



1. Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their students in this regard and how they might respond to issues appropriately that can be both sensitive and emotive.

The Education Act, 1998 provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.

The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016 set out a detailed programme of action to combat the problem of substance misuse in society in Ireland. These strategy documents, which are government policy, highlight the important contribution that schools can make in the area of education and prevention and require that a substance use policy be put in place.

Monaghan Collegiate School's policy takes account of the needs and challenges that our young people face and is based on the strategies and guidance mentioned. The policy is consistent with our ethos.

2. Scope of this policy

a. To what will the policy apply?

The term 'substance' will be interpreted in a broad sense to include alcohol, tobacco, legal/illegal drugs and any other dangerous substances. Note: medication, which has been prescribed by a medical person for a student, should only be taken by that student.

b. To whom will the policy apply?

This policy addresses substance use issues mainly in respect of students. However, it also applies to all people employed by the school.

c. When will the policy apply?

This policy is in effect during school time (including break times), and when students are easily identifiable as members of the school community while wearing the school uniform. The policy also applies to all school related events such as team training, sporting events, international/national school tours, and day trips.

d. What are the aims of our post-primary policy?

- To provide a programme of education for all students in substance use issues.
- To equip our school to deal with issues relating to substance use.
- To meet statutory responsibilities in the area of substance use.
- To reinforce the role of our school in contributing to local and national issues of substance use.
- To minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within schools/communities.
- To manage incidents of substance misuse in a consistent manner.
- To provide a framework of support for the stakeholders of our school.

3. Educational measures relating to substance use

Issues of substance use are addressed in the following ways:

a. Subject-based learning in a classroom setting:

- Social Personal and Health Education (S.P.H.E.).
- Relationship and Sexuality Education (R.S.E.)
- Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (L.C.V.P.) Link Modules.
- The school's Religious Education (R.E.) programme at senior cycle.
- Junior Cycle Wellbeing programme.
- General teaching opportunities where related subjects may be considered in classroom discussions.

b. Visiting speakers:

All guest speakers/external agencies to the school are approved by the principal and are undertaken in the presence of a teacher. Guest speakers and/or external agencies are made aware of the school ethos and are asked to ensure that the material is age appropriate. The programme must be provided in line with this ethos.

From time to time, the school, a subject department, and/or an individual teacher may invite a group or guest speaker to address issues relating to substance use. Such groups will deliver a talk or will organise an activity to support the school and its students in creating awareness of the dangers of substance use. Some examples of external agencies/guest speakers are listed below:

- An Garda Síochána
- Alcoholics Anonymous Ireland
- Love for Life

c. Visiting speakers on national curricula

Guest speakers and/or external agencies may be invited in to the school to support learning in specific areas of the national curricula that have or may have a substance use component. For example:

- S.P.H.E.
To provide extra information and to support classroom learning.

- L.C.V.P. Link Modules
To provide a personal and in-depth understanding to students in preparation for writing documents such as the Summary Report.
- R.S.E.
To enable students to understand more fully the effects that substance use can have on relationships.

Visiting speakers to support learning

Guest speakers and/or external agencies can also be invited in to the school to support further learning in the area of substance use. For example:

- Transition Year (T.Y.)
- School's R.E. programme at senior cycle

d. Pastoral care at school

Communication and/or support via:

- Head of Year support
- Guidance and counselling support

4. Management of substance use related incidents

- a. Handling an incident** A student who is found to be engaging in substance use/misuse will be referred to a relevant staff member i.e. Head of Year and Senior Management, the Principal as DLP or in their absence the Deputy Principal as DDLP.

Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use might include:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco or other dangerous substances on the school premises or during a school related activity.
- Possession or supply of the above substances and/or associated paraphernalia on the school premises or during a school related activity.
- Disclosure about the use of the above substances.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the school's Code of Behaviour in its entirety. Specifically related Level 4 sanction:

Level 4 – Principal/Deputy Principal's sanction.

Suspension is a very serious sanction and is used most sparingly. A suspension may also in some cases be served as an internal withdrawal, at the discretion of the Principal/Deputy Principal on consultation with the parents.

There are a number of offences that will automatically incur a period of suspension. These include:

- Swearing at a teacher or giving a teacher serious verbal abuse,
- Hitting someone with malicious intent,
- Touching someone in an inappropriate or sexual manner,
- **Smoking, vaping, drinking alcohol or intent to do so in school uniform or on the school premises,**
- Such behaviour as would bring the good name of the school into disrepute.
- A culmination of misbehaviour or failure to follow the instruction of the Principal.

b. Suspected Serious Incidents For serious incidents of substance use, sanctions up to and including expulsion may be considered.

- The school may, when appropriate, apply sanctions in response to behaviour that occurs outside the school grounds and/or the school day.
- In cases where the use of drugs is seriously suspected or substances appearing to drugs is found, advice should be sought from An Garda Síochána.
- Parents should be contacted if the Gardai are informed and offered the opportunity to be present during any investigation.

c. Confidentiality

If a teacher becomes aware that a student is (or may be) at risk, the school's Designated Liaison Person (D.L.P) should be notified immediately. It is important that students are made aware of the limits of confidentiality. The wellbeing and welfare of the teacher and of the student must be the primary focus.

d. Agencies

Substance misuse issues are dealt with through the multi-agency approach. Among our contacts are:

- An Garda Síochána
- C.A.H.M.S. (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- Tusla (Child and Family Agency)
- N.E.P.S. (National Educational Psychological Service)
- The Strengthening Families Programme
- Y.A.P. (Youth Advocate Programmes)

5. Training and staff development relating to substance use

The school facilitates (P.D.S.T. or other approved organisations) training for staff involved in the teaching of S.P.H.E. Management are committed to upholding our Child Protection responsibilities and the appropriate training and certification is offered to staff.

6. Implementation considerations

a. Other relevant policies

Our School Code of Behaviour and Child Protection Safeguarding Statement should be viewed in conjunction with this policy.

b. Communication, involvement and dissemination

The policy will be uploaded onto the school website and also referenced in the staff handbook.

c. Evaluation

We are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of this policy. Specifically important to that process is:

- Pupil feedback
- Staff feedback
- Parental feedback

d. Ratification

The Board of Management ratified this policy on 5th October 2020

e. Review and Development

We are committed to the review and development of our school policies. As part of our ongoing review process, this policy will be examined to reflect feedback from our evaluation practices and to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.