



Substance Use Policy

In Sandymount Park Educate Together Secondary School, we strive to create a vibrant, welcoming school community in which every student feels a sense of belonging. Our aim is to become a school of teaching and learning excellence where students will flourish; enabled to reach their full potential whilst becoming confident, considerate, active members of society. We focus on providing students with opportunities to develop their own identity, both as individuals and as learners and to build strong bonds with others and the wider world

Our values include: Kindness, Respect, Empathy, Hard Work, Participation, Curiosity, Creativity, Democracy, Community.

Ratified: 13th May 2026

Review date: May 2028

Rationale

Sandymount Park Educate Together Secondary School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and healthy environment where students can develop academically, socially and emotionally.

Substance use can have serious implications for the health, wellbeing and safety of young people. Schools play an important role in supporting students to make informed and responsible decisions regarding substance use.

This policy aims to promote the wellbeing of all members of the school community by outlining the school's approach to substance use education, prevention and the management of substance-related incidents.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy
- Suspension and Expulsion Policy
- School Trips Policy

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

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education Welfare Act, 2000
- The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025
- Circular 18/02
- The Misuse of Drugs Act and Tobacco Regulations 1995
- Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002)
- Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023

Relationship to School Ethos

As an Educate Together school, Sandymount Park ETSS promotes respect, equality, responsibility and critical thinking. The school aims to support students in developing the knowledge and skills required to make healthy and responsible choices.

The school adopts a supportive and educational approach to substance use, recognising that prevention and education are central to promoting student wellbeing.



Policy Development

This policy was developed following consultation with members of the school community including:

- School management
- Teaching staff
- Students
- Parents/guardians
- The Board of Management

The policy reflects a whole-school approach to wellbeing and student support.

Aims of the Policy

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote a healthy and safe school environment
- Educate students about the risks associated with substance misuse
- Support students in developing the skills needed to make responsible decisions
- Provide clear procedures for responding to substance-related incidents
- Ensure a consistent approach across the school community
- Provide appropriate support for students experiencing difficulties related to substance use

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All students enrolled in the school
- Members of staff
- Parents/guardians
- Visitors to the school

The policy applies:

- During the school day
- On school premises
- While travelling to and from school



- While in the vicinity of the school
- At all school-related activities including:
 - school trips
 - extracurricular activities
 - sporting events
 - school tours
 - any activity where students represent the school

Definition of Substances

For the purpose of this policy, substances include:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, snuss, and chewing tobacco)
- E-cigarettes/vaping devices/vaping liquid
- Illegal drugs
- Prescription medication used without medical supervision
- Over-the-counter medication used inappropriately
- Solvents and inhalants
- New psychoactive substances (“legal highs”)
- Any other substance used to alter mood, perception or behaviour

School Position on Substance Use

Sandymount Park ETSS does not permit students to:

- Possess alcohol, illegal drugs or prohibited substances
- Use alcohol, illegal drugs or prohibited substances
- Supply or distribute substances
- Be under the influence of substances
- Possess drug-related paraphernalia
- Use tobacco or vaping products on school grounds or during school activities

Any breach of this policy will be addressed in accordance with the school’s Code of Behaviour.



Education and Prevention

The school recognises that prevention and education are key elements in addressing substance misuse.

Substance use education is delivered through the school's wellbeing programme including:

SPHE Programme

Students receive education relating to:

- The effects of alcohol and drugs
- Decision-making skills
- Peer pressure and resilience
- Personal safety
- Healthy coping strategies

Ethical Education

Students receive education relating to:

- Moral and philosophical underpinnings of modern society
- Age-appropriate discussions about drugs, substance use and misuse

CSPE

Students receive education relating to:

- Substance use in the context of citizenship and the law

Whole-School Initiatives

Additional initiatives may include:

- Guest speakers
- Talks from An Garda Síochána
- Workshops
- Awareness campaigns
- Wellbeing events
- Information sessions for parents/guardians



Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management The Board of Management will:

- Ratify the policy
- Support its implementation
- Ensure the policy is reviewed regularly

Principal The Principal will:

- Ensure the policy is implemented
- Manage serious substance-related incidents
- Liaise with parents/guardians
- Seek advice from appropriate external agencies where necessary

Teachers and Staff Teachers and staff will:

- Support the aims of the policy
- Deliver relevant educational programmes
- Promote a healthy school environment
- Report concerns to school management

Students Students are expected to:

- Respect the rules of the school
- Never use or be in possession of substances
- Support a safe school environment
- Seek help if concerned about themselves or others

Parents/Guardians Parents/guardians are encouraged to:

- Support the aims of this policy
- Discuss substance use issues with their children
- Work collaboratively with the school where concerns arise

Substance-Related Incidents

A substance-related incident may include:

- Possession of substances
- Use of substances
- Supply or distribution of substances



- Being under the influence of substances
- Possession of drug-related paraphernalia
- Disclosure by a student of substance use
- Unusual or concerning behaviour that may indicate substance use
- Discovery of substances on school premises

This list is not exhaustive.

Procedures for Managing Incidents

1. **Student safety first.** The safety and welfare of the student is the primary concern. Any student suspected of being under the influence of a substance, or found in possession of a prohibited substance, will be immediately placed in the care of the Principal, Deputy Principal, or their nominee.
2. **Application of Code of Behaviour.** All incidents will be managed in line with the school's Code of Behaviour. Where necessary, the school may temporarily remove a student from school while an investigation is carried out, particularly where there is a risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of others.
3. **Investigation process.** All suspected substance misuse incidents will be subject to a thorough investigation. The school will gather and record statements from all relevant individuals.
4. **Parental involvement.** Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately and requested to attend the school during the investigation.
5. **Search and confiscation.** The school reserves the right to request that students empty their lockers, schoolbags, pockets, and personal belongings in the presence of a staff member. Any prohibited substances or related items will be confiscated, recorded, and retained pending the outcome of the investigation, unless otherwise directed by external authorities.
6. **External agencies.** The school will inform An Garda Síochána in all cases involving illegal substances and will liaise with appropriate external agencies including Tusla where child protection concerns arise.
7. **Medical response.** Emergency services (999/112) will be called immediately if there is any concern about a student's physical condition. The student will not be left unattended. Parents/guardians will be informed.
8. **Outcomes and sanctions.** Following a completed investigation, the Board of Management may apply sanctions in line with the Code of Behaviour. These may include verbal warning, written warning, school-based interventions, suspension, or expulsion. The right to appeal will apply.
9. **Student support.** Appropriate supports will be put in place for any student affected by substance misuse incidents.
10. **Final determination.** All outcomes will be guided by the school's Code of Behaviour.



Recording and Reporting

All substance-related incidents will be recorded by school management.

- Details of the incident
- Actions taken
- Communication with parents/guardians
- Support measures provided

Serious incidents may be reported to the Board of Management. Records will be maintained in accordance with GDPR and the school's Data Protection Policy.

Support for Students

The school recognises that substance use may be linked to underlying difficulties. Support may include:

- Meetings with Progress Leader or Pastoral Care Team
- Guidance counselling support
- Behaviour monitoring
- Referral to external support services where appropriate

These services are an integral part of the general education of students and are part of a supportive whole school environment

Confidentiality

Information regarding substance-related concerns will be handled sensitively. Students will be informed of the limits of confidentiality before disclosing information. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where:

- A student's safety is at risk
- The safety of others is at risk
- There are legal obligations to report certain matters

Communication of the Policy

This policy will be communicated to members of the school community through:

- The school website
- The school journal
- Staff meetings



- Parent communications

Parents and students are expected to familiarise themselves with the policy.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner if required by legislative changes or following serious incidents. The review process may involve consultation with:

- Staff
- Students
- Parents/guardians
- The Board of Management

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 13.05.26

Date of next review: May 2028

Chairperson, Board of Management:

Vanessa Barcroft

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Principal:

Paula Mulhall

Signature: _____

Date: _____

