



Substance Use Policy

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Introduction

This policy outlines the school's role in relation to substance education and the procedures to be followed in response to substance abuse or misuse in the school. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour and SPHE Policy.

Our School Philosophy & Mission Statement

Students who attend Galway Educate Together Secondary School will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere and environment in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which respect for self and others is the norm. Our school operates under the direct patronage of Educate Together and there are four underlying principles which form our ethos; we are a co-educational school, democratically run, multi-denominational and child centred.

The school aims to provide an innovative, 21st Century approach which will promote excellence in learning and teaching as well as prioritising wellbeing, resilience, student voice and active citizenship. Each student will be encouraged to reach their potential in a happy, safe and inclusive environment where they are engaged in and excited about their learning. The School's Substance Use Policy is rooted in our mission to educate our students in a safe, disciplined and caring environment. Our aim is to prepare students to be responsible citizens and to enable them to make informed, healthy and responsible choices.

Rationale:

The school is aware of its responsibility under legislation regarding substance abuse:

- The Education Act with its emphasis on the social and personal development of the students, including the promotion of healthy living.
- The National Drugs Strategy
- The Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and 1984
- Tobacco Regulations 1995 and Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002

This policy aims to cooperate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in DE circular 18/02.

Scope:

The phrase 'Substance Use', in this document, refers to the use and abuse of any of the substances listed below. This is not an exhaustive list.

- Alcohol

- Tobacco
- Illegal drugs or controlled substances and all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977)
- Paraphernalia associated with illegal drugs or controlled substances and all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977)
- Solvents
- Prescribed medication
- Non-prescribed medication, including vitamins, herbal remedies etc
- E-cigarettes including vapes
- Legal and illegal highs

This policy applies to all members of the Galway Educate Together School (the 'School') community: students, teachers, ancillary staff, parents/ guardians and any users of the school buildings.

This policy applies to all School buildings and grounds with the following exceptions:

- i. materials stored in the Science laboratories or Home Economics classroom for use in classes
- ii. special functions authorised by the Principal/Board of Management.

This policy applies to students in school, while travelling to and from school, while in the vicinity of the school or while on any school related activity at home or abroad.

Aims and Objectives:

This policy aims to:

- Promote a healthy, safe and drug-free environment for all members of our school community
- Enable our students to make healthy and appropriate life choices through substance education
- Outline clear and fair procedures for dealing with incidents relating to Substance Use.

Substance Education and Training:

The aim of substance education is to promote the health and welfare of the school community and to enable pupils to make healthy, informed choices.

Galway Educate Together Secondary School is committed to:

- Improving students' awareness of drugs and their effects on the human body
- Promoting students' understanding of the reasons why drugs are used and misused.
- Raising student awareness of the consequences of drug use and misuse to the individual, the family, peers, local communities, and society
- Supporting parents in their effort to educate their children in alcohol and substance abuse

- Enabling students to develop a range of skills and techniques appropriate for handling situations related to drugs and drug use
- Helping students to explore and develop their own attitudes to drug use
- Enabling students to identify sources of information and appropriate personal support and be able to make use of these sources should they require them
- Providing education and training for staff in coping with Substance Use incidents

For Students:

The school community recognises that the most effective education in this area aims at enhancing self-esteem and developing social competence, as well as providing information. Substance education is provided for all students in the context of:

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE), a mandatory subject for all students in Junior Cycle which follows the Department of Education & Skills syllabus
- Ethical Education, which provides a platform for students to discuss the moral and philosophical underpinnings of modern society, including age-appropriate debate and discussion about drug and substance use and misuse
- Civic, Social & Political Education, which deals with substance use in the context of citizenship and the law.

Substance education will be delivered by teachers but may be supplemented by outside agencies or individuals who have specific expertise. The contributions of such agencies and individuals will be subject to review.

For Staff:

The School will facilitate training for staff involved in the SPHE programmes and Wellness programmes. Specific training may be made available to key staff in relation to managing substance-related incidents.

For Parents:

The School may hold information evenings for parents, at the requests of the Parents & Guardians Community (PGC). The PGC may also organise substance education talks for members.

Management of Alcohol, Tobacco, e-Cigarettes and other substances:

The School aims to encourage a healthy lifestyle for every member of the School community. For this reason:

- The possession, use or supply of tobacco, e-cigarettes or vapes and alcohol is always forbidden in School buildings and on School grounds

- The possession, use or supply of illegal drugs or controlled substances and associated paraphernalia, and all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977), or the attempt to arrange same, is forbidden in all parts of the School
- The intent to supply illegal drugs or controlled substances and associated paraphernalia, and all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977) to other members of the School community is forbidden
- Solvents may only be used for their legitimate function by members of staff, and by pupils when under the direct supervision of a member of staff
- Tippex and aerosols are discouraged and inappropriate use of these is forbidden
- Medication of any kind may only be used in accordance with the terms of this policy document. This includes CBD and CBD products, which may only be used with written advice from a doctor and must be submitted in advance of use in School.

This list is not exhaustive.

School Practice in Relation to Substance Misuse and Abuse:

Management of incidents involving pupils in which school rules relating to substance use have been breached fall under two headings: disciplinary and support:

Disciplinary:

- As is the case for any disciplinary issue, such incidents will be dealt with in line with the School's Code of Positive Behaviour. The School reserves the right to remove temporarily from the School, any student involved in a suspected substance misuse incident, pending an investigation of the incident. This applies particularly where there is a threat to the safety, health and wellbeing of students, staff and members of the School community.
- In all instances where a student is suspected of substance abuse/misuse, an in-depth investigation will be carried out.
- The School reserves the right to ask students to empty out the contents of their lockers and/or schoolbags, and have students empty out the contents of their pockets and personal belongings in the presence of another member of staff. This should not take place in the presence of other students, to preserve the dignity of the student.
- Parents/carers will be contacted immediately and requested to come to School while an investigation takes place.
- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and' paraphernalia associated with the incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- In the event of a medical emergency, the School will seek appropriate medical assistance. Parents/guardians will be contacted.

- In the event of an incident, the School will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident, and will record these statements.
- The School will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including, but not limited to; a verbal warning, a written warning, lunchtime intervention, school-based intervention, suspension, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
- The School will ensure that appropriate pastoral and restorative supports are offered to any students affected by incidents of substance misuse.
- The Code of Positive Behaviour and will inform the outcome of the investigation.
- The School reserves the right to exclude a student from the School. In such circumstances parents/guardians have the right to appeal such exclusion, under Section 29 of the Education and Welfare Act 2000.

Support:

As part of our duty of care to students, a programme of pastoral support will be recommended. This may include referral to an appropriate support agency or medical practitioner. The School reserves the right to insist on counselling or other professional support for a student found in breach of this policy. The student's continued enrolment in the School and/or their return to school after a suspension may be conditional on the student's participation in the agreed programme of support. This does not prohibit the School from imposing sanctions which it considers appropriate in accordance with the School's Code of Positive Behaviour.

Services that may be contacted to support students may include, but is not limited to:

- An Garda Síochána Juvenile Liaison Officer
- School Guidance Counsellor
- Social or Family Services
- National Educational Psychological Service
- Local Services such as Jigsaw, Pieta House or appropriate addiction services
- General Practitioner
- HSE

Roles & Responsibilities

Staff:

Where a student is believed to be in possession, or under the influence of a prohibited substance, or in possession of drug paraphernalia:

- The student will be supervised while the Principal or Deputy Principal is informed and asked to come to the scene. In their absence a person nominated by the Principal or Deputy Principal may be informed.
- If necessary, the student may be asked to bring their belongings to the school office.
- Students can be asked to empty the contents of their belongings in the presence of the Principal, Deputy Principal, or a nominated staff member in their absence.
- Students and their belongings (including schoolbags and lockers) may be searched in the presence of a parent or guardian, by the Principal or Deputy Principal, or in their absence, a person nominated by the Principal or Deputy Principal. In the event of parental consent not being given, An Garda Síochána may be asked to intervene.
- The Principal or Deputy Principal will undertake an investigation.

Where a member of staff finds or is alerted to the existence of a suspicious substance:

- Such finds will be reported immediately to the Principal.
- Any suspicious substance will be confiscated and stored by the School in a secure location.
- The Gardaí will be contacted to remove the substance, establish its nature and arrange for its disposal.
- The School will maintain a record of all items confiscated, and the Principal or Deputy Principal will undertake an investigation and follow up accordingly.

Where the School is made aware of a concern where a student may be involved in illegal substance use outside of school:

- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately
- Parents/guardians will be invited to meet with the Principal and discuss the concern.
- The Principal may make parents/guardians aware of available support services and the need to contact their GP.

All staff involved in any incident, will, at the earliest possible opportunity, make a written record of what occurred and forward it to the Principal. The account will explicitly outline the 'who, what, where, when and why' of the incident from the perspective of the staff member.

Students involved in any incident will also be required to make a written record of what occurred. This will normally happen in School. The account should explicitly outline the 'who, what, where, when and why' of the incident from the perspective of the student.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are expected to acknowledge the importance of all school programmes that the School provides for students. They should attend, where possible, talks, workshops and courses provided for parents/guardians in relation to substance use. Parents/Guardians should recognise that they are in

partnership with the School in relation to informing their children about substance misuse and abuse. They should assist and cooperate fully with the School as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

To assist parents/carers in their role the School will:

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the School regarding education programmes
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents/carers on the best use of available resources in the community to support the School in its programme and policy implementation.
- In the event of an incident of substance abuse, Galway ETSS will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the School community.

Parents/Guardians or any other interested groups are welcome to make an appointment to visit the School and discuss any aspect of the policy.

Students

Students are expected to comply in full with this policy and with the School's Code of Positive Behaviour. Student should report any suspected incidents of substance misuse or abuse to the Principal or Deputy Principal.

Confidentiality

The School recognises the importance of limiting the number of people involved in investigating and managing a substance misuse/abuse incident. It is the aim of the School only to involve those concerned with an incident. Incidents relating to breaches of the Policy are considered confidential and will not be discussed with any students, staff or parents/guardians, outside of those directly involved.

However, students and parents/guardians will be made aware of the following:

- The duty of care of staff members precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any student when they encounter a substance abuse incident or suspected substance abuse incident
- The School may be required to contact, as appropriate and according to statutory child protection procedures, such authorities as the Gardaí, Túsla and the HSE
- The School may be duty bound to notify certain persons about the incident and/or the outcomes of the incident investigation under statute, regulations or DE guidelines

All external inquiries relating to such incidents, including media inquiries will be dealt with by the Principal and/or the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

Ratified by the Board of Management, February 2023.

