

Loreto College Cavan



Substance Use / Misuse Policy

Substance Misuse Policy

1. Rationale

The central objective of our Substance Use/Misuse Policy is the welfare, safety, care and protection of students in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare Act 2000) and, in the case of students over 18 years of age, in common law. This reflects the need for Loreto College Cavan to assist students in dealing with the many challenges affecting their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, and other substances is part of this reality.

2. Ethos

As part of the family of Loreto schools and in co-operation with parents and the community, we are dedicated to Christian education. We aim to provide a balanced academic, pastoral, and physical education for all our students, affording space for reflection and for learning through experience. We seek to promote self-esteem, self-discipline, and the goal of self-fulfilment and to inculcate in our students the virtues of courage, sincerity, and truth.

The underlying philosophy is one of concern and care for our students.

3. Scope of Policy

3.1 This policy applies to all schools and centres for education established and maintained by Loreto College Cavan. The policy will always apply during normal school hours and during times in which students and those who accompany them are involved in school related activities.

3.2 This policy relates to any substance that changes the way the body functions mentally, physically, and emotionally. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, medicine, and solvents etc. and all come under the general heading of drugs. Any reference to smoking in this document includes the use of electronic cigarettes (also known as vaporising cigarettes or e-cigs) and all vaping paraphernalia.

3.3 Definition of School Related Activities

The term 'school related activities' applies to any activity on the school premises, on the way to and from school and during any school related activities in any location outside the school, where students

are deemed to be participating in school related activities, representing the school, or working as part of a school programme.

4. Aims and objectives of Policy

- To provide a safe and secure environment within which the educational development of every student can take place.
- To protect each student and staff member in the school, from the potentially harmful effects of consuming alcohol, smoking and/or consuming any substance defined as a drug, in an atmosphere of care and concern.
- To provide clear guidelines regarding the use of alcohol, cigarettes/vapes and/or other potentially harmful substances by students
- To ensure that other than possession of and use of prescribed drugs in accordance with the instructions of a medical practitioner (in which case the school must be informed by parents/guardians in writing), no student will have possession of, use, sell, supply, or attempt to sell or supply to others on the school premises, on the way to or from school or on school related activities as defined in this policy.

5. Relationship to other policies

This policy operates in conjunction with other school and Loreto College Cavan policies:

- School Code of Behaviour
- School Child Safeguarding Statement
- Loreto College Cavan Administration of Medications in Schools policy
- Loreto College Cavan School Suspensions and Expulsions Policy as incorporated into the School Code of Behaviour
- Safety Health and Welfare Policy
- School Critical Incident Policy
- Wellbeing Policy
- SPHE Policy
- Antibullying Policy

This list is not exhaustive and may be added to from time to time as the need arises.

6. Relevant Legislation

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

- Health Act (1947)
- Poisons Act (1961)
- Medical Preparations Regulations (1970)
- Misuse of Drugs Act (1977, 1984)
- EU and other international regulations
- Criminal Justice Act (1994)

The Road Traffic Act (1961) prohibits the use of mechanical vehicles while under the influence of drugs or alcohol

7. Operation of the Policy

Part 1 – Alcohol and Drugs

7.1 Definition of Substance or Drug

A drug can be defined as any chemical that causes change in the way a person functions either, mentally, physically or emotionally.

A drug or substance (as used in the context of this policy) is any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels.

Drugs or substances may be addictive and illegal as well as potentially harmful for an individual. Misuse occurs when the use of the drug (legal or illegal) is harmful to the physical, mental, or social wellbeing of an individual, group or society. Prescribed drugs, when taken other than as prescribed, can be harmful to the person for whom they have been prescribed or other(s) for whom they have not.

It has generally been accepted that tobacco and alcohol are the most widely abused drugs but recently there has been an increase in vaping in adolescents. Vaping is the term often used to describe the act of using an electronic cigarette. E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that heat a liquid solution — usually, but not always, containing nicotine — turning it into a vapor that can be inhaled. If the base nicotine mixture is not palatable, many flavours, such as mint, apple and others, can make vaping attractive, especially to adolescents. Also, substances such as cannabis, ecstasy, magic mushrooms, solvents, cocaine, and heroin etc. are increasingly becoming a problem in our communities across the country. It has been recognised that drug use has serious negative effects on the educational experience, performance, and attainment of young people. There are many negative short terms and long-term effects of drug use.

7.2 Substance or Alcohol use or Possession

- Possession or consumption of alcohol or other substances defined as a ‘drug’ in the policy, in the school building, on the school premises or by students while they are engaged in any school related activities is expressly forbidden.
- Students found with alcohol or another drug for their own consumption or suspected of being under the influence of any or either, will be sanctioned under the School Code of Behaviour, sanctions will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence.

7.3 Student selling/distributing illicit substances in school

- Following clear evidence of any student involved in selling or distributing illicit substances on school premises, their activities will be immediately reported to the Gardaí.
- The student may be suspended in accordance with the Suspensions and Expulsions Policy, pending a decision by the Board of Management.

7.4 A limited number of people are involved in all suspected or confirmed drug related incidents. People will be informed on a ‘need to know’ basis. All written records will be held confidentially by the Principal, Deputy Principal and/or Head of Year. Parents/Guardians will be involved. They will be informed sensitively, and support offered to them. In the case of illicit drugs, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact Gardaí, and any drugs found will be dealt with by the Gardaí. In response to all incidents, pastoral support will be offered.

7.5 If a student has a problem with substance misuse, then referral will be recommended to the appropriate authority. Parents/Guardians, staff and other students involved in the incident will be offered support. Confidentiality is a complex issue. It is important that the limits of confidentiality are discussed with students before any disclosure is made. The wellbeing and welfare of the student and teacher must be primary focus.

7.6 The Principal or Deputy Principal will handle all media enquiries. They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school policy and procedures in place to manage any drug related incident.

7.7 Management of a student suspected of having used a Drug (including alcohol)

, Should a member of staff suspect that a student is under the influence of a substance, (s)he will ensure that at no time the student is left unaccompanied.

- The assistance of another member of staff and or a student will be sought if appropriate and practicable so that the safety of no student is compromised.
- Medical assistance will be sought immediately, if deemed necessary.
- The incident will be reported to the Principal/Deputy Principal immediately.
- The Principal/ Deputy Principal will outline the concern to the student and seek their cooperation in establishing the facts.
- The parents/guardians of the student will be contacted as soon as possible.
- The student may be accompanied to hospital by a staff member in the absence of parents/guardians, if deemed necessary.
- Mindful of the school's duty of care, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action to investigate the concern and make every attempt to establish the facts. The student may be suspended from school. Their return may be dependent on medical/treatment report being received.
- The duration of the absence will be determined by the nature of the substance taken; the level of dependency; recommendations from external professionals and arrangements with parents/guardians

In the event of returning to school:

- The student will receive a caution/sanction from Principal/Deputy Principal –in line with the School Code of Behaviour.
- A letter confirming this will be sent to parents/guardians.
- The Garda JLO may be informed if deemed necessary.
- The school reserves the right to request that the parent arranges to have the student tested for drug use.

7.8 Disciplinary Procedures

- The protection and safety of students who have breached the School Code of Behaviour in relation to use of potentially harmful substances is a priority. However, the use of such substances cannot be condoned and students who offend will be sanctioned in accordance with the Schools Code of Behaviour.
- A programme of support will be recommended for the student. The school will insist that if the student is to remain in the school they must participate in the agreed programme of support.
- A student who supplies illegal substances to another person(s) in the school will be suspended or excluded from the school.
- Illegal substances confiscated in the school will be passed on to the appropriate authorities for identification purposes.

7.9 Medication

- Medication is not issued by school staff. If a student becomes unwell at school, parents/guardians are contacted and asked to take student home
- The Loreto College Cavan Administration of Medication in Schools Policy governs the administration of medicines in the case of students with on-going medical conditions. (In all cases the school must be informed of details by parents/guardians in writing).

- If a student needs to take medication during school hours parents/guardians should inform the Year Head. In the absence of such notification the possession of non-prescription medication is prohibited

Part 2. Smoking/Vaping

7.10 The Board of Management is obliged to ensure that the terms of the Public Health Tobacco Act 2002 and the Public Health Tobacco Amendment Act 2004, are implemented by the school.

- Smoking/Vaping is expressly forbidden in the school building, on the school premises or by students while they are engaged in any school related activities.
- Cigarettes and e-cigarette or other smoking paraphernalia are prohibited and will be confiscated.
- Students found smoking/vaping on the school premises, grounds or engaged in school activities, will be sanctioned.
- Students who are with other students who are smoking, though they may not be in the act of smoking themselves, are deemed to be condoning smoking/vaping and may be sanctioned appropriately.
- If a member of staff suspects that a student may be smoking/vaping, the student is accompanied to the Principal/Deputy Principal/or Head of Year.
- The Principal/ DP/ Head of Year will outline the concern to the student and seek her cooperation in establishing the facts.
- Mindful of the school's duty of care, the school reserves the right to take appropriate action to investigate the concern and make every attempt to establish the facts. The student may be suspended from school.

7.11 Sanctions

- A student, who is found smoking/vaping or misusing a substance by a member of staff in the school, may face immediate suspension from class and her parents/guardians will be contacted.
- Sanctions will be decided upon in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
- A further breach of this policy will result in further sanctions.
- The school reserves the right to remove break time/lunch time privileges from students found smoking/vaping/misusing a substance during school time.

8. Training & Development

8.1 Staff

- The school will facilitate training for staff involved in the SPHE programme.
- All staff will be offered drug information and awareness training regularly.
- First Aid training will be made available to all staff regularly.

8.2 Parents/Guardians

- The school will provide opportunities to attend drug workshops, information evenings and sessions on the School Drugs Policy.
- This may be offered as part of the induction for parents/guardians of new students to the school.

8.3 Students

- The school provides Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes on a formal and informal cross-curricular basis.
- Education on these topics happens as part of our SPHE programme at an age-appropriate level.
- Other age-appropriate educational programmes such as “Know the Score” (HSE) may be offered and at times visiting speakers will build on and enhance existing school programmes.

9. Availability of Policy

- This policy is available to staff, students and their parents, persons who work in the school on a part time and or temporary basis and it applies to all persons who come into contact with the school or its staff or students when engaged in school related activities. New staff will be informed of the policy when they take up employment in the school.

10. Review of Policy

- This policy will be monitored and reviewed regularly on behalf of the Board of Management, by the principal. The practical application of the policy during the preceding year, its efficacy in preventing the use of tobacco/vaping or other substances and an assessment of the staff in regard to education and awareness about use of these, will form part of the review process.
- This policy may be reviewed periodically, in light of emerging legislation and circulated Guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills.

This policy was ratified by the Loreto College Board of Management on 6th June 2023