guardians who have a complaint in relation to a drugs-related issue or incident, should contact the principal. If they are not satisfied with the outcome, they may refer the matter, in writing, to the chairperson of the Board of Governors who will deal with the matter as promptly as possible and, in due course, will respond in writing.

20. Conclusion

The college staff and Board of Governors recognise the issue of drugs is a serious one and that it causes many parents/guardians and students have concerns. Staff and governors would like to assure all parents/guardians that they will endeavour to keep the college free from illegal drugs. They will also act in the best interests of all its students and, in doing so, ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

The Board of Governors agrees with, and fully supports the contents and implementation of this policy.