

Patrician Primary School

Substance Use Policy



Introductory Statement

This policy deals with the potential misuse of illegal or inappropriate substances within the school community. The policy was renewed in 2024 as part of the School Self Evaluation process relating to well-being.

Rationale

It is necessary to formulate a policy on substance use because:

- The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, drugs and other substances 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, 2001-2008 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 (Action 43).
- Full details of the updated National Drugs Strategy can be found below:

[gov.ie - Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery 2017-2025 \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie)

Objectives

The objectives and goals of this policy are

- 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.

Scope of the Policy

What is the school definition of a "substance"?

The term "substance" will be interpreted in the widest possible sense to include the following: (This list is not exhaustive)

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- E-cigarettes
- Vapes
- Legal and/or illegal drugs (including over-the-counter/prescribed medication)
- Other dangerous substances
- Other substances that are deemed not appropriate for school-going children

Who does this policy refer to?

While this policy addresses substance use issues in respect of students only, elements of the policy applies also to teaching and other school staff, parents/guardians, and others involved in the school

Parents/guardians, staff, external workers

- The use of alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vapes, illegal substances is prohibited by law in a school building or its premises.
- In the event that there external maintenance contractors or similar doing work in the school who require a cigarette break etc, they will be asked to take their break outside of the school premises and out of sight from the pupils
- As a courtesy to our pupils, the school asks that parents/guardians do not smoke or vape outside of the school walls at drop-off and collection time
- Parent-teacher meetings may not proceed if a party is clearly under the influence of alcohol or drugs. In this event, the relevant staff will conclude the meeting immediately and consult with the principal for further action.

Pupils

- The use of and possession of alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vapes, illegal substances, controlled substances etc. is strictly prohibited for all pupils. See below for school procedures in relation to this event taking place.
- This policy will apply to pupils during school time (including break times) and to all school related activities to include sporting activities, school tours, fieldtrips etc.
- There may be some instances where pupils require medication, natural herb remedies or other substances for health reasons. In this situation, the Administration of Medicine policy should be consulted. As part of this policy, staff will ensure that any arrangement is safe for all involved.
- Note: non-alcoholic beer or wine, malt drinks, spirits, fake cigarettes are not permitted at school

Key Measures on Substance Use

Education concerning substance use

In Patrician Primary School, we fully recognise and acknowledge that education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme which is developmental and delivered in the context of a safe and supportive whole-school environment. In this regard, substance misuse prevention will be covered/taught through the medium of the revised “Walk Tall” programme launched during the school year 2016-2017 <http://pdst.ie/walktall>. (Please also refer to our school’s SPHE policy for information regarding the delivery and implementation of the “Walk Tall” programme). Class teachers will teach the Walk Tall Programme within the school. When available, external guest speakers may be sourced to talk to classes about substance misuse.

Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents

Incidents involving substance use might include: (This list is not exhaustive)

- Use or suspected use of substances on the school premises or during a school-related activity
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Disclosure about use
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school-related activity
- Other

The school will respond to incidents involving substance use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be important in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include referral to a support agency. A disciplinary response will refer to the school code of behaviour.

The following reporting procedure will be followed within the school:

Step 1: The witness to substance related incident informs teacher or staff member who in turn informs the principal.

Step 2: The principal inform parents/guardians (if concerning a student in the school) and will liaise with relevant parties on an appropriate response

Step 3: The local Gardaí may be informed depending on seriousness of the incident

Step 4: The HSE will be contacted to remove any substance related paraphernalia (if applicable/relevant).

Other courses of action that will be considered may include

- Seeking advice from outside agencies i.e. Drugs Task Forces such as Kildare and West Wicklow Drugs Helpline Freephone 1800 459 459
- Seeking advice from outside agencies i.e TUSLA/Duty Social Worker
- Convening an emergency Board of Management meeting if the drug related issue is concerning a staff member.
- Providing an appropriate medical or first aid response if required. There are trained first aiders within the school. Outside medical assistance may be required and the emergency services will be contacted if this is the case.
- Liaising with the media. The school Critical Incident policy may be consulted in this situation

Provision for Training and Staff Development

An effective Substance Use policy needs to be supported by an ongoing commitment from the Board of Management to training and staff development. In this regard, 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.

Links to Other Policies and to Curriculum Delivery

Identify any links to related school policies

School policies need to be consistent with one another, within the framework of the overall School Plan. The following policies may be relevant in the context of substance use:

- Code of Behaviour
- Administration of Medicine
- Health and Safety Statement
- Critical Incident Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- SPHE Plean Scoile

Implementation Arrangements, Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for implementing this policy

- Board of Management
- Principal
- Teachers/Staff
- Parents/Parent Teacher Association
- Local Gardaí
- HSE

Communication, Ratification and Review

- This policy was developed with the staff and shared with representatives of the Parent Association before being ratified.
- The policy will be shared with all staff and parents/guardians. It will be available on the school website and on request.
- This policy was ratified at the meeting of the Board of Management in February 2024
- This policy will be reviewed as part of the school policy five-year review plan or before if necessary

Signed:



~~Niall Bradley~~ (chairperson of BoM)

Date: 20-2-2024



David Dempsey (principal)

Date: 20-2-24

