

Rathcormac NS

Drumcliffe, Co Sligo F91 NX21

071-9143962 office@rathcormacns.ie



Rathcormac National School

Substance Use Policy

Definition

Our understanding of the term "drugs" is informed by the following definition:

"A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels."

In our policy, when we refer to a substance/drug, we mean:

- Medicines (prescription and non-prescription)
- Solvents (e.g., correction fluid, white spirits, cleaning agents, aerosol deodorants, hair spray, aerosol fixatives, toxic markers)
- Nicotine (including vaping products and e-cigarettes)
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All school premises at all times
- Students during school time and school-related activities
- Staff during school time and school-related activities (while in view of or in charge of children)
- Parents while visiting the premises or assisting with school-related activities
- All other visitors to the school premises

Relationships to School Vision

This policy on Substance Use reflects the school vision, which states that our school aims to:

"Provide a safe and secure environment for learning to take place."

- **Rang 3 & 4** – Safe use of medicines, dangerous substances, nicotine/alcohol
- **Rang 5 & 6** – Safe use of medicines, dangerous substances, nicotine/alcohol, illegal drugs

Lessons will be delivered using the *Walk Tall* programme, *Stay Safe* programme, and HSE-approved materials. External speakers may be invited to supplement classroom learning.

2. Management of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug-Related Incidents

- **Medicines:** Pupils are not permitted to have or use medicines on the school premises unless in accordance with the Administration of Medication Policy.
- **Solvents:** Pupils are prohibited from possessing or using solvents. Solvent-based products used for educational purposes will be stored securely.
- **Nicotine & Vaping Products:** Prohibited for all individuals on school grounds under the *Tobacco Products Act 2002*.
- **Alcohol:** Pupils are prohibited from having or using alcohol on the school premises. Adults may consume alcohol on special occasions with Board of Management approval, in compliance with the *Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018*.
- **Illegal Drugs:** Strictly prohibited for all individuals under the *Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977-2016*.

Procedures for managing an incident.

The school will respond to incidents involving alcohol, nicotine and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain circumstances it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be important in deciding between a pastoral and disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving substance use may include referral to a support agency. Where a member of staff requires support, schools may consider facilitating links with The Employee Support Agency -Spectrum Life

A disciplinary response will refer to the school code of behaviour.

1. A student found with a prohibited substance or suspected to be using a prohibited substance. If a situation occurs the following procedures will be put in place
 - a. Confiscate,
 - b. Investigate,
 - c. Inform parents,
 - d. Any further disciplinary action as required
 - e. Record incident.

2. Any substance found on the premises e.g. cigarette butts, alcohol will be disposed of safely to ensure wellbeing of pupils.
3. Any person appearing on the premises obviously intoxicated will be asked to vacate the premises immediately (with the permission of the board of management)
4. Any staff member found in breach of the policy will be reminded of the policy, receive a verbal warning, followed by a written warning and any disciplinary action as required.
5. If any staff member becomes aware of a parent/guardian coming to collect a pupil, obviously under the influence of a substance and incapable of caring for a pupil, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the wellbeing of the pupil. Gardaí and other relevant authorities may be contacted in severe cases.

3. Provision for Training and Staff Development

- Staff will receive ongoing training on identifying and addressing substance use concerns. Advice may be sought from Oide advisers in the Health and Wellbeing Team regarding the delivery of the SPHE curriculum within the school or similar external resources to assist in staff professional development in this area.
- The school will work closely with the Health Service Executive (HSE), National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), and local support services.
- New staff will be briefed on the substance use policy as part of the induction process.
- Parental education on SPHE and substance misuse issues will be promoted through parents' evenings and the school website.

Success Criteria

Indicators of the policy's success include:

- Positive feedback from teachers, parents, and pupils
- Observation of behavior in classrooms, corridors, and the school yard
- Effective intervention and support in substance-related incidents

Roles and Responsibilities

- The school principal has overall responsibility for policy implementation.
- Class teachers are responsible for delivering educational content.
- Parents are responsible for supporting school efforts in substance education.
- Other staff members (e.g., SNAs, PE teachers, caretakers, cleaners) must report any concerns.
- Adults supervising pupils on school-related activities must adhere to the policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management every two years or when necessary. Feedback from staff, students, and parents will be considered in policy updates.

Ratification

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed: Thomas A. Lee

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Date: 8/4/2025