

St. Mary's P.S.: Drugs Education Policy

Section 1: Introduction

a) Ethos Statement

In St. Mary's P.S. the welfare of every child is of paramount consideration and so we endeavour to create a caring, happy, secure, supportive and stimulating environment where children can develop socially, emotionally and physically at their own rate. The Principal, senior leadership team and staff endeavour to provide an atmosphere of care and respect within the curricular and extra-curricular life of the school community.

b) Rationale

The Board of Governors of each school is required by the Department of Education to establish and maintain a Drugs Policy. The school drugs policy is based on guidelines from DENI (Circular 2004/9) and has been developed as a response to the growing concerns about the use and misuse of drugs in Northern Ireland.

The policy endeavours to make a clear statement of our views on drugs and drug education. It ensures a consistent approach among staff on drugs education and in the handling of drug related incidents. Good practice for the future is also safeguarded.

We at St. Mary's P.S. take a very serious view of drug related incidents. We recognise that there are those who are required to take prescribed drugs because of a health problem. We wish to develop a programme to ensure that pupils live in a drug free lifestyle.

Drug abuse is a whole community issue and we believe that the school has a role to play in conjunction with the other statutory and voluntary agencies within the community. The support of parents is vital, as the school needs the support of parents to extend the messages taught in the classroom into the home. Drugs education alone will not solve the problem of drugs abuse but the problems will not be solved in the absence of effective drugs education.

Drugs education is a cross-curricular issue whereby we seek to ensure that key messages are reinforced in all aspects of school life, which reflect the caring ethos of the school. We believe that drugs education needs to be part of a holistic learning approach aimed at the overall development of our pupils.

c) Drug Definitions

A drug is any substance which when taken has the effect of altering the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.

Drugs include:

- a) Illegal drugs-those substances listed as controlled drugs eg. heroin, cocaine, Ecstasy, cannabis and magic mushrooms.
- b) Illicit drugs-include those socially unacceptable legal drugs. E.g. poppers, solvents and the underage consumption of alcohol and tobacco.
- c) Prescribed drugs-those given by a doctor on prescription (also known as 'over the counter drugs') e.g. tranquillisers, sleeping tablets and strong painkillers.

d) Aims of Drugs Education Policy

- a) To provide a clear statement of the school's view on drugs education.
- b) To ensure a consistent approach from staff to drugs education and in the handling of drug related incidents.
- c) To safeguard good practice in the future.

Section 2: Development and Implementation

a) Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Governors and Principal will have overall responsibility for ensuring the effective implementation of the Drugs Policy in St. Mary's P.S.

The Drugs Education Co-Ordinator will ensure an appropriate programme of study is being delivered for all pupils within the school. Duties will include:

- a) Liaising with the Principal on the implementation of the policy.
- b) Contacting and liaising with outside agencies.
- c) Offering support and training where necessary for the Board of Governors, staff and parents on drug education matters.
- d) Helping to promote an awareness of drug education within the school.

All other teaching staff will be responsible for putting into practice the policy and ensuring that appropriate lessons are taught to ensure that children are developing positive attitudes towards a healthy way of life. Non-teaching staff will support teachers where necessary and will report all drug related incidents to the Drugs Education Coordinator.

b) Staff Training

Periodically drug education programmes may be organised for staff to meet training needs, in order to implement the drugs education policy. This will take the form of 'in-house' training although specialist drug education staff may also attend in-service training to inform staff of new developments.

Parents will be informed about certain drug issues if appropriate by receiving information leaflets from the school produced by statutory agencies. Parents will also be encouraged to contact the school if they have concerns about drug issues.

c) **Overview of Drugs Education Programme**

Drugs education will be an integral part of our Personal Development and Mutual Understanding programme, incorporating the personal and social development of pupils in their environment. Aspects covered will be relevant to their age and will take account of their present knowledge and experience of drugs. Adequate and suitable resources will be used in lessons of Living and Learning Together. The approach adopted will be mainly preventative and teaching methods will include pupil centred activities e.g. role play, drama and group work. Where appropriate links will be made with other relevant areas of learning e.g. Religious Education, Physical Education and PDMU. On occasion outside agencies may be asked for specialist help. E.g. PSNI, nurse, etc. if this is the case the class teacher will remain with the children at all times.

Aims of your Drug Education Programme:

- a) To promote positive attitudes towards personal health.
- b) To inform pupils of the effects of drug use and abuse.
- c) To help pupils build up the self-esteem of the pupils.
- d) To help pupils acquire skills in managing the pressures of the youth culture in which they live.
- e) To help pupils acquire decision-making skills.
- f) To create a climate where a young person feels comfortable to discuss problems around substance misuse.
- g) To encourage a participative approach in which each pupil is actively involved.
- h) To encourage a healthy and critical respect for all substances taken into the body.
- i) To equip pupils with skills that will empower them to take responsibility for their own health and safety.

d) Staff Use of Smoking and Alcohol

St. Mary's P.S. is a smoke-free zone. This means there will be no smoking on the premises or outside any of the school doors. Consumption of alcohol is also not permitted during the school day.

e) Communicating the Policy to Parents and Other Relevant Agencies

The Drugs Education Policy will be made available to all new parents and in the event of the policy being updated new copies will be issued to all parents. A draft copy of the policy will be sent to parents at a consultation stage and responses will be taken into consideration before the policy is finalised.

Section 3: Management Issues

a) **Procedures for Managing Drug-Related Incidents**

For all those involved in dealing with incidents of drug misuse, the experience is likely to be traumatic. This will be true not only for the Principal, teachers, other members of staff and

Governors of the school but also for the pupil involved in the incident, their parents and other pupils in the school. Dealing with suspected incidents of drug misuse will require extreme sensitivity on the part of those involved.

During instances where a pupil or pupils are suspected of, or found in possession of drug, their names and identities will be passed on to the PSNI. Any suspicious substance found in school or in the possession of a pupil will also be given to the police for analysis. If a pupil is suspected of being under the influence of drugs parents will be notified immediately and appropriate medical action will be taken. Parents will be encouraged to make the school a drug free zone. Confidentiality in drug related incidents cannot be guaranteed.

In cases where an incident has occurred and the school is approached by the press, a prepared written statement will be made, only by the Principal or his/her deputy. This statement will include the fact that the school is dealing with the incident. Pupils involved in the taking of drugs will be encouraged to attend counselling sessions.

b) A Range of Disciplinary Measures

The Board of Governors, Principal and staff have a duty to protect every pupil from the drug culture and will follow EA/DE procedures to protect all pupils from the danger of drugs. Pupils suspected of possessing, supplying or using drugs on the school premises will be dealt with in a serious manner. Incidents involving drugs may lead to suspension, after investigation of the incident and in extreme cases expulsion may be recommended. The school in these cases will act in accordance with DE and EA Guidelines.

The school expects parents to support these measures and to cooperate with the school in encouraging the child to lead a healthier lifestyle. Parents need to be aware of the school's discipline policy on drugs as:

- It reassures parents that the school treats drug related matters very seriously, thus providing protection for pupils.
- It informs parents on what to expect if their child becomes involved in a drug related incident.

At all times the needs of each individual child involved in such incidents will be considered and appropriate intervention and support mechanisms will be put in place.

c) Confidentiality

Confidentiality can never be guaranteed to any pupil. Any criminal activity disclosed must be passed on to the designated teacher, PSNI and EA.

d) Procedures for Using Outside Agencies

If an outside agency is to be used the following checklist will be consulted:

- Does the individual/agency have a specified Child Protection Policy?
- How will the issue of confidentiality be dealt with?
- Are the teaching resources being used appropriately?
- Has the individual/agency worked with any other schools?
- Does the individual/agency have a clear set of aims and objectives as well as lesson plans?
- Has the individual/agency read the school's Drugs Policy and are they prepared to adhere to it?
- Do parents/guardians know that an individual/agency is being used by the school?
- Will the input by the individual/agency be monitored?
- Will the pupils be asked how the session/class with the individual/agency went?
- Can the school terminate the work of the individual/agency if the classes or sessions are deemed inappropriate?
- Are evaluations carried out by the individual/agency and if so will the school have access to them?

e) **Emergency First Aid**

Ref. Appendix 3

f) **Guidance for Confiscation and Storage of Harmful Substances**

If a harmful substance is found it will be stored in a secure place and the relevant authorities notified as outlined in Appendices 1-3.

g) **Guidance on Storage, Handling and Disposal of Hazardous Substances**

Within many classrooms materials are required and used which are toxic and emit intoxicating fumes e.g. solvent-based glues, aerosol sprays, paint thinners, felt-tipped pens. These materials will be kept to a minimum and need to be carefully monitored and stored in locked cupboards to which only staff have access. Classrooms where such materials are used will be kept in locked cupboards when not in use. Materials of a similar nature which are used by caretakers and cleaning staff will be kept in locked storerooms and used with care.

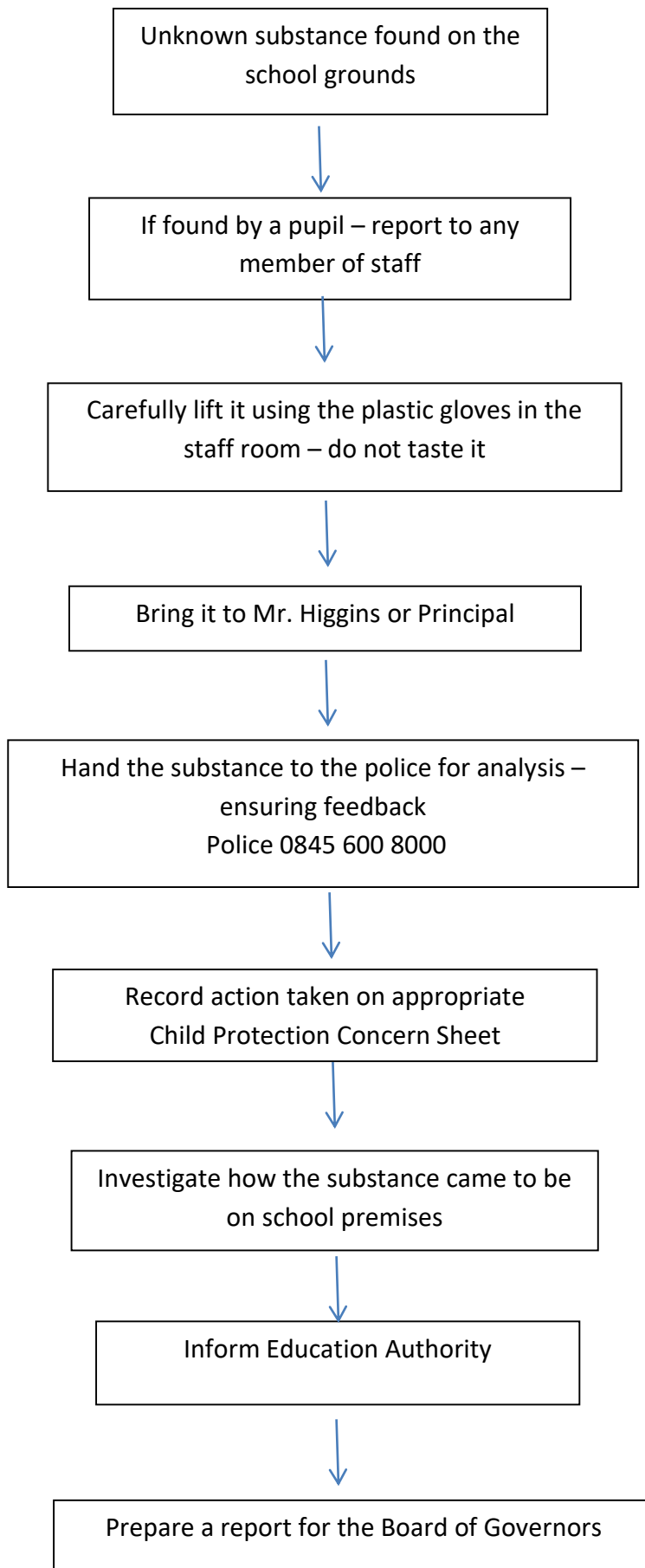
Section 4: Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The drugs education policy and programme will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis as part of the School Development Plan to take account of the needs of staff and pupils. It will also be reviewed in light of particular incidents or local circumstances. Account will be taken of the views of the Board of Governors, staff, parents and pupils and any necessary changes will be made.

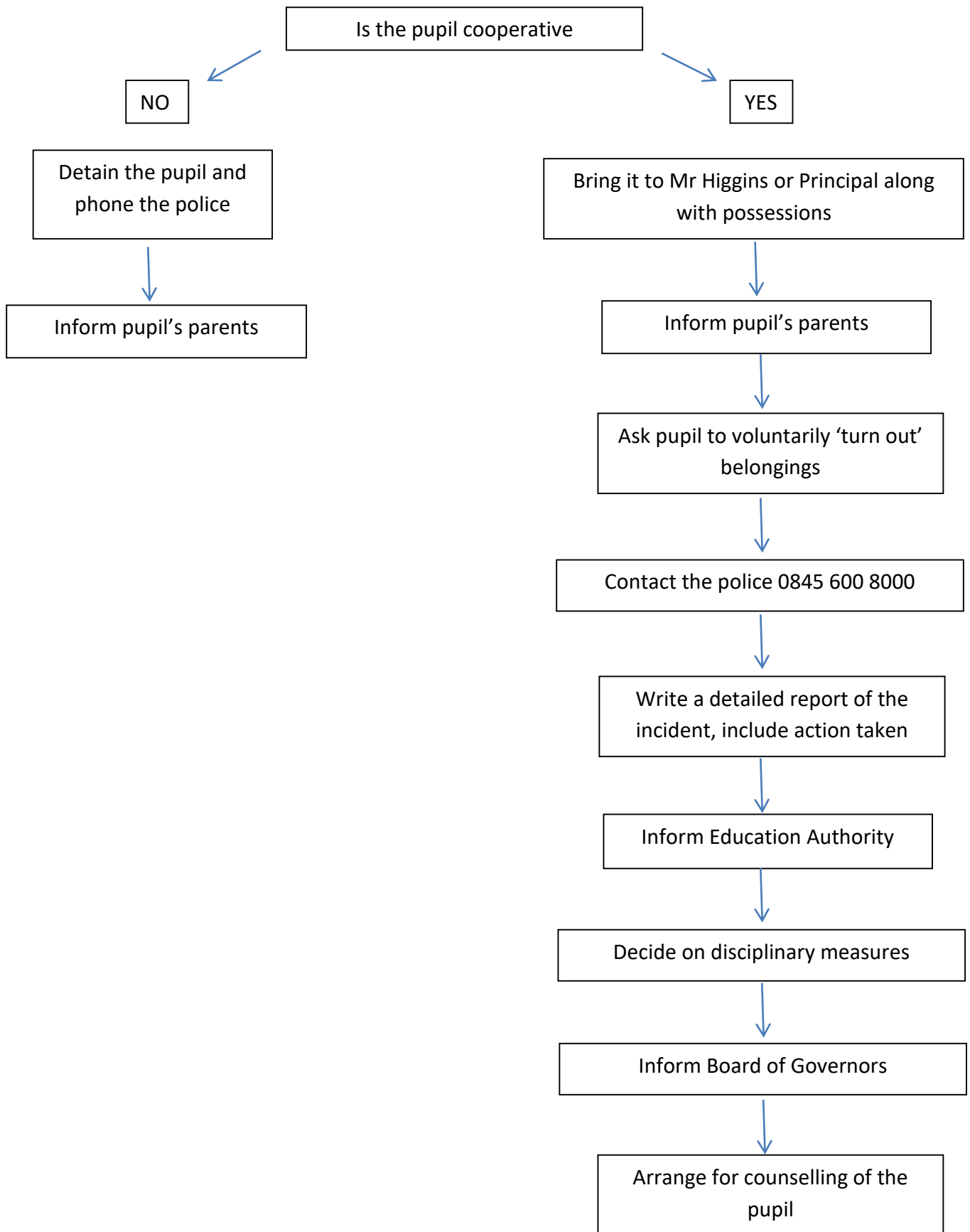
Section 5: Appendices

- Appendix 1: Finding an illegal substance on PPS premises.
- Appendix 2: Pupil suspected of distributing an illegal substance.
- Appendix 3: Pupil suspected of taking drugs in PPS.

Finding an illegal substance on Aughlisnafin Primary Premises (Appendix 1)



Pupil suspected of possessing or distributing an illegal substance (Appendix 2)



Pupil suspected of taking drugs in St. Mary's P.S. (Appendix 3)

