

St. Mel's College, Longford



Substance Misuse Policy

April 2026

School Roll No: 63750B

Diocese of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise



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Scope

This policy applies to the entire school community, including students, teachers, parents/guardians, ancillary staff, school visitors and all users of the school premises.

This policy applies:

- while on the school premises (school times and outside school hours)
- during school related activities including school tours and trips
- while representing the school in any way
- for anyone using the school.

This policy refers to any drug or substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally. Drug misuse or substance misuse extends beyond the use of illegal drugs and substances to include legal drugs and substances(including alcohol, any medication, illegal drugs, solvents, cleaning agents, aerosols, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vapes and devices) that are being misused.

Context

This policy has been drafted with direct reference to the following documents:

- St. Mel's College mission statement
- Code of Behaviour
- National Drugs strategy 2001 to 2008, reference Department circular 18/02
- The Education Act 1998
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- ‘Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health- led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017 to 2025’
- Report ‘The drugs situation in Ireland: an overview of trends from 2005 to 2015(6)’

School's Mission Statement

St. Mel's is a Catholic Diocesan College under a Board of Management, whose spiritual, academic, athletic and social programme is intended to enable male students to live a full, active, working Christian life. Our value system is based on mutual respect and courtesy along with honesty and integrity in our dealings with one another. We promote an environment where each male student is valued for himself, supported in developing his full potential, learns self-discipline and personal responsibility and where misconduct can be reasonably seen as unacceptable.

Relationship to school's mission

St. Mel's College is committed to excellence. The school provides a caring and disciplined environment in which all students are challenged to reach their academic and personal potential.

We realise that we must cater for the changing needs of today's world, and to that end, we review our various programmes.

The College Board of Management, parents, staff and students, working together as a school community within the resources available, aim to provide an education in the best possible environment for all its students.

Tackling the issue of substance abuse is a key element in creating a safe environment for all members of the school community.

Rationale

The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery', sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented following a report entitled 'The drugs situation in Ireland: an overview of trends from 2005 to 2015'. This report noted that drug misuse in Ireland was prevalent and that new substances are likely to enter the public domain. The report also recognised that the issue of substance use evolves and changes and so presents new challenges that will affect the health and wellbeing of young people. As a DEIS school St. Mel's College recognises and is aware of the prevalence of drugs and substance abuse in the local community.

Research has shown that schools have a developed strategy for responding to the issue of drug misuse, are best equipped to respond to drug related incidents as they arise and are most successful in terms of drug prevention and education. We reflect upon how our school can provide for the needs of our student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

The central objective of St. Mel's College substance misuse policy is the welfare, care, and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Goals/ Objectives

St. Mel's College aims to:

- Create a safe, healthy working environment for all staff and students
- Educate students so as to enable them to make healthy, informed choices and life skills
- Inform, support and educate parents and guardians

Policy Content

- i. Education concerning substance use
- ii. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug related incidents
- iii. Provision for training and staff development

i. Education concerning substance use

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme which is developmental and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment.

In St. Mel's College the programme of education on substance use and related topics at both Junior and Senior Cycle is age appropriate. The Junior Cycle SPHE programme contains lessons on substance abuse. At Senior Cycle level through the RE programme issues related to and on the topic of substance abuse are dealt with.

St. Mel's College welcomes outside agencies to enhance the work done in class.

ii. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents

Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use might include:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs tobacco on the school premises or during a school-related activity
- Intoxication/ unusual behaviour
- Disclosure about use
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school-related activity.

The use of vapes and e-cigarettes is strictly prohibited in St. Mel's College. This prohibition

extends to include all use of such devices whether the substances be used within these are legal or illegal.

St. Mel's College will respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice and or contact An Garda Síochána. Due care will be given to each incident including a pastoral response to an incident which may include a referral to a support agency. The principal and/ or deputy principals will assess each situation individually and determine the most appropriate action while maintaining the integrity of the school's code of behaviour.

Procedures

Certain procedures may be enacted in response to incidents involving alcohol tobacco and drug use. People will be informed of an incident and details on a need-to-know basis.

The principal or deputy principal should contact emergency services if they deem it necessary.

A record of the incident will be kept and passed on to external relevant agencies if needed.

The principal or deputy principal will inform parents or guardians of the student or students involved.

If illegal drugs are involved principal or deputy principal would inform the Gardai of the situation.

Pastoral support and referral to a support agency will be offered to those involved.

The wellbeing of the student and that of the school community is the primary focus of any response.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

- The Board of Management supports and is committed to providing relevant training or support for employees on matters relating to substance use.

- The Board will review this policy in accordance with the needs of the school.

- The Board will consider all reports from the principal and decide on sanctions for persons involved in breach of the policy.

- The Board will consider each case which may involve dealing with parents or guardians liaising with Gardai and responding to media inquiries.

Principal and deputy principal

- The principal and deputy principal are responsible for dealing with issues and incidents relating to substance used including alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

- Will be responsible for all decisions regarding investigation of an incident.

- Will inform the Board of Management and relevant personnel about any investigation

- Will ensure any written documentation and reports associated with an incident are kept securely.

- Will ensure that any prohibited substance is taken and disposed of in the relevant manner.

Teachers and ancillary staff.

- All teachers and staff are required to read this policy, accept this policy and be aware of the procedures outlined therein.

- Be aware of the professional responsibility to students in their care as outlined in the Code of Professional Conduct published by the Teaching Council.

- Always refer to the school principal or deputy principal as the designated liaison person or deputy designated liaison person.

- Refer all incidents substance abuse as outlined in the policy to the principal or deputy principal.

Students

- Students must take personal responsibility for their own actions relating to drug misuse and accept the sanctions.

-Students must not use, purchase, deal or sell any drug while on the school grounds or in school uniform during school related activities or while representing the school in any way.

Parents and Guardians

- All parents and guardians should be aware of this policy and its contents.
- Agree to this policy and the school code of behaviour.

iii.Provision for Training and Staff Development

The Board of Management is committed to training and staff development in St. Mel's College. The SPHE support service assists post primary level and training is available for staff. Well-being, providing and developing a supportive, safe school environment is an ongoing process in our school in line with our DEIS pillars. All new staff are made aware of this substance misuse policy.

Monitor, review and evaluation the policy

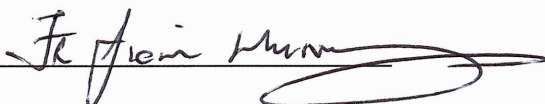
This policy will be reviewed taking cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in school-based programmes and feedback from parents/guardians, teachers and students.



Substance Misuse Policy

The Board of Management formally adopted and ratified this policy on the 27th May 2026.

It will be reviewed in May 2028.

Signed: 
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 27-05-26

Signed: 
Principal/ Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 27/05/26