



**Belmayne Educate Together  
Secondary School  
Roll Number 68346 T**

**Substance Misuse Policy**

## Introduction

This policy was informed by the [Substance Use Guidelines](#) set out by the Department of Education. The policy was initially drafted by school management. As part of our mission statement we will maintain a positive, progressive learning environment where every student will reach their potential and be encouraged to open their minds and become life-long learners. We seek to promote healthy lifestyles for all in a safe, supportive and non-threatening environment.

## Scope

The term “substance” includes alcohol, tobacco, legal/illegal drugs and over the counter/prescribed medication and other dangerous substances.

This policy addresses substance use issues in respect of students, however the policy applies also to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians, and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them. The policy applies during school time (including break times) and to all school related activities including school trips and sports activities.

## Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well being. 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 student cohort and respond appropriately to issues 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, 2009-2016](#) sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government Departments and Agencies to combat the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. The strategy, which is Government policy, highlights the important contribution that schools can make in the area of education and prevention, and requires them to have substance use policies in place.
- [The European Drug Report 2019: Trends and Developments](#) highlight the increasing drug use in Ireland.

## Objectives

- to provide a comprehensive programme of education for all students in substance use issues
- to equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities
- to reinforce the role of the school in contributing to local and national strategies in relation to substance use education & prevention
- to minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within schools/communities
- to manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner
- to support parents and pupils in understanding and addressing substance misuse.

## 1. Education concerning substance use

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is taken by all junior cycle students. SPHE provides students with opportunities to develop the skills and competencies to care for themselves and others and to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. The content of the SPHE programme, relating to substance misuse, will be addressed in an age appropriate manner during SPHE class time. In addition, the school will draw on the expertise available within the community such as parents, Gardaí, Juvenile Liaison Officers, Health Board, the Education Staff of the Regional Drugs Task Force and the Support Staff of the PDST. Any use of an outside visitor/speaker to enhance the work done in class will always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and will be undertaken in the presence of a teacher.

## 2. Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents

### **Smoking**

- The school building and the vicinity around the school building is a non-smoking area (as per the Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2004).
- Students, staff or visitors are not permitted to smoke, vape or be in possession of cigarettes or similar on the school premises or on any other school related activity.
- Students found smoking or vaping, or in the possession of cigarettes, will be reported to the school management and parents/guardians will be informed.

### **Alcohol**

- The School premises is an alcohol-free area.
- No student is allowed to bring alcohol into the school or on any school activity, or to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities. If a teacher is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of alcohol, the teacher will immediately inform the school management and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a student comes on to the premises under the influence of alcohol, their parents shall be called to take them home.
- Students breaking these regulations will be dealt with according to the School's Code of Behaviour.
- Alcohol will not be used as prizes in raffles.
- Were a teacher or other adult to come to the school under the influence of alcohol, the Principal will take appropriate action.

### **Illicit Drugs and Solvents**

- Students, staff and all visitors are forbidden to be in possession of or using illicit drugs or solvents or aerosols (these will be confiscated) on the school premises.
- Illicit drugs found on school premises should be locked away and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them. Teachers should alert school management as soon as possible.
- If a member of staff is of the opinion that a student or adult is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, the teacher will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where the School suspects distribution of illicit drugs, an investigation will be carried out where warranted. Parents of any students involved will be informed. The advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer will be sought.

The response to incidents involving substance misuse in the school will be largely of a pastoral, rather than a disciplinary nature depending on the severity of the incident. It may be considered necessary in certain circumstances to seek legal advice. A written account of all incidents will be kept by the school in the student file. School personnel will seek to establish the facts and to be clear

about the nature of the incident before deciding on a course of action. There will be no assumption of guilt. In the context of possible further investigation into alleged possession / sale etc. of substances by outside authorities, staff are advised that opinions should be stated as opinions rather than facts.

The student should not be confronted openly before their peers. There should be no assumption of guilt regarding substance misuse, as there are a variety of conditions, which might mimic the suspected misuse of substances. The possession of tablets may be for medicinal use. The teacher is entitled to request the surrender of a suspicious substance until the situation has been investigated and the substance either stored securely or returned. This should be done with minimal fuss. The teacher should not seek to search the student or their possessions or locker. Where there is a refusal to cooperate, the student should be brought to the Principal or Deputy Principal whose responsibility it is to proceed with the matter.

The Principal or Deputy Principal will recognise that the health/safety and the wellbeing of the student/students is paramount and will seek medical aid if deemed necessary. The student will be provided with the appropriate guidance and support they need. The role of the teacher carries a duty of care towards the student. The teacher acts in loco parentis during school hours. This can involve a degree of confidentiality. However, this does not preclude reporting a genuine suspicion or fear. The quality of the relationship between teacher and student is central to noticing a change in behaviour. Teachers should always discuss with colleagues and Year Head any significant altered behaviour or performance of a student. The Principal may decide in particular circumstances to opt for a counselling solution or may involve the Board of Management in suspension. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include referral to a support agency. It should be stressed that the ultimate sanction of exclusion or permanent exclusion can have the effect of alienating a student from mainstream sources of help and may result in the student becoming more involved in the culture of substance misuse. Return to the school may depend on participation in an appropriate counselling or addiction-counselling programme. Parental involvement and guarantees may also be required.

The Principal will deal with any/all queries from the media.

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### 3. Provision for Training and Staff Development

The Board of Management are committed to the ongoing training and staff development. At present, schools are assisted in this by the SPHE Support Service (Post-Primary). The Health Service Executive (HSE) also provides a wide range of supports for schools including Health Education and Health Promotion, Smoking Cessation Support and Adolescent Counselling Services.

There is a shared understanding among teachers of the following:

- the contribution that an SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance misuse
- the contribution they can make to the prevention of substance misuse within their own subject area by developing a supportive class environment
- the awareness of, and sensitivity to, the signs and symptoms of substance misuse
- the laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how they relate to themselves, to the school and the students
- they will be offered further training if it becomes available through the PDST or some other agency

- the need to actively participate in the induction process of new teachers

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Behaviour for Positive Learning Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- SPHE School Plan

### Reviewing and Evaluating the policy

The policy should be reviewed and its impact evaluated every 3 years. Ongoing review and evaluation should take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school-based programme and feedback from parents/guardians, students, teachers, community members, Gardaí, HSE staff, the SPHE co-ordinator will be sought during the review stage.

Indicators to guide our review will include:

- a Substance Use Education programme is being successfully taught through SPHE for all relevant students
- resource material is available to teachers
- appropriate in-service for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it
- yearly in-service for staff is time-tabled
- students are aware of the policy
- parents/guardians are aware of the policy
- positive feedback is received from teachers, students, parents/guardians, community members, Gardaí, HSE staff or others
- incidents relating to substance misuse are reduced.

#### **Ratification:**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 05/05/2020

Signed: Kristina Ryan

Chairperson of the Board of Management