



Substance Misuse Policy

Introduction

Ballymakenny College was established in 2014 as a co-educational establishment catering for all ranges of abilities, embracing all social groupings, offering the widest possible range of subjects and being open to all religious persuasions. The school is under the joint patronage of LMETB and Educate Together.

Ballymakenny College is committed to the holistic development of all its students. Students who attend Ballymakenny College will be encouraged to reach their full potential mentally, physically, spiritually, emotionally and socially, in an atmosphere in which they feel safe, valued and secure and in which they have respect for themselves and one another is the standard.

Ballymakenny College is dedicated to addressing the needs of its students in relation to substance misuse and particularly alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarette, drug, gas and solvent use.

The Substance Misuse policy has been drawn up and accepted by the board of management, principal, staff, parents/guardians and students. It is paramount that all involved work together to implement this policy.

This policy applies to all students of Ballymakenny College. This policy applies also to students involved in any school activities, (as defined in section 4.1 below), both on and off campus.

Ballymakenny College believes that the primary role of substance misuse prevention rests with parents/guardians. It is vital that parents/guardians actively work with the school to implement this policy to ensure their children's health and safety.

1. Mission Statement

In line with our Mission Statement and the vision of equality, human rights and citizenship in Ballymakenny College, this Substance Misuse Policy is part of our overall approach to pastoral care, which seeks to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive

environment where pupils can feel safe and valued and where learning is actively facilitated. This Substance Misuse policy supports the values of the school as outlined in our mission statement: Ballymakenny College is committed to the values laid down in the Educate Together Charter and the Mission Statement, Values and Principles of Louth Meath Education and Training Board. Ballymakenny College is learner-centred, multid denominational, co- educational and democratically run. This means that all members of the school community, whatever their social, cultural or belief background, work together in an atmosphere of dignity and respect. Students follow an ethical curriculum, which includes learning about different religions and belief systems. Our ethos provides a strong moral, ethical and spiritual framework for the whole school community, and informs all policies and practices in the daily life of the school.

Ballymakenny College asserts its right to take whatever steps are necessary to protect and promote those values that are central to its vision by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices that are inimical to its ethos.

2. Definition of a drug or substance

A drug or substance can be defined as any substance, drug or chemical that changes the way the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. The term 'substances' includes but is not limited to illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vaping devices, solvents, gases, and the misuse of legal or prescription medicines. In particular, this policy recognizes the growing misuse of substances such as THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) compounds, including cannabis oils and vape cartridges containing THC. These substances, whether legal in some jurisdictions or not, are strictly prohibited in the school environment and during school-related activities.

3. Rationale

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, THC and drugs is part of this reality. It must be assumed that tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol and drugs are available to members of our school community.

The fundamental reason for developing a Substance Misuse policy within the whole school is to ensure that all students feel safe and secure in the school environment within which their educational development can take place.

The prevalence of tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol and drug misuse poses challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness education.

The Board of Management recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug, alcohol misuse, tobacco (e cigarettes), vaping devices and associated paraphernalia.

The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02.

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of pupils and provide health education for them.

The report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs 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) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen years old in Ireland. 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.

Research has shown that drug use is on the rise in Ireland from data analysed in 2016 and 2017.

The central objective of this Substance Misuse Policy is the welfare, safety, care and protection of students in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare Act) 2000.

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 an issue involving alcohol, tobacco, solvents, and other legal and illegal drugs.

4. Scope of Policy

Ballymakenny College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances or drugs paraphernalia by any member of the school community while in school, on school trips and outings or during any school-related activity (See section 4.1 below)

A legitimate exception is the use of a prescribed drug in accordance with medical advice and prescription (and in line with the First Aid Policy and Medication Administration Policy).

This policy will apply during normal school hours and during all school related activities which may occur during and outside of normal school hours.

The Board of Management of Ballymakenny College affirms that students who are over the age of eighteen years must comply with this policy and that they shall have the same rights and responsibilities as are given to other students beneath the age of eighteen and their parents/guardians in this policy.

4.1 Definition of School Related Activities

The term '*school related activity*' applies to:

- any activity on the school premises
- travelling to and from school
- representing the school or working as part of a school programme
- educational tours, field trips, reward trips etc.
- extra-curricular activities and associated trips
- any activities organised by the school that take place offsite including foreign/overnight trips
- work experience
- online learning
- being clearly distinguishable as a student of Ballymakenny College i.e., when wearing the school uniform

Ballymakenny College is immensely proud of its students and the school uniform which clearly identifies and distinguishes them. Our school uniform is a huge part of our identity as a community of learners. The manner in which students conduct themselves while in uniform reflects significantly on the public image of Ballymakenny College. Therefore, students wearing the school uniform should always be conscious that they represent the entire school community, and, as such, their conduct, attitude and manners should reflect our school principles, values, and ethos.

5. Policy Aims

- Provide a safe and secure environment within which the educational development of every student can take place.
- Protect each student and staff member in the school from the potentially harmful effects of tobacco, tobacco related products, e-cigarettes, vaping products, alcohol, solvents, gases and drugs (legal or illegal).

- Provide information and education (within available resources) to pupils, their parents/guardians and school staff/stakeholders about the effects of substance misuse and its prevention.
- Enable pupils to make informed decisions by increasing knowledge.
- Increase the self-confidence and well-being of pupils.
- Help pupils to identify sources of support and intervention.
- Help adult members of the school community to recognise the symptoms of substance misuse.
- Develop a planned and considered response to incidents involving substance misuse with a view to the protection of the person involved and the maintenance of a safe environment for the wider school community.

5.1 These aims will be achieved by:

a) A co-ordinated approach to the issue of substance misuse through Cross Curricular Education:

- Social, Personal and Health Education in Junior and Senior Cycle
- Civic, Social and Political Education in Junior Cycle
- Home Economics
- Science
- Physical Education
- Ethics
- Transition Year modules
- Treoir
- Letter/email home
- Announcements and assemblies

b) Guest Speakers:

When appropriate, visiting speakers will be used to reinforce, supplement, and support the school's programme and offer additional information and support to teachers and students.

c) Continuous Professional Development:

School management will endeavour to facilitate training and information relating to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and other substances for staff.

d) Support Services:

- The appropriate use of An Garda Síochána Juvenile Liason Officer
- Social services
- National Educational Psychological Service
- Local services such as Boomerang
- General Practitioner
- HSE

e) Parental/Guardian Support:

- Ballymakenny College acknowledges the crucial role parents/guardians play as the primary educators of their children with regard to informing and educating their children about Substance Misuse.
- The school welcomes consultation with and co-operation from parents/guardians in relation to Substance Misuse.

6. Relationships to Other Policies:

This policy operates in conjunction with other Ballymakenny College documents such as:

- The Mission Statement
- Health & Safety Policy
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Smoke Free Policy
- First Aid Medication Policy
- School Tour Policy
- Work Experience Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Relationship & Sexuality Education Policy
- General Data Protection Regulation Policy

This list is not exhaustive and may be added to as appropriate.

6.1 Relevant Legislation

A range of legislation applies to the operation of this policy including:

1. Education Act (1998)
2. Education (Welfare Act 2000)
3. Health Act (1947)
4. Poisons Act (1961)
5. Medical Preparations Regulations (1970)

6. Misuse of Drugs Acts (1977 to 2017)
7. Criminal Justice Act (1994 - 2007)
8. Public Health (Tobacco) Acts (2002 – 2015)
9. Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act (2010)
10. Children First Act (2015)
11. National, EU and other International Regulations

7. The Role of the Parents/Guardians:

The school views parents/guardians as essential partners in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance misuse. The school welcomes parents/guardians engaging with the school if they suspect their child is misusing a substance.

Parents/Guardians are expected to acknowledge the potential importance of this issue in the lives of their children and the importance of the school's Substance Misuse Policy in supporting their children.

The school expects the active support of parents/guardians as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents of substance misuse that might arise. When dealing with a substance misuse or suspected substance misuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the pupil involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

At the earliest possible stage, the school will contact parents/guardians of the individuals involved. The school anticipates and expects the full co-operation and active assistance of parents/guardians in facilitating an investigation of an incident of substance misuse.

8. 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 dealing with incidents. However, 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 concluded. In dealing with media enquiries, the principal or chairperson of the Board of Management will act as spokesperson on behalf of the school.

9. Confidentiality:

The school recognises the importance of limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating a substance misuse incident. In the event of such an incident or suspected incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare

of the pupil involved and the welfare of the school community. However, the school can give no absolute *guarantee* of confidentiality.

In discharging its duty of care, the school may need to make contact and/or disclosures to outside agencies such as An Garda Síochána, and the health board.

The school may need to engage the expertise of an appropriate third party in thoroughly investigating the incident.

The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and the outcome of an investigation under statute, regulations or Department of Education and Skills guidelines.

The duty of teachers and other staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they encounter a misuse incident or a suspected misuse incident.

10. A Substance Misuse Incident

A Substance Misuse Incident is any incident involving alcohol, solvents, gases, tobacco (e-cigarette), or drug use. Possession of a substance or related paraphernalia may infer usage and may be subject to sanctions. This might include:

- use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco, e-cigarettes, gases, or solvents on the school premises (including grounds) or on a school-related outing or activity.
- intoxication arising from suspected substance misuse or behaviour that suggests the use/misuse of alcohol, drugs, solvents, gases or tobacco or e-cigarettes.
- finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia on a student's person or property e.g. locker or schoolbag.
- possession/supply of such substances/paraphernalia on the school premises (including grounds) or on a school-related activity.
- medical emergencies where substance misuse is suspected in school or on a school related activity.

11. Procedures for Managing and Investigating a Substance Misuse Incident

Ballymakenny College expects all students to cooperate fully with school staff in all matters pertaining to safety and security, including searches of personal belongings when deemed necessary. Non-cooperation is considered a serious breach of school policy. Ballymakenny College is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and drug-free environment for all students. Non-cooperation in matters related to substance misuse will not be tolerated, and all students are expected to adhere strictly to this policy to ensure their safety and the safety of their peers.

11.1 General Principles:

- Where it is apparent that there is an 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 misuse incident pending a full investigation of the incident.
- The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any substance misuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.
- The school reserves the right to ask students to empty out the contents of their lockers, empty out the contents of their schoolbags and have students empty out the contents of their pockets in the presence of another member of staff.
- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drugs paraphernalia associated with the 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 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 these decisions, any sanctions or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- If the circumstance merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents/guardians 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/guardians in time to permit the student 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/guardians 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 that may be appropriate to the specific case.
- c) The school shall shortly thereafter inform the students and his/her parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the students have been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.

In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to; an oral warning, a written warning, lunchtime intervention, school-based intervention, a suspension up to three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion - (see Suspension and Exclusion (Section 4.1) in Code of Behaviour policy for further clarity on appropriate timelines in relation to student expulsion).

The school will ensure that appropriate pastoral supports are offered to any students affected by incidents of substance misuse.

11.2 Vaping and Substance Misuse

- (a) Students suspected of engaging in vaping or possessing substances during school hours and an inspection has taken place to confirm same, will face a **one day suspension**.
- (b) Students suspected of engaging in vaping or possessing substances during school hours and refuse to cooperate with inspection will face a **minimum suspension of three days**.
- (c) Repeated instances of non-compliance, as outlined above will result in escalating sanctions potentially leading to more severe consequences, including

the possibility of referral to the Chairperson and/or Board of Management for possible longer suspension and/or expulsion.

11.3 Policy on Non-Cooperation

If the staff member in their professional judgement has reason to believe a student is vaping they may be requested to empty the contents of their bags and belongings for inspection.

Students are required to open and display the contents of their bags and personal belongings for inspection by staff when necessary. This process involves students presenting items from their bags and belongings themselves.

If a student refuses to cooperate with a request to empty their belongings, the following procedures will be enacted:

- The student will be informed that their refusal to comply will result in immediate disciplinary action.
- A formal documentation of the incident will be recorded in the student's file, which may impact their standing within the school and eligibility for future opportunities.

11.4 Involvement of External Authorities:

The school reserves the right to contact local authorities including An Garda Síochána if there is a suspicion of illegal substance possession, and non-cooperation will be considered an aggravating factor in any disciplinary proceedings.

12. The Role of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation

- The Principal is responsible for dealing with substance misuse incidents arising in the school.
- All reports of substance misuse incidents or suspected incidents must be made to the Principal.
- The Principal may nominate the Deputy Principal, or House Leader or other member of staff to act on his behalf in the investigation of a substance misuse incident.
- The Principal makes all decisions regarding the investigation of the incident, communication with the relevant parties and disclosure of information regarding an investigation.

- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with the incident.
- 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.
- The Principal may seek the advice of the Deputy Principal, House Leader, Guidance Counsellor or any other relevant person in conducting the investigation.
- Where substance misuse is suspected the Principal should immediately inform parents/guardians, particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a student and share any available information that may help parents/guardians in supporting their child's health and well-being. This action will be taken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any substance misuse incident.

13. Storage and Disposal of Substances

Where a member of staff or a student finds or is alerted to the existence of a suspicious substance, such finds must be reported immediately to the Principal. Any suspicious substance will be stored by the school in a secure location. The Gardaí may be contacted where appropriate to remove the substance, establish its nature and arrange for its disposal.

14. Training and Development

The school is committed to raising awareness of the dangers of substance misuse among all stakeholders: students, parents, all staff and members of the Board of Management.

14.1 Staff

The school will:

- Promote and facilitate training in relation to alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, and drugs.
- Inform staff on their role in relation to the management and investigation of a substance misuse incident.

14.2 Other Stakeholders

The school will:

- Provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and the policy in conjunction with local support services.
- Provide appropriate information, guidance, and support to the board of management regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

14.3 Students

- The school provides Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes on a formal and informal, cross-curricular basis.
- These programmes may be run within the context of SPHE classes and Treoir.
- Age-appropriate educational programmes from the community and visiting speakers to build on and enhance existing school programmes.

15. Availability of Policy

This policy is available on the school website at www.ballymakennycollege.ie

16. Success Criteria & Monitoring

The Substance Mis-use Policy was devised in consultation with the students, parents, staff, management and Board of Management of Ballymakenny College.

This policy will be reviewed regularly as part of the normal Whole School Development Planning review cycle. If necessary, it may be reviewed at any time considering changing circumstances and/or changing legislation. Any amendments which need to be made will be in keeping with the general philosophy of the school. Any suggested amendments/improvements will be communicated to the Principal or Deputy Principals who will consult with all partners.

Approved by the BOM of Ballymakenny College on the 7th of November, 2024.

Signed by Chairperson:

Maire Ní Bhroithe

