



Sacred Heart School
Tullamore

SHS Substance Misuse Policy 2026

Mission Statement

In keeping with the Mercy tradition, we seek to achieve the holistic development and the achievement of the full potential of each student, particularly those that are marginalised. We strive to ensure that our students leave our school with a healthy self-image, enhanced by the life skills and abilities necessary to make a positive contribution to society. This Substance Misuse Policy supports our mission by protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of all students, enabling them to make informed, responsible choices free from the harms of substance misuse.

Scope

This policy applies to the entire school community including teachers, students, parents/guardians and all users of the school building. The policy applies to all school buildings and the grounds surrounding them. It also applies to all school related activities on or off the school grounds.

Substance abuse is a serious issue in society and can have a detrimental impact on the lives of those who abuse and those around them. Misuse of substances adversely affects the positive atmosphere in a school and diminishes the ability of individuals to achieve their full potential. It impacts on their physical and mental wellbeing and is not an appropriate preparation for adult life. These detrimental and negative impacts are contrary to the mission and aims of the Sacred Heart Secondary School.

Legal Context

The Board of Management has specific legal obligations under the following Acts of the Oireachtas

- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017
- Education (Student and Parent Charter) Act 2019
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- National Drugs Strategy
- Health and Safety at work act 2005

Objectives

1. To protect students, teachers, staff and parents from dangers arising out of substance use and misuse in school and school related activities.
2. To ensure that there is a programme of education regarding substance use.
3. To outline the roles of the various partners in education regarding substance abuse
4. To outline the procedures for dealing with any incidents of substance use or misuse.

Policy Content

For the purposes of this policy, substance abuse is defined as the use of any substance that changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally. Such substances include:

- Legal drugs, e.g. alcohol and tobacco,
- Illegal drugs
- Substances in daily use whose misuse produces a volatile effect, e.g. sprays and solvents
- Illegal use of prescribed medication/misuse of over the counter drugs
- Legitimately prescribed medication may be used provided the parent/guardian has informed the school.

Smoking

The Sacred Heart is a smoke-free area which means people are not permitted to smoke on the school premises or in its immediate environs.

- Pupils may not smoke on any school trip/outing or while engaged in any school related activity.
- Pupils found smoking on school premises, grounds, or while engaged in school related activities will be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal and **will result in immediate suspension. Possession of a vape on the school campus will result in immediate suspension.**
- **In both cases the matter will also be referred to the Year Head Committee and/or Board of Management for additional sanctions.**

Alcohol

The possession, use or supply of alcohol in the school premises or grounds, on school trips/outing or during any school related activities will not be tolerated. Pupils found in possession of, using or supplying alcohol on school premises, grounds, its environs and on school related activities will be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal and **will result in immediate suspension. Possession of alcohol on the school campus will result in immediate suspension. The matter will also be referred to the Year Head Committee and/or Board of Management for additional sanctions.**

Substances including Illegal Drugs

The possession, use or supply of substances including illicit drugs, solvents etc. on the school premises or environs, on school trips/outing or during any school related activities will not be tolerated and appropriate procedures will be followed as outlined. The possession, use or supply of illegal drugs or prescribed medication or over the counter medication which is intended for misuse will result in immediate suspension. The matter may also be referred to an external agency or authority (Tusla, An Garda Siochana).

In all cases the matter will also be referred to the Year Head Committee and/or Board of Management for additional sanctions.

Managing an Incident

The primary focus in dealing with all incidents of substance misuse will be balancing the welfare of those involved with the welfare of the school community as a whole. All cases will be dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Procedure

Any member of the teaching staff who becomes aware of or sees something they suspect to be an inappropriate substance in a pupil's possession, should confiscate the item or items and bring this matter to the attention of the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head immediately. Ancillary Staff should report their concerns to the Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher or supervising teacher where relevant as soon as possible. Where it is the opinion of the school management that an immediate danger to students or the school community exists, the school reserves the right to suspend or temporarily remove the student/s suspected of being involved in the incident pending further investigation.

An investigation will be carried out by the Principal / Deputy Principal / Year Head. It may be necessary to engage the expert advice of a third party depending on the gravity of the situation. All stages and details of the investigation will be recorded. Parents/Guardians of any student/s involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of outside agencies, such as the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer or Community Garda, the HSE, etc may be sought. Any suspicious substance once found will be stored in a secure location. The Gardai will be contacted in order to remove the substance, establish its nature and arrange for its disposal. The school will take possession of any substances related to the incident. These will be retained unless otherwise instructed by the appropriate outside agencies. Student/s involved in substance abuse/misuse will be subject to the sanctions outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour which may include expulsion from the school.

Roles and Responsibilities Parents

Parents are expected to:

- Support the School's Substance Misuse Policy
- Recognise they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse
- Assist and fully cooperate with the school as it seeks to deal with substance abuse related issues.
- Contribute to the review of the School's Substance Misuse Policy
- To inform the School if they become aware of a substance abuse issue concerning their own or other pupils in the school.

Students

Students are expected to:

- Adhere to the rules and guidelines with regard to substance use and abuse in the school
- Inform the school if they become aware of substance abuse issue/s in the school
- Cooperate fully with the school as it seeks to deal with substance abuse related issues
- Contribute to the review of the School Substance Misuse Policy

Teachers are expected to:

- be familiar with the School's Substance Misuse Policy
- be vigilant in the course of their daily work with regard to substance abuse
- report as soon as possible any concerns which they may have regarding substance abuse
- be aware of the sensitive nature of each case and be mindful of confidentiality.

Management is responsible for:

- Making staff aware of the substance abuse policy particularly the procedures for managing an incident.

- Ensuring an appropriate programme of education is provided in the area of substance abuse/misuse.
- Conducting an investigation into a substance abuse issue.
- The Principal may seek assistance from the Deputy Principal, Class Teacher, Guidance Counsellor or other relevant school personnel or outside agencies in the conduct of an investigation.
- Maintaining records of any investigation/incident.
- Take possession of any illegal substances.
- Implementing the appropriate sanction arising from the incident.

Substance Misuse Education

While a range of subject areas deal with the issue of substance abuse it is the SPHE programme that has specific responsibility for education. Through this programme the school will endeavour to ensure that:

- Students have clear information about the effects of various drugs.
- Students examine attitudes to alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances in their lives and in the environment in which they live.
- Students develop with the skills to make informed and healthy decisions around substance use. Contributions from outside agencies will be facilitated from time to time provided such contributions compliment the school's approach, values and ethos.

Date: May 12 2026

Signed: 

