



Maryfield College

Substance Use Policy

February 2024

1. Scope of this policy

This policy applies to all students, teachers, members of staff, and visitors within the Maryfield College building and grounds. Students will be governed by this policy throughout the school day, when representing the school in any activity both during and outside normal school hours including school break and lunchtime and including going to and from school or when wearing the school uniform. It also applies on all school trips and to all those using or visiting the premises.

Maryfield College operates a zero-tolerance approach to any student or staff member who brings or has in their possession in school alcohol, drugs, solvents or any illegal substance or drug paraphernalia with the intention of supplying it to others. We wish to clearly state in this policy that involvement with tobacco, alcohol, solvents, illegal drugs, or the misuse of medicines within the school buildings and grounds and or on a school-related activity or trip or while in school uniform is forbidden. Maryfield College also has in place a no-vaping policy for all students, staff, and visitors in the school buildings and on the grounds and for students on school activities and trips.

The only legitimate exception is the use of a prescribed drug in accordance with medical advice and validated prescription. It is our aim to ensure that Maryfield College is a safe environment free from substance misuse.

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's policy review schedule and will be updated to align with current requirements.

2. Relationship to School Mission Statement

The school understands that exposure to alcohol, tobacco, nicotine-based products e.g. vapes, illegal behaviour-altering substances and drugs is a reality for many young people today. Nationally the rates of drug use have risen significantly in the past decade with the greatest increase seen amongst our young people. The school acknowledges that it can make an important contribution to the education and prevention of substance misuse through school-based intervention programmes.

This policy relates to many facets of our mission statement including the development of responsibility for oneself and one's behaviour, the care, welfare and protection of our students and the provision of a holistic education which includes health and wellbeing education provided through the Christian value system.

3. Rationale

The world we live in presents young people with many challenges and choices that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, nicotine-based products, and drugs is part of that reality.

The Education Act, 1998 and Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, provides that schools should promote the social and personal development of students and provide them with health education.

The National Drugs Strategy - Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery – A health-led response to drug and alcohol use in Ireland 2017-2025 sets out the government's strategy to address harm caused by substance misuse in our society

up to 2025. This strategy identifies key actions to be delivered between 2017 and 2020 and opportunities for development of further actions between 2021 and 2025. Relevant to post-primary schools this strategy details school-based interventions that can be provided through the whole school wellbeing programme, SPHE and guidance and counselling.

Taking these points into account Maryfield College must have a policy in place to address and manage issues relating substance use.

4. Objectives

The central objective of the school's Substance Use Policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in the school in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. This policy addresses both education concerning alcohol, tobacco, nicotine products and drugs, and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances. Maryfield College aims to foster a culture that prioritises student and staff wellbeing while also maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment.

This policy has been developed to protect all the students and staff in the school and to support parents in the management of substance use education in the home. The issue of substance misuse is very serious, and it can have an impact on staff and students. In arriving at a policy to deal with the possession of, distribution of, use of and abuse of substances, the school is conscious that each situation is unique and so a flexible response is required.

5. Definitions

When referring to substances the Board of Management of Maryfield College defines them as follows:

All substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and 1984, non-validated prescription medication, the misuse of solvents, the use and misuse of matches, lighters and fireworks and all alcohol and all tobacco and vaping products and paraphernalia. The Board of Management reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance, please see list below for examples.

'Substances' generally denote any chemical which changes the way the body functions, mentally, physically or emotionally' these any include but are not limited to;

- Alcohol
- Tobacco
- Vaping products
- Medicines – prescription and over-the-counter – see note below
- Illegal drugs
- Solvents incl. Tippex, glue, paints
- Aerosols
- Cleaning agents
- Gases
- Laboratory Chemicals
- Performance-enhancing substances

Validated Prescribed Medications and OTC Medications

Medicines such as painkillers, cough medicine etc. should not be brought into the school without parental advice to the school. If a student needs prescribed medication during the school day the school must be notified in writing by parents/guardians. The school will not provide pain medication (paracetamol) without seeking parental/guardian

permission. Parents/guardians are requested to inform the school in writing of any relevant details that pertain to their child's health at the beginning of each school year.

6. Current Provision of Substance Use Education

The educational aims of Maryfield College in relation to substance use are;

- To enable students to make informed, healthy, and responsible choices.
- To provide honest and age-appropriate information on substance use.
- To increase self-esteem and confidence in students.
- To equip students with the social and personal skills needed to navigate decision-making around substance use.
- To minimise harm by offering supportive and appropriate interventions.

We aim to provide education on substance use through.

- (i) Our mission statement and its everyday lived experience for students in the school in which they learn to take responsibility for themselves, and others so they can eventually become independent adults.

(ii) Junior Cycle Wellbeing – SPHE Specification

Learning Outcomes for Strand 2 Making Healthy Choices

2.1 consider the multifaceted nature of health and wellbeing and evaluate what being healthy might look like for different adolescents, including how food, physical activity, sleep/rest and hygiene contribute to health and wellbeing.

2.2 investigate how unhealthy products such as nicotine, vapes, alcohol, and unhealthy food and drinks are marketed and advertised.

2.3 discuss societal, cultural and economic influences affecting young people when it comes to making healthy choices about smoking, alcohol and other addictive substances and behaviours, and how harmful influences can be overcome in real-life situations.

2.4 demonstrate skills and strategies to help make informed choices that support health and well-being and apply them in real-life situations that may be stressful and/or involve difficult peer situations.

2.5 discuss the physical, social, emotional, and legal consequences of using addictive substances - immediate and long-term.

2.6 consider scenarios where, for example, alcohol, nicotine, drugs, food, and electronic devices might be used to cope with unpleasant feelings or stress and discuss possible healthy ways of coping.

(iii) Senior Cycle SPHE – Area of Learning - Substance Use

The objectives of this area of learning are to:

1. enhance students' knowledge and understanding of substance use and misuse
2. develop awareness of personal experiences, values, attitudes, and feelings which influence lifestyle choices about substance use

3. develop students' personal and interpersonal skills so that they might have the confidence to act appropriately in the face of social pressures to behave differently
4. examine life stories associated with the harmful use of substances to develop understanding and empathy with those involved
5. examine the external influences on substance use including the media, peers, and community.

(iv) Religious Education

In the exploration of relationships and morality at Junior Cycle the use of illegal drugs is examined as a behaviour and choice that has intrapersonal, interpersonal, communal, and global consequences. Research and project work is undertaken by students on illegal drugs and alcohol.

The senior cycle religious programme includes the topic of addiction which includes, tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs.

(v) Home Economics

Junior Cycle – Element 2 of the Course – Health and Wellbeing

Within this element of Home Economics, focus is placed on developing students' knowledge, skills and understanding, to encourage them to make informed and responsible decisions that positively impact their health and wellbeing. Students reflect on the impact of substance use (smoking, alcohol and drugs) on the individual, on their families and on the wider community. The programme also identifies support agencies for substance abuse and the government's responses to substance use.

Senior Cycle

Senior Cycle Home Economics encourages students to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, competencies and attitudes necessary to contribute to a personal and family environment conducive to human development, health, leisure, security, and happiness. Within the areas of social studies (elective area 3), substance use is linked to the causes and effects of societal problems such as unemployment and poverty.

- (vi) The involvement of outside agencies and guest speakers from relevant bodies including An Garda Síochána and HSE-approved agencies. All external speakers and groups will be pre-approved by the principal.
- (vii) Through the school's Guidance and Counselling department students receive care, support, and advice to manage and make good lifestyle choices.
- (viii) **Further Development of Substance Use Education**
 - Develop links with external agencies to strengthen the substance abuse education provision.
 - Develop a TY programme on substance use.
 - Explore training and TPL for staff in dealing with drug-related incidents and providing substance abuse education.

7. Roles & Responsibilities

Role of the Board of Management

- To ensure that a policy is in place and that is reviewed as specified.
- To support staff in the implementation of this policy, including up-to-date staff development/training.
- To decide on appeals by parents or students with respect to decisions made by the principal.
- To appraise this policy regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of the Principal /Deputy Principal

- To formulate a draft policy in consultation with the teaching staff, students, parents and Board of Management.
- To monitor the implementation of the policy and to ensure that it is reviewed as specified.
- To support other staff in their implementation of the policy and arrange relevant staff training.
- To ensure all referrals are investigated in accordance with this policy and the school's Code of Behaviour.
- To liaise with parents and outside agencies including An Garda Síochána and local authorities.
- To appraise this policy regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Year Head

- To report any matters or concerns relating to this policy directly to the principal and or deputy principal.
- To liaise with parents when requested to do so by the principal or deputy principal.
- To provide pastoral support to any student in their year group whose actions or behaviours are being addressed under this policy.
- To appraise this policy regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Teaching Staff

- To advocate positive and healthy lifestyle decisions
- To treat the possibility of substance abuse as a serious threat to the welfare of students.
- To inform themselves regarding the signs, symptoms, and effects of substance abuse.
- To be alert to disclosure by students regarding their own or others involvement in substance use.
- To implement the policy and bring any information/concerns to the attention of the principal or deputy principal immediately.
- To appraise this policy regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Guidance Counsellor

- To offer advice and support to any student who may be involved in substance abuse which will include referral to relevant agencies.
- To advise parents/guardians where further support and information may be found.
- To liaise with outside agencies concerning counselling and related support.

Role of Parents

- To support the policy and to cooperate fully with the school in its implementation.
- To inform the school authorities of any information/concerns they have in relation to substance abuse.
- To appraise this policy regarding its suitability and the effectiveness of its implementation and make recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Role of Students

- To cooperate fully with the school in the implementation of this policy.
- To bring any information, suspicions or concerns regarding substance abuse to the attention of a staff member immediately.

8. Management of Substance Use Incidents

Examples of substance use incidents.

- Emergencies where a person may become unresponsive or unconscious.
- Intoxication or abnormal behaviour
- Allegations and/or suspicions of substance use, possession, or distribution.
- Disclosure of a person involved in substance use by a third party.
- Possession of substances on the school premises or on a school-related activity or trip
- Distribution and or sale of illegal substances
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property.
- Vaping liquid and/ or devices found on school property.

Any member of the school staff who discovers a student(s) with a substance as defined in this policy must immediately report what has been found, seen or heard to a member of the school's senior management team.

Procedures to be followed:

- 1) The person(s) considered to be involved in a substance use incident will be immediately put into the care of the principal, deputy principal or their nominee. In the case that the person is a student their parents/guardians will be contacted immediately and requested to present at the school to collect the student. If necessary, first aid will be administered, and medical attention will be sought for the person. An incident form will be completed. See Appendix 1
- 2) The school will take all the necessary steps to fully investigate and assess the incident. Statements will be taken from all persons deemed to be involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and these statements will be recorded and kept in a confidential incident file. The school principal, deputy or nominee will liaise with parents/guardians throughout the investigation.
- 3) The school will liaise with and consult an Garda Siochana regarding all incidents involving illegal substances.
- 4) The school will take possession of any substance or paraphernalia, or device related to the incident. Any such items will be recorded and retained pending completion of the investigation and where instructed to do so placed in the possession of the appropriate authority.

- 5) Students involved in substance use incidents are subject to the school's Code of Behaviour. Any incident involving substance use is defined as a high-level breach of the Code of Behaviour. Sanctions may include suspension and referral to the Board of Management for expulsion.
- 6) The school may liaise with relevant outside agencies such as the HSE or other professional agencies or professionals including drug counsellors following any investigation and where applicable following the return of a student after the period of suspension as part of the return to school plan.
- 7) In all identified cases every effort will be made to support and help the person(s) involved in the incident including support from the school's guidance counsellor and student support team.
- 8) Any voluntary disclosure by a member of the school community about their problematic substance use will be treated as an approach for help.
- 9) In the case that the incident(s) involve a member of school staff this will be referred by the principal to the Board of Management and the relevant agreed disciplinary procedures may be initiated.

Review Procedures

This policy is available on the school website and by request from the school office. Students will be made aware of this policy through the SPHE lessons in all year groups. The school will monitor, review, and evaluate this policy on an ongoing basis. Teachers, students, parents/guardians, and the Board of Management will be involved in the review of this policy as per the school policy review schedule and with due regard to current legislation that relates to this policy.

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Appendix 1

Report Form for Recording Incidents of Substance Use

Date: _____ Time: _____

Reporting Staff Member: _____

Note this form must be completed with facts only.

Who was involved?

Where was the location?

What was seen?

What was heard or said?

What are your concerns?

Who has been informed?

What action has been taken so far?

What further actions are necessary?

Any other information that is required is recorded here.

Sign: _____

Date: _____

