

## St. Anthony's Special School

### Substance Use Policy

Version	Revision date	Reason	Approved by	Approved on
1	For 2025/26	R/v 2017 policy	BOM	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
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## St Anthony's School - Substance Use Policy - Revised 2025

This policy applies to all users of the school building. In this policy, our understanding of 'drugs' is 'A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels'

The Substance Use Policy is applicable to all school related activities (both on and off site) and any exceptions to be discussed with the Principal and/or Chairperson of the Board of Management.

The characteristic spirit of the school (school ethos) has been developed and agreed with the partners in education. The substance use policy reflects the school ethos in that it is dedicated to the care of the whole school community and it aims to provide a safe and secure environment for learning.

### Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, vaping, drugs, caffeine and high energy drinks 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 what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues. The National Drugs Strategy 2107-2025 "Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery", sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government departments and agencies to tackle substance abuse, based on the four separate pillars of:

1. Supply Reduction
2. Education and Prevention
3. Treatment
4. Research

The second of these pillars relates specifically to the role to be played by the educational sector. One objective in this area is to create greater societal awareness regarding the dangers and prevalence of drug misuse. Another objective is to equip young people and other vulnerable groups with the skills and supports necessary to make informed choices about their health, personal lives and social development. The new strategy identifies two key objective that are relevant to schools

### **The DES Position**

As part of its role as a government agency committed to implementing the National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, "Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery", the Department of Education and Science now requires that all schools have a Substance Abuse Policy.

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

- The Social Personal and Health Education curriculum, of which substance misuse prevention education is an integral part, is a mandatory subject on the primary curriculum and must be taught to all primary pupils from junior infants to sixth class (DES Circular 022/2010).
- The National Drugs Strategy 'Building on Experience'<sup>1</sup> is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place.
- Action 21 of the National Drugs Strategy (interim) 2009-2016 mandates the Department of Education and Skills to monitor the implementation of substance use policies in schools through the whole school evaluation process as operated by the Inspectorate. It is also mandated to ensure that best practice is disseminated to all schools
- The recent report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled 'Drug use prevention'<sup>2</sup> (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.
- The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report<sup>3</sup> highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.

For the population as a whole, alcohol consumption per capita in Ireland has increased by 41% in the period 1989 to 1999, while the other EU Member States showed either a decrease or a modest increase. In 2019 the top 10 European Countries with the highest alcohol consumption per capita- Ireland ranked 6<sup>th</sup> @12/7% per capita. 24% of Irelands population engages in heavy episodic drinking at least once a month.

### Goals/Objectives

The substance use policy of St. Anthony's National School is intended to highlight the clear procedures the staff of the school will follow in the event of a drug related incident and that the School Community will be better informed with regard to Substance Use in all its guises.

### Definition of a drug:

A drug is any substance which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally. This description includes many substances we normally think of as drugs as well as substances we might not usually consider to be drugs such as coffee, tea, alcohol, solvents, tobacco (Corrigan, 2003 cited in Best Practice Guidelines in Substance Misuse Prevention

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<sup>1</sup> Available at [www.pobail.ie](http://www.pobail.ie)

<sup>2</sup> Available at [www.nacd.ie](http://www.nacd.ie)

<sup>3</sup> Alcohol and other Drug Use among students in 30 European countries.

Education 2010). Included in this list is Vapes, caffeine drinks and drinks of high energy i.e Red Bull & Monster

## Policy Content

### Education concerning substance use

Education concerning substance use in St. Anthony's National School will be provided (within the broad context of the subject of Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) which was introduced into the school in September 2003 by following our two-year plan for SPHE as outlined on our planning grid.

Considerations, which inform the selection of content and methodologies, include adherence to our planning grid for SPHE in which we follow the same Strand Units in the same two-month period to ensure a thematic approach throughout the school. Approaches to co-ordinate, involve teachers and allocate time include adherence to the same strand units in the same two-month period.

Active learning strategies are advocated in the SPHE curriculum and will inform our selection of methodology. Our work will be reinforced by project work and the possibility of talks from local Gardaí and Public Health Nurses as long as the content of their talk is in keeping with the school curriculum on the topic.

The use of an outside visitor/speaker to enhance the work done in the class should always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and should be undertaken in the presence of a teacher. School will ensure compliance with Best Practice guidelines in line with DES Circular 22/2010.

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

Young people are most at risk in relation to substance use in St. Anthony's National School in the array of food and drink consumed in certain instances, use of glues and solvents, the Paramedic Room and break times in the school.

Incidents relating to:

- (a) alcohol, (b) tobacco + vaping and (c) drug use (d) Caffeine and high energy drinks are addressed in the school as follows:

#### Alcohol:

The school is an alcohol free zone and pupils and staff or any other personnel who present for work in the school in any capacity are not allowed to bring alcohol into the school or to consume alcohol in school or during any school related activities as per the scope of this Substance Use policy.

If any member of staff thinks that a student or staff member is under the influence of alcohol, the Principal will be informed and action will then be decided.

In general, if a student comes to school in an intoxicated manner or becomes intoxicated in school, they will be withdrawn from the class and parents requested to take them home. Parents of the other children in the class will be written to and requested to monitor their children for any signs of alcohol consumption.

Students found breaking this rule must be cared for and may also need to be referred to the school Code of Discipline if the offence is repeated. Gardaí may be informed especially if the child/ren were supplied the alcohol - i.e. the alcohol was not stolen from the house as a once-off act of bravado. If the child continuously violates the rule, the school will have no choice to report the matter to the duty social worker of the local Health Authority as this falls under the realm of neglect in the Children First Guidelines - guidelines all teachers must adhere to in relation to child protection.

School will balance a pastoral care approach with disciplinary procedures.

A record of such incidents will be kept in writing in pupil's file and stored in a secure location.

Members of staff who present themselves for work in an intoxicated manner will be asked to excuse themselves from work for the day and the Chairperson of the Board of Management informed. The Chairperson of the Board of Management will then adhere to the Rules for Primary Schools and the schools' Disciplinary Policy with regard to this issue.

Parents and Bus operators who collect children and are clearly under the influence of alcohol and intend driving them home will be advised that the school will seek the other parent/guardian listed on the school enrolment form to perform same and bus operator will be advised to supply an alternative driver. The Bus Operator, Bus Eireann and the Chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and due disciplinary procedures followed as necessary.

#### Tobacco & Vaping:

The school is a no-smoking & No Vaping zone.

Students are not permitted to smoke, vap or possess tobacco or vaping products on the school premises or on any school related activity.

Staff may smoke or vap off the school grounds out of view of the pupils or in a designated smoking room. There is no designated smoking or vaping room in St. Anthony's National School.

All visitors to the school will be expected to comply with the School policy as outlined and signs informing visitors to the school of this will be displayed.

Pupils found smoking/vaping or in possession of tobacco or vaping related products on the school grounds or on a school activity will be asked to hand over all tobacco/vaping products and matches/lighters they have and parents informed of the incident.

These products may then be returned to the parents. Gardaí may be informed especially if the child/ren were supplied the tobacco products - i.e. the tobacco product was not stolen from the house as a once-off act of bravado. Pupils over 18(as per Dept of Health 2023) can purchase tobacco products but must adhere to school policy. Tobacco products may be taken from pupils over 18 and returned to them afterwards.

### Illegal drugs/Solvents.

The school is an area where illicit drugs, non-water based solvents and certain food and beverages, which affect the behaviour of children, will not be allowed.

Any illegal drugs found on the school premises will not be disturbed unless leaving them in the location they were found presents an unreasonable risk to pupils. Gardaí will be informed immediately and asked to remove the substances. No member of staff will transport illegal substances at any time.

If any member of staff thinks that a pupil is under the influence of an illegal substance, the Principal will be informed immediately and further action will then be decided.

In general, if a student comes to school under the influence of an illegal drug or comes under the influence in school, they will be withdrawn from the class and parents requested to take them home. Parents of the other children in the class will be written to and requested to monitor their children for any signs of substance use.

Students found breaking this rule must be cared for and may also need to be referred to the school Code of Discipline if the offence is repeated. Gardaí will be informed. If the child violates the rule, the school will have no choice to report the matter to the duty social worker of the local Health Authority as this falls under the realm of neglect in the Children First Guidelines - guidelines all teachers must adhere to in relation to child protection.

If the dealing of illegal drugs is suspected in the school, an investigation will be carried out. Parents of any students involved will be informed and the advice and assistance of the Gardaí will be sought in all instances.

Members of staff who present themselves for work under the influence of illegal substances will be asked to excuse themselves from work for the day and the Chairperson of the Board of Management informed. The Chairperson will then decide on action to be taken and the appropriate disciplinary procedures will be followed. This applies to all staff members, bus operators and their employees and all adults who present for work in the school in any capacity.

Parents who suspect their child is taking illegal substances should inform the school. The school may be able to advise where support is available for that child in consultation with the relevant Health Authorities.

Food and Beverages and Miscellaneous items:

Children with certain conditions may have a noticeable change in behaviour if certain fizzy drinks are consumed. The parents of the school will be encouraged not to include fizzy drinks in their child's diet as per the healthy eating policy of the school.

For all school activities, the use of spray deodorants is to be monitored by school staff, encouraging roll on deodorant in preference of spray deodorant. Deodorants need to be kept in child's closed school bag or on high/closed shelf in the classroom if absolutely necessary for use by specific students. These products will be returned to the parents of the child.

Prescribed medication must be kept in a secure place in the Paramedical area as school supply but also in closed child's bag in zipped or tight seal container for use on school transport and for class outings where the child needs medication in case of emergency i.e. epilepsy/ diabetic medication. This medication will only be administered under the supervision of the School Nurse in the presence of a second witness. In the absence of the school Nurse, responsibility falls to the Principal/Deputy Principal in agreement with the parents. Sometimes, parents may be requested to call to the school to administer the medication themselves e.g. insulin.

If a child has an illness whereby they must receive medication during the course of the day, parents of the child in question must apply in writing to the Board of Management of St. Anthony's National School for the issue to be taken further. Individual arrangements may be drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians and students themselves. A doctor's prescription must be provided with details of medication to be given to the child and dosage instructions. (See Administration of Medication Policy)

School Staff are aware of the Administration of Medication Policy and will adhere to it at all times.

Emergency incidents requiring medical intervention will be dealt with by the School's Nurse (or Principal) who may consult the pupil's doctor as detailed on the school enrolment form having already informed the parents of the child. If unavailable, the pupil will be brought to Casualty in line with school policy.

The School Principal/Chairperson of the Board of Management is designated to respond to the media in relation to 'drug related incidents' they may be enquiring about.

ii. Provision for training and staff development



The shared understanding among the staff regarding the contribution that an SPHE programme can make to the prevention of substance misuse is evident through our adherence to the two-year plan for SPHE and the use of the Walk Tall Programme as per the content objectives of the SPHE curriculum.

Staff members are aware of the contribution they can make to the prevention of substance misuse within their own class by developing a supportive class environment and informing the pupils taking the age of the pupils into consideration and local circumstances and events, which may arise.

Staff members will be made sufficiently aware of and sensitive to the signs and symptoms of substance misuse by asking the School Nurse and relevant Garda to inform the staff of same.

Staff members have been made sufficiently aware of laws relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug use and how they relate to themselves, to the school and the students by having this policy inspected by a legal expert and reading prescribed material as advocated by legal advice sought.

Further training needs we have in relation to the implementation of the substance use policy include revision of the signs and symptoms of Substance Use - training similar to training received by staff on the Walk Tall Programme. Updated and available training will be sought for staff in this area. In 2023 NEPS- RSE training was attended by School Staff.

Training can be accessed from the Substance Misuse Prevention Project based in Dublin West Education Centre - at present this training is only available to schools in the Local Drugs Task Force Areas and St. Anthony's is in the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force-to invite to school on a 2-year cycle beginning 2025

New staff will be briefed on the substance use policy of the school on commencement of employment in the school.

Parent education on SPHE and issues relating to substance misuse can be promoted in the school community by encouraging parents and carers to attend information nights as they arise for parents/guardians informing them of all related issues - this information may be given by an employee of the Health Promotion Unit or a Garda Officer in local Education Centre or other venue. It is envisaged that the parents will be informed of the school's role in relation to child protection by informing them that the school must adhere to the "Children First Guidelines" and more specifically the Department of Education and Science Guidelines produced in conjunction with the aforementioned "Children First Guidelines". This is clearly stated in the Child Protection Policy which is reviewed annually by the school.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All members of the school community have a role in the development, implementation and evaluation of the policy to ensure the safety and welfare of all students is maintained and we have a safe and secure environment for learning.

The following indicators will be used to gauge the effectiveness of the substance use policy in St. Anthony's National School:

- School Community to be well informed in relation to Substance Use.
- Clarity regarding procedures to be followed in any drug related incident in the school.
- Regular review of how the policy is being implemented.

The completed policy was first circulated to all parents and staff and Board of Management members in September 2004. Comments from interested parties were considered when reviewing the Policy (Feb 09) and it was approved by the BOM on 25/5/2009. A further review took place with PDST advisor Lisa Noone and staff on 27/2/2017. A copy was sent to all parents for their views and no comments or amendments were noted.

In January 2025 we circulated the St. Anthony's School- Substance Use Policy- Revised 2017 . Policy redrafted following replies and suggestions given by parents and staff.

**Resources:**

**Substance Use-S.P.H.E- Scoilnet.ie**

**Drug Education Resources-Teachnet.ie**

**National Youth Council Of Ireland youth.ie**

The policy was therefore ratified by Board of Management at a meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Signed:   
Chairperson BOM

Signed:   
Principal

Date: 10/03/2025 Date: 10/3/2025