



Substance Use Policy

Introduction

Presentation College, Carlow is a voluntary second-level, co-educational school with a Catholic ethos under the trusteeship of CEIST.

Presentation College is, by choice, a truly co-educational school. We aim to prepare all of our students, boys and girls alike for the challenges, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. All members of the school community – students, parents, teachers and other staff – are held in very high regard and their dignity, worth and individuality is respected. We strive to build a sense of community based on Christian values. The school's Code of Behaviour acknowledges this and aims to promote a culture of respect throughout the school. It recognises that good discipline enables good teaching and allows good learning to take place.

The school, through its academic, pastoral and spiritual undertakings strives to provide for the holistic development and welfare of each of the students in its care.

Presentation College aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. Students' well-being is of paramount importance to use. This Substance Use Policy aims to protect and promote students' well-being and the well-being of other members of our school community through the safe and limited use of prescribed medications, and the banning and prohibition of dangerous, illegal or other substances that are considered to pose a risk to the health, safety and well-being of members of the school community.

The Substance Use Policy has been developed following consultation between staff, parents, students, Principal and the Board of Management. In this policy document the term 'parent' is taken to include 'guardian'. The policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, students, non-teaching staff, parents and users of the school building.

Definitions

The aim of this section is to provide definitions for specific and technical phrases that appear throughout the policy document so that these do not have to be defined within the body of the policy.

The school This includes school buildings, grounds, playing fields, play areas and public areas where students congregate coming to and going from school.

Banned or Prohibited Substances Banned or prohibited substances include all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. The school reserves



the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.

Drug

Paraphernalia

This includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

An Abuse

Incident

This is defined as any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occurs in the school or during school functions or outings or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the students concerned, to other students, or to the policy or reputation of the school. The school reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the policy.

Parents

For the purposes of the policy, parents are defined to include natural parents, foster parents, step parents or guardians of the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in loco parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of the abuse incident.

Principal

In the policy, reference to the Principal should be taken to mean the Principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or a Deputy Principal where the Principal is either unavailable or has delegated to a Deputy Principal.

Social Context and Rationale

This policy is informed by:

- The Mission Statement of Presentation College, Carlow
- The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) Policy
- The Pastoral and Disciplinary Systems, including The Code of Behaviour
- The Child Safeguarding Statement
- The Special Educational Needs Inclusion Policy
- The Guidance Plan
- The Wellbeing Policy

The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol and drug misuse in modern society and its growth among young people pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.

As a Ceist school we are constantly striving to realise the ideal of Education in line with the CEIST Charter and the Presentation Ethos. Presentation College is a place where students feel safe and cared for, where the individual is respected both as a person in his/her own right but also as an integral part of a larger learning community, where justice and fairness are mediated in its structures and procedures.



This holistic approach to education and the communal context in which it takes place underpins our policy on Substance Use. This policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community – teachers, parents, students and Board of Management – manages issues relating to substance abuse.

Objectives

1. The policy is designed primarily to educate and protect and is seen as part of a larger pastoral effort by the school to ensure the wellbeing and Christian formation of our students.
2. The welfare, care and protection of every person in the school in line with the Education Act 1998, the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the National Drugs Strategy 2017- 2025, 'Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery'.
3. To address education relating to tobacco, alcohol and drug use through a planned and developmental education programme offered to every student and set within the context of the SPHE programme.
4. The use of pastoral principles and practice along with fair and consistent actions and disciplinary procedures in managing drug-related incidents.
5. A commitment to training for staff, parents and the Board of Management and to reviewing the policy on a regular basis.

School Policy

The school does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited intoxicants or drugs (including the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medications or inhalants and e-cigarettes) and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school-related activity.

We make an exception for the use of properly prescribed drugs. Parents of students taking prescribed and/or over the counter medication must inform the school in writing of that fact and complete an Emergency Medical Information form, and ensure that any updates are provided to the school for inclusion on this form. The procedures for the use and storage, if necessary, of the prescribed medication must be agreed, in writing, between the Principal and the parents concerned, in keeping with the Administration of Medications Policy.

Substance abuse related incidents involving staff will be dealt with under the Staff Welfare Policy.

Programmes for Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education

The school, within the limited resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all its students in Junior Cycle through SPHE, CSPE, PE (Wellbeing) and RE, and through SPHE and RE in Senior Cycle. The focus in SPHE is to enable students to develop a



framework for responsible decision-making for every aspect of their personal and social lives. This means being able to say “no” to the misuse of different substances including drugs, tobacco and alcohol, to have an awareness of the consequences of substance misuse and to make conscious and informed decisions about the use of drugs in their lives.

The school requires that parents acknowledge the importance of these programmes for their children and recognise that parents are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse and minimising the harm caused by an abuse incident by offering supportive interventions. Parents are also required to support and assist the school in relation to their children’s participation in all education programmes. The school needs the support of parents and can more easily implement a policy on substance use if it has the active support and involvement of parents.

It is the intent of the school to provide parents with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes. The school encourages and welcomes consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Drug-Related or Substance Abuse Incidents

In the event of a substance abuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school. The school welcomes contact, information and support from relevant / approved agencies in this area including the HSE, Carlow Regional Youth Services and the Gardaí, among others. The following are the steps the school will take in managing and investigating an abuse incident.

- Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
- The completion of a Substance Abuse Incident Report Form.
- The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- In the event of an incident the school will, with due care and consideration, seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.



- The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for the decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- The school, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- The school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
 - a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his/her parents-at the discretion of the school-in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his/her own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he/she would wish to make or have made on his/her behalf.
 - b) The school will allow the student concerned and his/her parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
 - c) The school shall shortly after inform the student and his/her parents of the school's findings and its reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.
- In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement pastoral and disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to: pastoral care counselling, a verbal warning, a written warning, fine, suspension, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
- The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account.
- The school will immediately inform parents where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a child and share any available information that may help parents in attending to their child's health and well-being and will keep students informed about what is happening and why. Such actions will be undertaken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.



The involvement and roles of various parties in an incident investigation

The Principal is the key actor in the investigation of a substance misuse/abuse incident. However the Principal may consult with the Deputy Principal(s), Discipline Committee and the Student Care Team(s). In the absence of the Principal a Deputy Principal will assume responsibility for the investigation.

- (i) the Principal is the primary person responsible for dealing with abuse incidents arising at the school
- (ii) all reports of abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal using the Substance Abuse Incident Form
- (iii) the Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of an incident: communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation
- (iv) the Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments
- (v) the Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any documentation and records associated with an incident
- (vi) the Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice
- (vii) the Principal may seek the assistance of a Deputy Principal, Dean and / or Guidance Counsellor in conducting an incident investigation.

Confidentiality

The school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing an abuse incident and that it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, students and their parents must accept that:

1. the duty of teachers and staff to the school community precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident,
2. the school may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Gardaí, HSE/Tusla, Probation Service or Officers of the Courts,
3. the school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident,
4. the school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations or DES guidelines.

While handling media enquiries the school will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. In the interests of the school's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.



Training and Development

In relation to staff, parents and the Board of Management the school will provide opportunities to attend information sessions, Continuing Professional Development, and workshops in relation to drugs and the policy. The Principal and the Board of Management facilitate teachers to participate in professional development opportunities, with due regard to the school budget and Supervision/Substitution rota, and the need for the ongoing teaching and learning programme of the school to continue with as little disturbance as possible. The school will provide appropriate information, guidance and support to the Board of Management regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

In relation to the students, the school will offer all students programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco, and drug education within the context of the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate programmes.

Implementing, Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating the Policy

All staff, teaching and non-teaching, will be familiar with this policy and the procedures to be following in the case of suspected or known breach of this policy. The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices. The policy will be reviewed and evaluated at least every two years under the direction of the Board of Management. Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, guidelines, legislation and feedback from parents, students, teachers and others. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school self-evaluation and policy planning. The Board of Management will review the policy as part of its normal school planning duties.

To review and evaluate the policy, it will be necessary to gauge the impact and effectiveness of the policy by examining the extent to which:

- Drugs and Substance Abuse Education is being successfully taught through SPHE for all relevant students.
- Resource materials are available to teachers in designated area in workroom.
- The timetable facilitates the implementation of SPHE in Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle.
- Appropriate professional development for teachers is available and relevant teachers are availing of it.
- Staff are aware of the policy.
- Students are aware of the policy.
- Parents are aware of the policy.
- Feedback is received from teachers, other school staff, students, parents, members of Board of Management etc.

Ratified by the Board of Management on: 18th May 2023

Date of next review: May 2025

Signature (Chairperson): _____
For and on behalf of the Board of Management