

St. Augustine's College, Abbeyside, Dungarvan



Substance Use Policy and Procedures

Mission Statement.

St. Augustine's College is a caring community, committed to offering all of its students and staff a happy and safe environment in which they can work, learn, pray and play. We endeavour to facilitate the academic, personal, moral, spiritual and social development of each member of our school community. Our aim is to provide a balanced and well-rounded education for all our students.

1. Scope

This substance use policy applies to every member of the school community, including those using the school premises at any time.

2. Definition of a Drug

Any substance, including alcohol, tobacco, vapor nicotine, volatile substances, illegal use of prescribed medication, over-the-counter drugs, and all substances covered under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977-1984, or banned by the National Sports Council, that changes the way the body feels, acts, and thinks.

3. Definition of the School

- a) Anywhere within the boundaries of the school grounds, including the school bus shelter.
- b) All open areas within the school boundary or wall.
- c) The playing fields and all other recreational facilities.
- d) The public property, roadways, and footpaths in the immediate vicinity of the school where school students and staff congregate on the way to and from school at the start and end of the day's activities.
- e) The policy also extends to approved school outings of any duration, either within or outside of Ireland.

4. Rationale

- a) The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges, which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, vapor nicotine, and drugs is part of this reality. Our school needs to reflect upon how we might provide for the needs of our students and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.
- b) The Education Act 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- c) The National Drugs Strategy, "Building on Experience," is now government policy, and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- d) The recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled "Drug Use Prevention (November 2001)" underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.
- e) The World Health Organization is of the view that the safety of e-cigarettes and vapes has not been scientifically demonstrated, and the potential risks they pose for the health of users remain undetermined.

5. Aims

- a) To create a healthier and safer school environment.
- b) To safeguard every member of the school community.
- c) To deliver an appropriate education programme.
- d) To provide comprehensive, well-balanced drug information for staff and parents/guardians.
- e) To enable students to make their own informed decisions, this will minimize the harm from drug use to themselves, their families, and communities.

6. Management of Alcohol, Tobacco, Vapor Nicotine, and Drug Related Incidents.

- a) Where suspicion of use of the above-named substances has been confirmed and/or is supported by evidence, or where a specific disclosure has been made, then all information in relation to the incident must be recorded.
- b) The current policy and procedures in relation to the above-named substances,
- c) along with the sanctions, will follow the procedures outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour. Those in breach of this rule will be automatically suspended from the school
- d) Due care will be important in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response.
- e) An appropriate pastoral response to such an incident may include referral to Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain, Year Head, Parents/Guardians, Deputy Principal/Principal.
- f) An appropriate disciplinary response may include referral to
- g) Year Head, Parents/Guardians, Deputy Principal/ Principal, The Board of Management.
- h) Health Board Specialists or other agencies may be contacted for advice and assistance.
- i) Where a suspected illegal substance has been found on the school premises, then the Gardaí, via the Juvenile Liaison Officer, must be informed immediately to arrange for its safe removal.
- j) Any member of the school community found to be in possession of or involved in the supply of illegal substances must be reported directly to the Principal.
- k) Where the evidence confirms drug use or possession of drugs by any member of the school community, then that person will be suspended until such time as it is confirmed safe to allow him/her to return or may be permanently excluded from the school.
- l) Where the misuse of drugs acts 1977-1984 has been broken, the Gardaí will be informed.

The sharing of over-the-counter medication (e.g., paracetamol, ibuprofen, etc.) between students is not allowed. This is a serious and potential risk to the health and safety of students.

7. Alcohol on School Premises

- a) The school shall remain an alcohol-free area during its day-to-day operation.
- b) The Principal is responsible for granting permission for functions, either fundraising or social, to be held on the school premises at which alcohol may be supplied or sold.
- c) The Principal will ensure that all requirements relating to the sale or supply of alcohol, as detailed in the Drug and Alcohol Legislation Act, are met.
- d) When making decisions in relation to the sale and supply of alcohol on the school premises, the Principal will take into account the reputation of the school and the duty of care to students, staff, and the community.
- e) Alcohol must not be supplied or sold for the consumption of students or those under 18 years of age.
- f) School functions, at which alcohol will be available, cannot be attended by any student unless they are accompanied by a supervising adult or their parent /guardian.

8. Implementation of the Policy

- a) The school will **not** administer medication of any description to any students. This includes over-the-counter drugs, i.e., paracetamol.
- b) Parents/Guardians of any student using prescribed medication must inform the school office, where a register will be kept.
- c) Any solvents and volatile substances necessary for use in the maintenance and upkeep of the school will be kept under lock and key.
- d) The use of certain substances may be necessary for delivering the school curriculum i.e., Sciences, Home Economics
- e) Ongoing staff in-service in association with the Department of Education and Science, The HSE, and other agencies that may be deemed appropriate will form an integral part of the implementation of this policy
- f) The education component to be delivered to students will be timetabled within the Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.).
- g) The use of an outside visitor/speaker in conjunction with a wider substance use module will be considered. This could also prove useful for informing parents/guardians on an ongoing basis.

9. Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed regularly. Ongoing review and evaluation should take cognizance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme, and feedback from parents/guardians, staff, and students.

10. Conclusion

The drawing up of an appropriate policy on drugs is a difficult and involved task. Our school has certain legal and moral obligations to a child who is using or abusing drugs and to the student body as a whole. There is a duty on the school, where it reasonably believes a child poses a real threat to the health and safety of other students, to take all reasonable steps to prevent such a threat becoming a reality. The sanctions imposed will be at the discretion of the school.

Signed: 
(Chairperson of the BOM)

Date: 17 / 9 / 26.

Signed: 
(Principal)

Date: 17 / 9 / 26

Reviewed 2025

To Be reviewed 2027