



Substance Use Policy

Reviewed February 2024

A Substance Use Policy sets out, in writing, the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use. It reflects the unique ethos of the school and aims to develop a shared understanding of the term 'substances/drugs.'

This policy applies to all members of the school community, which includes staff, pupils, and all visitors to Blackwater Community School. The policy applies to the school building and its environs, 24-hours a day, including all school trips and activities off campus.

1.0 DEFINITIONS

In this policy, any reference to:

“DRUG”: is referring to any substance which changes the way the body functions physically, mentally and emotionally.

“THE SCHOOL”: is referring to anywhere within the school grounds, and its environs.

All school related trips and activities.

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders – Those involved in the development and evaluation of this policy include members of the teaching staff, Parents' Council, Student Voice and the HSE guidelines. It is the responsibility of the whole school community to ensure the contents of this policy are adhered to

1.1 CATEGORIES OF DRUGS COVERED IN THE POLICY:

In our school policy, the word “Substances” will include illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977 & Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Bill 2010. Notably known as cannabis, ecstasy, cocaine etc. And, legally available substances, such as but not limited to Painkillers, Benzodiazepines, Alcohol, Solvents, Tobacco, which includes Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) and Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs) also called electronic cigarettes (known also as vaping).

(Drugs.ie Guidelines for Developing a School Substance Use Policy)

2.0 RATIONALE FOR POLICY

We feel that Blackwater Community School requires a Substance Use policy for the following reasons:

- Legal regulations.
- To provide structure and procedures.
- Health and Safety considerations.
- Educate pupils, parents, and staff.
- Protect pupils, staff, and all stakeholders of the school.

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, and drugs 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.

3.0 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

Goals

- Provide a safe and healthy environment for all members of the school community
- To educate our pupils in a holistic manner through the SPHE programme.

Objectives

- Deal with drug related incidents in a fair and consistent manner.
- Provide teachers and parents with drug education as and when they require it.

4.0 PROGRAMMES FOR ALCOHOL AND DRUG EDUCATION

Training and Staff Development

All teachers involved in SPHE will be given the opportunity to avail of training in group facilitation skills and personal development. Training for the area of Substance Use education will be offered to all staff but there will be 2 dedicated trained staff members who will liaise with the staff and management on this issue. This is currently Ms. Aoife Ryan and Ms. Caroline Sheehan.

Drug Education – Education concerning substance use for students will be available to all pupils through the SPHE program established within the school. There will also be a module as part of the RSE programme dedicated to this topic in senior cycle.

Outside Speakers – We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out drug education but accept that, at times, it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work carried out in class. Junior liaison officer from An

5.0 MANAGEMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG RELATED INCIDENTS:

- **Procedure for Suspected Use** – Once a teacher has a suspicion of drug use, they must inform the Principal/Vice Principal as soon as possible. A range of options will then become available including contacting a parent, member of the Gardaí, a health care professional, or Juvenile Liaison Officer. All incidents will be recorded on the school administration system.
- **Disclosure** – This will be in line with the Child Protection Policy of the school.
- **Finding Substances** – If substances are known to exist, the relevant authorities will be notified.
- **Possession/Supply on or Off the Premises** – in the incidence of possession or supply of drugs on/off school premises the relevant authorities will be notified.
- **Reporting, Referral and Recording Procedure** – A written record of all incidents will be kept in a secure location. Access to information will be restricted to relevant staff

members and kept in line with GDPR regulations. Agencies that information may be referred to include, but are not limited to, Drug Education Officers, Juvenile Officer, An Garda Síochána and Social Services.

- **Students Over 18 Years** – All pupils are expected to fully comply with school regulations regardless of legal age.
- **Involvement of the media** – In the event of a drug related incident there will be no involvement of any kind with the media.
- **Pastoral Care Content** – the school will aim to treat all pupils in a pastoral care context.

6.0 SUCCESS CRITERIA FOR THE POLICY

If the following questions can be answered affirmatively, we feel the policy has been successful:

Have all pupils received substance use/misuse education through the SPHE programme?

If there has been a drug related incident, was it managed in the appropriate manner?

Have parents and staff availed of the Drug Education Programmes on offer?

MONITORING PROCEDURE

Blackwater Community School's Substance Use Policy will be re-evaluated annually.

Date of BOM ratification _____