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# **SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY**

## ***ETSS WICKLOW***

***SCHOOL ADDRESS: The Glebe, Bollarney South, Wicklow Town.***

### **Introduction:**

ETSS Wicklow (ETSSW) is committed to addressing the concerns of the whole school community concerning substance misuse/abuse.

This document should be read in conjunction with ETSS Wicklow's Code of Behaviour and the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy.

### **Scope:**

The primary role of preventing and dealing with substance misuse rests with parents/guardians. The school's part is to participate in the education of young people in health and wellbeing and ensure the safety of students and staff as per the SPHE Policy, the Wellbeing Programme, the Health and Safety Policy, and the ethos of the school.

This policy applies to all members of ETSS Wicklow: students, teachers (full-time, part-time, student teachers and teachers of individual students), ancillary staff, parents/guardians and any other users of the school buildings and grounds. This policy applies to students while in school, travelling to and from school, in the vicinity of the school or while involved in any school-related activity at home or abroad.

Reports of or information about students' possible supply, possession or use of drugs on or off the school premises or reports of any other breach of the Substance Use Policy will be communicated to parents. The school reserves the right to take action where there is a threat to the health and safety of students and/or to the reputation of the school.

ETSS Wicklow will strive to build the capacity of young people to be responsible for their own physical and mental health and their wellbeing. The school will promote education and behaviours designed to prevent substance misuse.

## **Definitions**

A drug, without medical approval, can be defined as a chemical that causes changes in the way the human body functions, either mentally, physically or emotionally.

The phrases '*substance misuse*' and '*substance abuse*' in this document include but are not exclusive to the use and abuse of any of the following:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Illegal drugs or controlled substances and all substances covered by the *Misuse of Drugs Act (1977)*
- Solvents
- Prescribed medication administered incorrectly
- Non-prescribed medication
- E-cigarettes and Vapes
- Legal and illegal highs

Instances of substance misuse/abuse, taking/possession as understood by the school include:

- Substances that are affecting someone's behaviour;
- Substances that are in someone's possession;
- Substances that are being taken;
- Any conversations about intended use, possession or sale of harmful and/or illegal substances;
- Substances being given or sold;
- A suspected overdose.

## **Aims:**

The aims of our Substance Misuse/Abuse Policy are as follows:

- The provision of a framework for education concerning substance use/misuse;
- The provision of a framework for the management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents;
- The provision of training for staff as part of the policy of continuous professional development.

## **Objectives:**

The objectives of this policy are as follows:

- To develop positive self-esteem in students and give them the confidence, skills, and knowledge necessary to make healthy life choices and become resilient;
- To help students appreciate their self-worth and the worth of others;
- To teach students a sense of responsibility for themselves and others;
- To help students develop strategies to assist in preventing substance misuse/abuse;
- To ensure that staff have continued professional development in various educational programmes related to substance misuse/abuse;
- To provide guidelines and information for parents to give their children about substance misuse/abuse;

- To detail the school's procedures for dealing with any substance misuse/abuse incidents that may arise in the school;
- To educate students to accept and take responsibility for their actions.

### **Rationale:**

The world we live in presents young people with many challenges which affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to potentially addictive substances is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student population and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues. The Education Act (1998) establishes that schools need to promote students' social and personal development and health education.

***The National Drugs and Alcohol Strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery: A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland, 2017-2025***, requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.<sup>1</sup>

The National Strategic Action Plan, and the Department of Education, commit to:

- Improve the delivery of substance use education across all sectors;
- Support the SPHE programme;
- Take a health promotional approach towards addressing substance misuse.
- Improve supports for young people at risk of early substance abuse
- Ensure those who do not seem to thrive in traditional academic settings complete their education

The National Advisory Committee on Drugs report entitled '***Drug use prevention***' (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use/misuse policies.

The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen-year-olds in Ireland. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland whilst tobacco and other drugs were above the ESPAD average.

Research has shown that drug use is rising in Ireland from data analysed in 2016 and 2017.<sup>2</sup>

The 2020 analysis of ***My World and Growing Up in Ireland*** surveys showed that there had been a decrease in the use of alcohol by young people:

- 57% of adolescents (12-19-year-olds) never had drunk alcohol, compared to the earlier 2012 survey, which reported that 49% had taken alcohol;
- Adolescents who did drink alcohol reported engaging in more problematic drinking than those in the 2012 survey;
- Problematic alcohol use was significantly associated with more severe feelings of anxiety and depression among adolescents;
- Adolescents who reported having made a suicide attempt presented with considerably higher levels of problematic drinking and were also more likely to have smoked cannabis;
- 15% (18% males vs 13% females) reported that they had smoked cannabis;

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Rural, Community and Family Affairs, The National Drugs Strategy (2009-2016), p. 39

<sup>2</sup> <http://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Bulletin-1.pdf> and <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/country-drug-reports/2017/ireland>

- The reported use of cannabis in the first year of secondary school was 3%, increasing to 27% in fifth-year and 36% in sixth-year.
- Of those who reported having smoked cannabis, 43% said they were aged 15 or younger when they first tried cannabis.

In the Growing Up in Ireland survey:

- On average, respondents were 15.9 years old when they had their first alcoholic drink;
- At the age of 13, just 15% of the sample had ever consumed alcohol, rising to 89% by 17/18;
- 1% had tried cannabis by age 13, 30% had tried it by age 17/18, and 59% had tried it by age 20;
- 26% of 20-year-olds said they tried cannabis once or twice, 18% took it occasionally, 6% took it more than once per week, and 9% did not take cannabis anymore;
- In relation to other illicit drugs (e.g., ecstasy and cocaine), 13% reported they had tried them less than five times, while 15% tried them five or more times;
- 9% reported using prescription drugs for recreational use.

*Source 1: <https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/31716/> O'Dwyer, Claire and Mongan, Deirdre (2020)*

*Source 2: My World and Growing Up in Ireland surveys*

*Source 3: Drugnet Ireland, Issue 72, Winter 2020, pp. 12-14 Accessed May 2021*

This policy will enable the school to provide suitable age-appropriate drugs education for our students.

This policy will enable the school to respond appropriately to any issue involving alcohol, tobacco and other legal and illegal drugs.

This policy has been formulated to protect all of the students and staff in the school. Issues outside the School can impact the school community, and one of these issues is the use/misuse of harmful substances. The management of ETSSW recognises that substance misuse is a sensitive area that can affect students and staff. In arriving at a policy to deal with the possession of, distribution of, and use of substances, the school is conscious that each situation is unique, and thus, a flexible response is required.

### **Policy Content:**

This policy focuses on the following areas:

- Education Regarding Substance Use ;
- Administration of Medicine to Students;
- Management of Substance-Related Issues in the School;
- Staff Action;
- Training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff;
- Review and Evaluation.

### **Education Regarding Substance Use:**

We believe that education in the school about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). This is in line with Actions 1.2.3 and 1.2.4 of the National Drugs Strategy (2017-2025).

## **SPHE**

Our students will experience a value system that supports primary prevention in a holistic, caring, nurturing environment through this subject. The content objectives of SPHE, relating to substance misuse, will be addressed in an age-appropriate manner using SPHE time.

### **Ethical Education**

This subject provides a platform for students to discuss modern society's moral and philosophical underpinnings. Included in this are age-appropriate debates about drug and substance use and misuse.

### **Speakers and Experts**

In addition, the school will draw on the expertise available within the community from parents, Gardaí, Juvenile Liaison Officers, the Health Board, the Education Staff of the Regional Drugs Task Force, as per Action 1.2.3 of the 2017 Strategy, and the Support Staff of the PDST.

When inviting speakers to talk to students, the school will ensure that all speakers are suitably qualified, have experience working with post-primary school students, understand the school's ethos and are familiar with the SPHE programme.

The timetabled teacher will be present during visits of outside speakers.

### **Administration of Medication to Students:**

Prescription or non-prescription medication required by a student should be administered at home by parents/guardians or by the student's medical provider whenever possible.

We recognise that in some cases and under some circumstances, it may be necessary for a student to receive medication during school hours. **We require that parents request permission in writing from the school** for their child to take prescription medicines at the school.

Under no circumstances whatsoever is any medication to be given or administered by a student to another student or misused in any way. Any such incident will be considered a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour.

As part of the enrolment procedure, the school requests medical information for each student, in addition to parental permission for the school to administer non-prescription medication (e.g., paracetamol) when necessary.

### **Special Medical Conditions**

Where a student is suffering from a chronic medical condition requiring constant or regular medication, parents or guardians will be required to present the school with a **Medical Action Plan**.

### **Exemptions**

This policy does not govern drugs or medicines provided or administered by the public health authority to prevent or control an illness or disease outbreak (such as meningitis). Emergency health procedures, including emergency administration of medication, are not subject to this policy. In advance of an overnight trip in Ireland or abroad, a separate medical information form will need to be signed by parents/guardians and students.

### **Privacy**

Proper consideration is at all times given to the right to privacy of both students and parents/guardians concerning medical information. Within the constraints of the need for supervision, the student's right to privacy in the administering of medication will be respected.

### **Management of Substance-Related Issues in the School:**

The response to incidents involving substance misuse will range from a pastoral response to a disciplinary response depending on the severity of the incident.

Given the seriousness which society attaches to the issue of substance misuse and the strong desire of the school to create a drugs free zone as part of providing a safe place for all students to reach their full potential, the range of possible sanctions for substance misuse/abuse extends to expulsion.

In the event of suspensions, return to the school may depend on participation in an **appropriate counselling or addiction-counselling programme**. Parental involvement and behaviour guarantees may also be required.

### **Smoking**

- The school building and the area around the school building is a non-smoking area (as per the **Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2004**);
- Students are not permitted to smoke, vape or have cigarettes or similar products on the school premises or during any school-related activity;
- Visitors to the School will comply with the no-smoking or vaping policy;
- Students found smoking or vaping, or in possession of paraphernalia related to smoking or vaping (such as lighters, cigarettes, tobacco or other items associated with smoking or vaping) will be reported to school management and their parents/guardians will be informed – the Code of Behaviour will be implemented;
- School management may also notify the **Environmental Protection Officer**, and the student or students involved in an incident, or their parents, may be liable to a fine or prosecution.

### **Alcohol**

- Drinking alcohol on the premises is forbidden;
- ETSS Wicklow is committed to keeping the school an alcohol-free zone for students;
- No student is allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol at school or during any school activities;
- If a teacher believes a student is under the influence of alcohol, the teacher will immediately inform school management;
- Where a student comes on to the premises under the influence of alcohol, their parents/guardians shall be called to take them home;
- Students breaking these regulations will be dealt with according to the Code of Behaviour;
- Alcohol will not be used as prizes in raffles;
- Students must not bring any bottles, cans, or other alcohol-related items – empty or full – on the premises.

### ***Illicit Drugs and Solvents:***

- The possession of or using of illegal drugs or solvents on the school premises is expressly forbidden;
- Teachers should alert school management as soon as any illicit drugs are found on the school premises – these will be locked away, and the Gardaí contacted to dispose of them;
- If a member of staff believes that a student is under the influence of illicit drugs or solvents, the staff member will immediately inform school management;
- Where the School suspects distribution or selling of illicit drugs, an investigation will follow;
- Parents/Guardians of any students involved with substance misuse will be informed at the earliest opportunity;
- Advice and assistance of the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer may be sought;
- The Board of Management will expect parents to inform the principal or teacher if they suspect their child of drug-taking;
- It may be considered necessary in certain circumstances to seek legal advice;
- Students must not bring any items connected with drug-taking or solvents onto the premises.

### **Staff Action:**

- The school will keep a written account of all incidents;
- The teacher is entitled to request the surrender of a suspicious substance. Where there is a refusal to co-operate, the student should be brought to the Principal or Deputy Principal, whose responsibility is to proceed with the matter. The teacher should not seek to search the student or their possessions or locker without permission – further details on the protocols for searches are outlined in the Code of Behaviour;
- Teachers should always discuss any significant altered student behaviour or performance with colleagues and the Year Head.

### **Continuing Professional Development and Training – teachers are encouraged to:**

- Be familiar with the support the SPHE programme can provide towards the prevention of substance abuse;
- Develop a supportive classroom environment;
- Be aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse;
- Become aware of the laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use;
- The school commits to keeping staff informed of any developments/updates to national policy and strategy.

The Board of Management passed this policy on ***Thursday, 16 December 2021*** – the policy will be reviewed in the academic year ***2023-2024***.