

# Ballyhaunis Community School



## Substance Use Policy

Ratified by the Board of Management on:

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Signature:

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(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Commenced:	November 2024
Next review due:	November 2027

## Introduction

Ballyhaunis Community Schools Substance Use Policy aims to promote student well-being and ensure a safe and supportive environment for learning. The policy aims to address issues related to the use of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, e-cigarettes and other substances, including the prevention of substance misuse and providing support for students who may be affected.

### 1. Aims and Objectives

- **Promote a Healthy School Environment:** Ballyhaunis Community School encourages positive behaviours and attitudes toward health and well-being.
- **Prevention and Education:** To raise awareness about the risks of substance misuse and provide students with knowledge and skills to make informed choices.
- **Support for Affected Students:** To ensure that students who may be using substances receive the appropriate support, intervention, and referrals.

### 2. Scope of the Policy

- This policy covers all substances that could be misused, including:
  - Alcohol
  - Tobacco and e-cigarettes
  - Illegal drugs (e.g., cannabis, cocaine, etc.)
  - Prescription medication misuse
- The policy applies to **all school activities**, including those that take place during school hours, at school events, on school trips, and even outside of school hours if they impact the school community.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

- **School Leadership:** The Principals and management team is responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented and communicated effectively.
- **Teachers and Staff:** Teachers and other school staff are responsible for modelling appropriate behaviours, reporting concerns, and providing pastoral care.
- **Students:** Students are expected to follow the school's code of behaviour and to refrain from substance misuse. They should also be aware of the support structures available to them.
- **Parents/Guardians:** This policy encourages parental involvement in promoting positive behaviours and preventing substance misuse.

### 4. Prevention and Education

- **Curriculum Integration:** Substance use education is embedded within the school's Social Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and Religious Education curriculum at

senior cycle. This includes teaching students about the risks of substance misuse, developing decision-making skills, and learning about the impact of substances on physical and mental health.

- **Guest Speakers and Workshops:** The school may invite experts or local agencies (e.g., health organisations, community groups) to run workshops on substance use prevention.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** The School often runs awareness campaigns over the course of the year to help students understand the dangers associated with substance misuse and to promote healthy lifestyles. This is done through Student Council initiatives, SPHE and other wellbeing initiatives.

## 5. Intervention and Support

- **Early Identification:** The school has procedures in place for identifying students who may be experimenting with or misusing substances. This could include signs of behavioural changes, academic decline, or physical symptoms.
- **Supportive Approaches:** the school provides a supportive environment for students who may be affected by substance misuse, offering counselling services, pastoral care, and links to external support services (e.g., youth services, addiction support organisations, family support worker etc).
- **Referral:** If a student's substance use is deemed to be a serious issue, the school may refer them to external agencies, such as the HSE (Health Service Executive) or community-based addiction services.

## 6. Disciplinary Procedures

- **Clear Consequences:** the school has clear consequences for substance use or possession on school property as outlined in the schools Code of Behaviour. These consequences may include after school detention, suspension, expulsion, or a restorative practice approach depending on the severity of the situation.
- **Restorative Practices:** the school may implement restorative practices to help students reflect on their behaviour, understand the consequences of their actions, and make amends within the school community.
- **Substance Use Incidents:** The procedure if a student is found using or in possession of substances.
  - Immediate safety concerns being addressed (e.g., providing medical assistance if necessary).
  - A Substance Abuse Incident Report Form (Appendix 1) is completed by the relevant Year Head.
  - Search and Seizure: The school is permitted to search any area where it has reason to suspect that harmful substances may have been secreted - including

the locker of the individual concerned. (Lockers, although rented out, are on school premises and are deemed to be essentially school property). The school reserves the right to hold bags and other property until such time as the necessary authorisation e.g. parents/guardians or Gardaí, has been received to search them - if this is deemed necessary.

- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a substance abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies. The disposal of drug paraphernalia will be conducted in consultation with the Gardaí or other relevant agencies.
- Parents or guardians will be contacted and involved in discussions about the incident.
- Referral to support services as needed.
- Disciplinary measures may range from verbal warnings, written warnings, after school detention, suspension, or in some cases, expulsion. The severity of the consequence is usually linked to the severity of the incident and whether it is a first-time or repeated offence.

## **7. Engagement with Parents and Community**

- **Parental Involvement:** The school encourages communication with parents about the dangers of substance misuse, and the school may seek parental involvement in prevention programs or initiatives.
- **Collaboration with Local Agencies:** the school collaborates with local health services, community groups, and law enforcement agencies to tackle substance misuse and promote a healthy environment for students.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

The school regularly reviews the substance use policy to ensure that it remains relevant and effective. This includes assessing the effectiveness of prevention programs and ensuring that the policy is up-to-date with national guidelines and best practices.

## **National Framework and Guidelines**

The Department of Education provides guidelines for schools to support the development of substance use policies. In addition, the National Drugs Strategy (such as the 2021-2028 strategy, Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery) outlines a public health approach to substance misuse, which the school aligned with when developing this policy.

## **9. Modification Clause**

The Board of Management in consultation with the school management team reserves the right to modify the details of this policy at short notice in response to events or circumstances that were not foreseeable when the policy was being first drafted or subsequently reviewed.

This policy will be periodically reviewed to ensure its effectiveness and relevance in the evolving landscape of education. Any necessary revisions will be communicated to students, parents, and staff accordingly.

## Appendix 1: Substance Abuse Report Form



Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Account of Events:

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Who has been informed?

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What action has been taken?

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_