

# St Clement Danes Primary School



## Alcohol & Drug Policy

## **ST CLEMENT DANES CE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **ALCOHOL AND DRUG POLICY**

#### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

St Clement Danes School is committed to ensuring a safe, healthy and productive working environment and to minimising problems arising from the misuse of drugs and alcohol at work. We aim to raise awareness of substance misuse among staff and encourage them to live a healthier and productive life.

The school recognises that early recognition of alcohol and drug related problems will lead to effective management and treatment. However, where performance, safety or criminal behaviour becomes an issue, staff should be aware that disciplinary action could be taken.

#### **AIMS OF POLICY**

- To advise all existing employees and all persons starting work of the risks to health arising from the effects of alcohol or drugs (including some legitimately prescribed medications).
- To ensure that all employees are aware of their responsibilities regarding alcohol and drugs at work.
- To encourage employees, who may have alcohol or drug-related problems which affect their work, to take advantage of the School's referral procedure for diagnosis and treatment.
- To enable supervisors and managers to identify job performance problems that may be attributable to the effects of alcohol or drugs and to determine whether there is sufficient concern to warrant further action.

#### **LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

- Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974, employers have a duty to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees. This would include taking appropriate provisions to ensure that persons who are known to be misusing substances do not affect safety of themselves and others whilst at work.
- The Road Traffic Act 1988 states that any person who, when driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle on a road or other public place, is unfit to drive through drink or drugs shall be guilty of an offence. An offence is also committed if a person unfit through drink or drugs is in charge of a motor vehicle in the same circumstances.
- It is an offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 for any person knowingly to permit the production, supply or use of controlled substances on their premises except in specified circumstances (e.g. when they have been prescribed by a doctor).

#### **OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

- This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Health & Safety Policy.
- This Policy must be read and implemented in compliance with the Sickness Absence Policy.

At St Clement Danes School it is the duty of the Governing Body, as an employer, to ensure full compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and all applicable supporting legislation. In order to achieve this it is essential that the Governing Body and the Headteacher make all the necessary financial and management arrangements required to implement this policy and procedures.

## **WHAT IS SUBSTANCE MISUSE AND DEPENDENCY**

It is important to clarify that the misuse of a substance may be different to the dependency on a substance. Misuse (or abuse) is normally defined as the taking of illicit or other substances into the body, which persistently affects an employee's work.

Alcohol and drug dependency can be defined as 'a combination of cognitive, behavioural and physiological symptoms that can indicate that a person has an impaired control of the use of substances and continues to use them despite the adverse consequences'.

A simple example of this may be a person who has too much to drink on a regular basis, which then has an impact on his/her work performance but the individual in question is not an alcoholic. In such cases, the normal response of a line manager should be dealt with under the School's Disciplinary Code.

## **MANAGER RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To implement the policy and procedures.
- To ensure that the policy and procedures are fully observed in the event of a member of staff having an alcohol or drug related problem.

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

- To take reasonable care of themselves and colleagues.
- Co-operate with their manager to enable them to discharge their health and safety responsibilities.

## **WORK RELATED PROBLEMS AND SYMPTOMS**

It is estimated that the misuse of alcohol and drugs at work costs British industry £2.8 billion a year. Listed below are examples of the kind of symptoms which may manifest in someone with an alcohol or drug related problem. Clearly, cases vary and not all these will apply in every instance.

### **Absenteeism/Irregular Attendance**

- Multiple instances of unauthorised leave.
- Frequent Monday or Friday absences.
- Improbable reasons for absences.
- Unusually high absenteeism.

### **Reporting for Work**

- Excessive lateness (e.g. returning from lunch).

- Arriving at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Smelling of alcohol.
- Unkempt appearance/lack of hygiene/excessive injuries.

### **Absenteeism Whilst at Work**

- Repeated absences from the post, more often than reasonably necessary.
- Frequent trips to the cloakroom.
- Overlong tea/coffee breaks.
- Incapacity due to the influence of alcohol or drugs.
- Leaving work early.

### **Lack of Concentration and Confusion**

- Work requires greater effort.
- Jobs take an unreasonable time to complete.
- Difficulty in recalling instructions and details.
- Increasing difficulty in handling complex assignments.
- Difficulty in recalling errors.

### **Spasmodic Work Patterns and Deteriorating Performance**

- Alternate periods of high and low productivity.
- Increasing general unreliability and unpredictability.
- Missed deadlines.
- Mistakes due to inattention or poor judgement.
- Complaints about performance.
- Improbable excuses for poor performance.

### **Poor Employee Relations**

- Over-reaction to real or imagined criticism.
- Unreasonable resentment.
- Irritability.
- Complaints from colleagues about behaviour.
- Attempts to borrow money from colleagues.
- Avoidance of manager or colleagues.

(Similarly these symptoms may arise but be wholly unconnected with alcohol or drugs in which case developments which give cause for concern should be addressed appropriately).

### **TAKING ACTION**

Below are some general points to remember when taking any action in respect of an employee who may have a drug or alcohol problem:

- Employees with a substance abuse or dependency problem have the same rights to confidentiality and support as they would if they had any other medical or psychological condition.
- Disciplinary action should be a last resort.

- Many people with a substance dependency or misuses problem are able in time to regain full control over their misuse or dependency and return to their previous work performance.
- It may be very difficult for people to admit to themselves or others that their drinking is out of control or that they are dependent on drugs. They need to know that you will treat their problem as a health problem rather than an immediate cause for dismissal or disciplinary action.
- If employees' misuse or dependency is a matter of concern, they should be encouraged to seek help from their GP or a specialist agency.

## **PROCEDURES**

Below are the general procedures that should be considered when dealing with an employee who may have a drug or alcohol problem:

- Employees who are considered to have an alcohol or drug related problem should be encouraged to seek confidential help and treatment. Further assistance may be sought from the Occupational Health Service. Alternatively, an individual may discuss the matter with their manager or senior member of school.
- Individuals may initially find it helpful to seek the advice of a Trade Union representative or a colleague to assist in addressing the problem. In these circumstances the colleague or union representative should seek assistance from Occupational Health or their line manager.
- Where an employee is unfit or unsuitable to resume the same job during or following treatment, advice should be sought from the HR and the Occupational Health Service.
- Where work performance is unsatisfactory due to an alcohol or drug related problem and the employee in question refuses assistance, denies the problem or discontinues a course of treatment and reverts back to an unsatisfactory level of performance and/or conduct then the normal disciplinary procedures should be followed.
- Where an employee is medically diagnosed as being unable to continue work in their current post, advice should be sought from the HR and the Occupational Health Service as to the action to take.
- Where an employee has completed treatment and subsequently has a relapse any shortfall in performance may be subject to the disciplinary procedure.

## **KEY POINTS: ALCOHOL**

The consumption of alcohol in moderation is acceptable in a social context. However, its potential to impair performance and behaviour in the workplace cannot be ignored. It has been estimated that 20% of all work accidents in the UK are related to alcohol.

Regularly drinking, more than the daily benchmark, increases the risk of liver damage, cirrhosis of the liver, and cancers of the mouth and throat. People who drink very heavily may develop psychological and emotional problems, including depression.

The following may be a useful guide:

**Men up to 21 units**

**Women up to 14 units**

These levels carry no long term health risk if spread throughout the week.

**Men - 22 to 35 units**

### **Women - 15 to 24 units**

Be careful! Your chances of ill health are increased and drinking in bouts could cause accident and injury.

### **Men - 36 to 50 units**

### **Women - 25 to 35 units**

You are drinking too much and should try to cut down; damage to your health is increasingly likely.

### **Men - 50 units and over**

### **Women - 36 units and over**

You may have already suffered some harm and alcohol dependence is more likely. Take steps to cut down on drinking now.

It should be remembered that body size, age, previous illness and the taking of medication may also affect a person's ability to drink alcohol.

The Government's guidance on sensible drinking lists the following as examples of specific situations when the best advice is not to drink at all:

- before or during driving;
- before using machinery, electrical equipment or ladders;
- before working or in the workplace when appropriate functioning would be adversely affected by alcohol.

## **MANAGING ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE**

To effectively manage alcohol in the workplace, the following steps are recommended:

### **Step 1 – Find out if there is a problem:**

Problems may come from employees:

- Drinking during working hours.
- Drinking during breaks or before coming into work.
- Drinking heavily regularly, outside working hours.
- Getting drunk outside working hours.

Evidence of possible alcohol problems at work may be discovered through the examination of the symptoms detailed above.

### **Step 2 - Decide what to do:**

Are you happy for employees to drink alcohol?

- During working hours?
- During lunch and other breaks?
- On special occasions?

Managers must determine how to deal with an employee who is finding it difficult to control his or her drinking and whose work is suffering as a result or is not in a condition to work in a school. In deciding what to do, managers need to consult with and involve employees.

### **Step 3 - Taking action:**

In taking action, the Headteacher should ensure that she consults with the Chair of Governors. Staff need to be clear about the School's rules and what to do if they suspect employees' drinking is affecting their work. They also need to be aware of the implications of not tackling possible alcohol misuse, especially where safety is an issue. (Consult the Whistle blowing Policy).

### **Step 4 - Checking what you have done:**

As with any other kind of initiative, regular checks need to be made to see if the policy is working and whether any changes need to be made.

## **KEY POINTS: DRUGS**

Drug misuse can harm the misuser both physically and mentally and, through the misuser's actions, other people and the environment. Drugs can affect the brain and the body in a number of ways. They can alter the way a person thinks, perceives and feels, and this can lead to either impaired judgement or concentration. Drug misuse can also bring about the neglect of general health and well-being. This may adversely influence performance at work, even when the misuse takes place outside the workplace.

The possession of some drugs is illegal, exposing the misuser to the risk of criminal charges as well as causing harmful effects to their health. The penalties for offences involving controlled drugs depend on the classification of the drug. Penalties for misuse of Class A drugs are more severe than those for Class B drugs which in turn are more severe than the penalties for Class C drugs. Drug misuse can be a serious problem not only for the misuser but also for the school in which they work.

The employer could also be breaking the law if they knowingly allow drug-related activities in the workplace and fail to act. It is possible that in certain circumstances charges may be brought against an employer or an employee under either the Misuse of Drugs Act or the Health and Safety at Work Act or both. It would be up to the courts to decide on the circumstances of each case.

## **MANAGING DRUGS IN THE WORKPLACE**

To effectively manage drugs in the workplace, the following steps are recommended:

### **Step 1 - Find out if there is a problem:**

Signs of drug misuse include:

- Sudden mood changes.
- Unusual irritability or aggression.
- A tendency to become confused.
- Abnormal fluctuations in concentration and energy.
- Impaired job performance.
- Poor time-keeping.
- Increased short-term sickness absence.
- A deterioration in relationships with pupils colleagues or management.
- Dishonesty and theft (arising from the need to maintain an expensive habit).

In addition to behavioural changes, sickness record (eg, any periods of unexplained or frequently taken absence) may be examined along with unexplained dips in productivity, accident records/near misses and disciplinary problems or conduct problems with any employees?

## **Step 2 - Decide what to do:**

The Headteacher in consultation with the Governing Body and HR, may wish to consider:

- A programme of awareness for staff Inset.
- A programme of training for managers on recognising the signs of drug misuse. They will need to know what to do if they suspect an employee is misusing drugs or if they are approached by an employee who declares a drugs problem.
- Encouraging those with a drugs problem to seek help.
- The need for confidentiality if an employee admits to a drugs problem. People with a drugs problem may be persuaded to come forward if they are assured that their problems will be dealt with discreetly. However, employers also need to consider their own legal position, if evidence or information supplied to you suggests that an employee's drug problem has involved breaking the law.

## **Step 3 - Taking action**

Any infringement of the criminal law relating to the selling or misuse of drugs on School premises may be regarded as gross misconduct

## **Step 4 - Checking what you have done**

The Headteacher should regularly check to see if the policy is working and whether any changes need to be made.

## **PRESCRIBED MEDICATION**

Where an employee is using prescribed medication that may impact on their work performance or duties should inform the Headteacher.

## **COMMONLY MISUSED SUBSTANCES**

Heroin - physical dependence, tolerance, overdose can lead to death. HIV or Hepatitis through sharing needles

### **Class A**

**Cocaine** - dependence, restlessness, paranoia, damage to nasal membranes.

**Crack** - as for cocaine but can be hard to control, damage lungs.

**Ecstasy** - possible nausea and panic, overheating and dehydration, can be fatal, usually linked to liver and kidney problems.

**LSD** - no way to stop a bad trip, which may be frightening.

**Cannabis** - impaired co-ordination and increased risk of accidents, poor concentration, anxiety, depression.

## **Class B**

**Amphetamines** - insomnia, mood swings, irritability, panic. Comedown can be severe

**Tranquilizers** - dependency and tolerance, increased risk of accidents, overdose can be fatal, severe withdrawal.

## **Class C**

**Barbiturates** - dependency and tolerance, overdose can lead to coma or death. Severe withdrawal

**Solvents** - nausea, blackouts, increased risk of accidents. Fatal heart problems can cause instant death. It is not illegal to possess these.

**Reviewed by:** Patricia Coxhead

**Last Review Date:** April 2020

**Next Review Date:** April 2023