



**St. Flannan's College,
Ennis,
Co. Clare.**

Substance Use

1. Introduction

1.1 Relationship to school's mission/vision/aims

The application of this policy will be in accordance with an overall school ethos of support and care for individual students as outlined in our school mission statement. This policy is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. This Substance Use Policy is one among a number of policies that serve to assist the school in fulfilling its aims. It also serves to protect the safety, health and welfare of our students and staff.

1.2 Scope of policy

The policy applies to students during all operational school times, during all school related activities and to students who are on the school premises at any time.

This includes any occasion, in any social setting, where staff and students may gather together at a school event. Students of St. Flannan's College who may be eighteen years of age or older are obliged to adhere to school policies and regulations when participating in/ celebrating any school related events.

1.3 Rationale

Because of the wide availability of drugs in society, the prevalence of substance misuse and the damage caused thereby to individuals, families and communities, St. Flannan's College recognises the need to develop policies and measures in these areas. This is in line with

- (a) The National Drug Strategy 2017-2025, which requires schools to develop and implement a substance use policy.
- (b) The Education Act 1998, which requires schools to promote the social and personal development of students and to provide health education for them.
- (c) The Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools, Section VI, which states that all schools should be actively engaged in the process of developing and agreeing a Substance Use Policy in line with action 43 of the National Drugs Strategy and DES guidelines as set forth in Circular Letter 18/02.

1.4 Goals and Objectives

St. Flannan's College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use or supply of banned or prohibited substances or drugs paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings or during any school-related activity. A legitimate exception is the use of a prescribed drug in accordance with medical prescription and advice.

The purpose of the policy is to provide, as far as possible, a safe and secure school environment, through setting up a framework of education and support for all students and outlining clear procedures for management of incidents.

1.5 Substances covered by this policy

This policy is concerned with the use of alcohol and/or of any mood-altering substances. For the purpose of this document it includes illegal substances and the illicit use of legal substances, such as medication and solvents.

2. Policy Content

2.1 Education concerning substance use

It is the aim of the school to implement age-appropriate educational programmes for Junior and Senior Cycle students (for example S.P.H.E.). These programmes will deal with the consequences of drug misuse – physical and biological, social and psychological. It is expected that the school will draw on personnel from within and outside the school in delivering this programme to maximum effect. Personnel from outside the school might include speakers from medical, pharmaceutical and legal backgrounds.

2.2 Definition of a Substance Abuse Incident

A Substance Abuse Incident is any incident involving alcohol, solvents, tobacco, or drug use. This can include:

- (a) Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco (including the use of e-cigarettes, vaping and all associated products) or solvents on the school premises (including grounds) or on a school-related outing or activity.
- (b) Intoxication arising from suspected substance use or behaviour that suggests the use/misuse of alcohol, drugs, solvents or tobacco.
- (c) Disclosure about use.
- (d) Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia on school property.
- (e) Possession/supply of such substances/paraphernalia on the school premises (including grounds) or on a school-related activity.
- (f) Medical emergencies where substance abuse is suspected in school or on a school-related activity.

2.3 Internal reporting and recording

Any substance-related incident is to be reported to the Principal.

The reporting staff member will complete an Incident Report Form.

A written record of each substance related incident will be kept on file.

The school will take all steps necessary to fully investigate and assess any substance abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this. However, where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to a student, 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 school will maintain a written record of all stages of any investigation, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matter under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.

2.4 Informing Parents

The school views parents/guardians as essential partners in relation to informing and educating students regarding substance abuse.

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 abuse 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 abuse that might arise.

Parental/guardian involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of such incidents and therefore it will be normal practice to inform parents/guardians if their son/daughter is involved in a substance related incident. In these circumstances parents/guardians will be invited to the school to discuss what has happened and the student will be informed that their parents/guardians are being notified.

2.5 Informing Gardaí

It will be normal practice to inform the Gardaí of any of incidents involving illegal drugs.

It will be at the sole discretion of the Gardaí as to whether or not they undertake their own investigation which may lead to a prosecution being taken.

2.6 Sanctions/disciplinary issues

In accordance with the school's Code of Behaviour, Suspension Policy and Expulsion Policy, sanctions including suspension and/or expulsion may be used in cases involving substance related incidents. Where appropriate, the school may require students to present a medical certificate to confirm that they are complying with the school's Substance Use Policy. If a student is caught in possession of an e-cigarette or any vaping or associated products, the item(s) will not be returned to student or parent/guardian but will be confiscated and destroyed by school management.

2.7 Powers of search

The school retains the right to search any part of school property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy may be contained therein. This includes school lockers. Students will be given the option to volunteer the substance prior to search. If they refuse, parents will be notified and the Gardaí may be called (in the case of a suspected illegal drug). Two staff members must be present during any form of search.

2.8 Confidentiality policy

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, the limits of confidentiality should be explained to the student prior to disclosure, where possible. Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain members of staff, with the parents of those involved, or with an appropriate external agency.

2.9 Provision for training and staff development

Training and support will be provided as required to help school staff fulfill their respective roles in implementing the school Substance Use Policy.

2.10 Success criteria

Review and evaluation will be as for the whole school planning process and will focus mainly on whether the provisions of this policy are being implemented, and whether they are deemed

appropriate and effective by those involved.

2.11 Implementation Programme

- (a) Staff will be reminded of the school policy at the first staff meeting of each year and an electronic version of the policy will be available for all staff on the school's internal staff server.
- (b) Students will be made aware of the policy through the substance use education programmes.
- (c) Parents/guardians will be made aware of the policy in correspondence to them and will be able to access the policy on the school website or request a copy from the office. They are encouraged to discuss the policy with their son/daughter.
- (d) The Parents Association will be encouraged to hold information evenings for Parents on the subject of substance abuse.

2.12 Public Media

If contacted by the media following a substance abuse incident, the school will not comment on any individual matter while an investigation is in progress, other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing such incidents. The Principal will be the designated person for dealing with the media in such instances.

In the interests of the reputation of the school, The Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

2.13 Support/ pastoral issues

Students involved in illicit drug incidents will be seen by the school counsellor. They may be offered support and information about external services, where appropriate. Students of the school who wish to speak to someone about their own misuse of alcohol or illicit drugs, or that of a person about whom they are concerned, are encouraged to approach any member of the teaching staff.

2.14 Procedure for disposal of illegal drugs

If an illegal (or suspected illegal drug) is found on school property or during a school activity, it should immediately be brought to the attention of the Principal or person in charge. It will be stored securely and the Gardai notified.

2.15. Approval and review of the policy

This policy was approved by the Board of Management on September 4th, 2024

The policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management in 2027

Signed: *Mr. Leonard Cleary*

Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: *September 4th, 2024*

Signed: *Fr. Ignatius McCormack*

Principal

Date: *September 4th, 2024*