

Elmsett C. of E. V.C.P. School

Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Related Incidents



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Contents:

1. Introduction: The need for vigilance	3
2. Drugs-related incidents co-ordinator	3
3. Drugs Education Programme.....	3
4. Tackling Drugs Together	3
5. Continuous Professional Development for Staff.....	4
6. School Ethos	4
7. School procedures.....	4
Relations with the media.....	4
Reporting the incident.....	4
Recording the incident	5
Handling the media.....	5
Legal requirements	5
First Aid	5
Safeguarding found drugs paraphernalia: Sharp Bins.....	5
Medicines	6
8. The law related to controlled drugs.....	6
9. Classification of controlled drugs	6
CLASS A	6
CLASS A/B.....	6
CLASS B	6
CLASS C	6
Tobacco.....	7
Alcohol.....	7
Solvents.....	7
10. Reference materials	8

1. INTRODUCTION: THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE

Drug misuse is as much an issue for schools in rural areas and affluent communities as for disadvantaged inner city areas. There is no such thing as a 'no go' area for illegal drugs. Drug misuse extends across socioeconomic boundaries. Educationally successful young people are just as likely to find themselves at risk. (Drug Prevention in Schools: DfE Circular No 4/95.)

No school can afford to be complacent or to think its pupils are not at risk from drug abuse. While the majority of school children do not indulge in such activities, numbers are growing rapidly, even at primary school age, and here at Elmsett Primary School we take seriously what can at worst be a life destroying activity and at best a dangerous diversion from healthy and unimpaired development. There is evidence that suggests the average age of first misuse of drugs is falling and the range of drugs available is expanding.

The misuse of drugs will not only damage individuals directly, but also others involved, such as families and the wider community.

2. DRUGS-RELATED INCIDENTS CO-ORDINATOR

The Headteacher is the drugs-related incidents co-ordinator. Curriculum coverage of drugs education is organised by the science and PSHE co-ordinators jointly, given drugs education clearly depends on strong links between the science and PSHE curricula.

All teaching and non-teaching staff need to be vigilant and report any sign of a drugs-related issue to the Headteacher. If confirmed it may then be necessary to treat the matter as a critical incident and set up an Emergency Action Plan (a copy is pinned to the notice board in the Head's Office).

Perhaps the biggest danger at Elmsett School is not that our own pupils will use drugs - although research shows we should not be complacent - but that teenagers in possession of drugs might come onto school premises or playground after school; or a parent that is a drug user brings drugs onto the premises or enters the premises to pick up their child while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

If any member of the teaching or non-teaching staff committed a drugs or alcohol related incident, they would be incapable of carrying out their duties and the standard county disciplinary procedures would be followed. Firstly, it would be necessary for them to be removed from the premises.

3. DRUGS EDUCATION PROGRAMME

The Key Stage One curriculum covers the role of drugs in medicines.

At Key Stage Two children are required to learn about the harmful effects of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

The current policy is concerned with how we would deal with a *drug-related incident* should one arise.

4. TACKLING DRUGS TOGETHER

The drugs strategy outlined in the Government's White Paper Tackling Drugs Together states as a government objective: to raise awareness among school staff, governors and parents of the issues associated with drug misuse and young people. The need for each school to develop a policy on managing drug-related incidents in schools (which will be inspected by OFSTED for quality and effectiveness) is a direct outcome of this Government initiative. Suffolk LEA have written guidelines for such a policy and we have also referred to NAHT advice.

5. CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR STAFF

When planning our annual CPD programme, the need to update staff awareness of drug-related issues will be taken into account.

6. SCHOOL ETHOS

The school:

- Condone neither the misuse of drugs and alcohol by members of the school, nor the illegal supply of these substances
- Is committed to the health and safety of its members and will take action to safeguard their well-being
- Acknowledges the importance of its pastoral role in the welfare of young people and through the general ethos of the school will seek to persuade pupils in need to come forward
- Recognises it is acting *in loco parentis* when dealing with drug-related issues

7. SCHOOL PROCEDURES

In the event of a child in possession of a suspected illegal substance, the Headteacher should:

- Make a preliminary investigation of the incident in the presence of a witness
- Inform parents
- Inform the Chair of Governors
- Inform the Area Education Manager and request advice
- Inform the police and request advice

In the event of abnormal and suspicious pupil behaviour, parents should be informed and a doctor may be contacted for advice.

In the event of substances and articles found discarded on school premises:

- Articles such as needles, syringes and containers should only be handled by a member of staff wearing gloves and then stored safely
- The police should then be informed

Relations with the media

The Headteacher will make a prepared statement after taking advice from appropriate sources. A copy of this Drug Related Incidents Policy is available for perusal by parents and other interested parties.

Reporting the incident

The procedures for reporting and supporting any suspected cases and causes for concern in school are similar for those for child protection:

- All cases and causes for concern are reported to the Headteacher
- Records are kept of this
- Reports are passed on where necessary to relevant staff and advisers
- If deemed necessary, an Individual Support Plan is made for that pupil

Recording the incident

An incident would be recorded in an *Emergency Action Plan*. Any specific named reports would be kept in the pupil's blue record file for confidentiality. Drug-related incidents requiring notification to the police will be recorded as above and made available to the LA/DAT (Drug Action Team).

Handling the media

If a drug-related incident takes place, our Emergency Action Plan procedures will be adhered to. As the issue of substance misuse is an emotive one and is likely to generate interest from local and national media, the school will take appropriate advice and guidance from the LA – by referring to the LA Media booklet, the LA Media Spokesperson and LA Legal Department – to ensure that any reporting of incidents remains in the best interests of the young people, their families and the school. The LA local officers will be informed as soon as possible.

Legal requirements

We follow the guidance in Appendices A, F and G in *Guidance for Schools on Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Related Incidents and Liaison with the Police* (copy in head's office).

First Aid

All teaching and most non-teaching staff are qualified Appointed Persons. Normal First Aid procedures will be followed:

- An ambulance will be called in cases of emergency
- Advice will be taken from other health officials (a local doctor from Hadleigh Health Centre, or the school nurse)

Safeguarding found drugs paraphernalia: Sharp Bins

Yellow Sharps Bins have been provided, which are kept in the custodian's cupboard while empty. They will be locked in the School Office when they have items in them. This procedure will be witnessed and recorded in the Health and Safety Risk Register (see SCC Health and Safety Manual Appendices).

Appendix H from *Suffolk Guidance for Schools on Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Related Incidents and Liaison with the Police - November 2000* (copy in Head's Office) relates to "sharps" and exposure to blood. Although these are *COSHH* (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) regulations (pub 1999) and don't cover schools, it is school policy that these principles be followed.

It must be stressed how important it is to use the protective gloves provided in the First Aid Kit to treat pupils. The gloves must be disposed of as quickly as possible. In addition, a pair of thick leather garden gloves are available to pick up any "sharps". These need to be picked up with a plastic bag so as to avoid contamination. The gloves and a small supply of plastic bags can be found in the custodian's cupboard. Take the bin to the item and remember to wear the gloves when handling the item. The Local District Council can be contacted to collect the Sharps Bin once it is three-quarters full. A replacement bin is then requested through Adrian Kirkby (or his successor) at the Suffolk County Council Health Authority.

Any hacksaw blades, sewing needles, scissors or knives that children cut themselves on need to be disposed of immediately in the Sharps Container, again to minimise contamination.

The school field and playground will be checked each Monday morning by the custodian, Headteacher or (in the head's absence) deputy Headteacher before the school opens at 8.50 am to ensure that no beer cans or bottles, hypodermic needles, etc are on site. If there is a discovery, needles or any other drugs-related equipment must be placed in the school Sharps Bin and the playground and field completely cleared of any such items before the school gates can be opened.

Medicines

Our school policy is that all medicines are kept in a container in the staff room. Appropriate procedures will be used in accordance with current legislation for prescribed drugs on school premises (e.g. Ritalin).

8. THE LAW RELATED TO CONTROLLED DRUGS

Under the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1971*, it is an offence:

- To supply or offer to supply a controlled drug to another in contravention of the Act
- To be in possession of, or to possess with intent to supply to another, a controlled drug in contravention of the Act
- For the occupier, or someone concerned in the management of any premises, knowingly to permit or suffer on those premises the smoking of cannabis, or the production, attempted production, supply, attempted supply or offering to supply of any controlled drug

In law, a defence to the allegation of possession, knowing or suspecting it to be a controlled drug, can be made on the following grounds:

Such possession would be lawful if the accused took possession in order to prevent another individual from committing or continuing to commit an offence, provided that all steps were taken, immediately after possession, to destroy the substance or deliver it into the custody of an individual lawfully entitled to hold such substances.

9. CLASSIFICATION OF CONTROLLED DRUGS

Tobacco and alcohol are equally dangerous and we see them as part of the total problem. (See sections below.)

Within controlled drugs there are three categories, category A carrying the highest penalties and Category C the least:

CLASS A

- Heroin – white powder from opium poppy: smoked, sniffed, injected, inhaled
- Cocaine – white powder from coca plant: sniffed, injected or smoked as crack
- Ecstasy – capsules and tablets: swallowed
- LSD – small white or brown tablets, or blotting paper soaked in chemicals: swallowed

CLASS A/B

- Amphetamines – powder, tablets or capsules: sniffed or swallowed (CATEGORY B) or injected (CATEGORY A)

CLASS B

- Cannabis – hash is a brown solidified resin from the cannabis plant, whereas grass consists of the dried leaves of the cannabis plant: smoked on its own or with tobacco; eaten

CLASS C

- Hallucinogenic mushrooms and solvents – not illegal unless otherwise prepared, or knowingly sold, for eating or sniffing

Tobacco

The sale of tobacco to children under the age of 16 is an offence (*Section 7 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933*). It is also an offence for children of 16 or under to smoke in public. If a child were ever discovered smoking or in possession of tobacco on school premises, the tobacco would be immediately confiscated, which is a legal action. Parents would then be informed and allowed to collect the confiscated materials. An appropriate punishment reflecting the seriousness of the situation would be agreed in discussion with the family concerned. Exclusion would be an option.

Elmsett Primary School is a *smoke-free zone*: we do not allow adults to smoke on school premises.

Alcohol

The sale of alcohol to young persons under the age of 18 is an offence under the *Licensing Act 1964, Section 169*. It is also an offence to give alcohol to children under the age of five, but those over five can consume alcohol on private premises.

Should a pupil be found drunk on the school premises, our first duty is to have regard for the health and safety of the pupil. Appropriate medical support should be provided if necessary. The removal of such a pupil from the premises would be necessary, as erratic and disruptive behaviour may well occur with the possible result of further disturbing the good order of the school. Such removal would normally be effected by the parents or guardians, but in some serious incidents it may be necessary to involve specialist agencies, such as the police or ambulance service.

Should a pupil be found in possession of alcohol on the school premises, the Headteacher has the legal right to confiscate it. Parents would then be informed and allowed to collect the confiscated items. An appropriate punishment reflecting the seriousness of the situation would be arranged following discussion with the family concerned. Exclusion would be an option, and where there were earlier concerns of a similar nature, permanent exclusion would be considered. However, such behaviour in a primary-aged child may well be symptomatic of other problems and difficulties in the young person's life. All incidents of this nature will be handled sensitively and result in supportive outcomes for the needs of the child.

The recent vogue of 'alcopops' adds to the difficulties of identifying alcoholic drinks when soft drinks are brought into school. The Headteacher will have no hesitation in confiscating 'suspicious' drinks. There is one water fountain in school, so there is a ready supply of drinking water as a substitute for the 'suspicious' drink supplied from home.

If a parent drives to school and appears to be over the legal limit, the school will call the police and try to delay the parent from leaving school before the police arrive so as to prevent them from risking lives.

Solvents

The selling, purchasing, possessing or sniffing of solvents and other highly volatile substances is not illegal. However, unruly or offensive behaviour resulting from such activities may lead to a breach of the peace which is an arrestable offence.

Should a pupil be under the influence of solvent intoxication, the first duty is to the health and welfare of that pupil. Because of the very harmful permanent effect such substances can have on the individual, the school would seek immediate medical attention by contacting the nearby Hadleigh Health Clinic or if necessary phoning the emergency services and requesting an ambulance. Where possible, a sample of the substance used should be made available to the medical authorities to aid appropriate medical support.

Parents will immediately be contacted, and also the community police officer and social services. If the school were to become aware that a pupil was involved in solvent abuse out of school hours, the duty of the school towards that young person dictates that the parents should be informed. This will be undertaken in a sensitive and supportive fashion.

10. REFERENCE MATERIALS

The policy was written with due consideration to:

Suffolk LA's Guidance for Schools on dealing with Drug and Alcohol Related Incidents and Liaison with the Police (November 2000)

Tobacco, Alcohol, Solvent and Drug Abuse (NAHT)

LA School Risk Management (SCC)

LA Health and Safety Policy (SCC)

LA Media Booklet (SCC)

Protecting Young People (DfE 1998)

The Right Approach (SCODA 1999)

The Right Choice (SCODA 1998)

Tackling Drugs Together (Government White Paper)

Drug Prevention in Schools: DfE Circular No 4/95