



cmetb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
an Chabháin agus Mhuineacháin
*Cavan and Monaghan
Education and Training Board*



Virginia College

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

CAVAN AND MONAGHAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING BOARD

BORD OIDEACHAIS AGUS OILIÚNA AN CHABHÁIN AGUS MHUINEACHÁIN

SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

Cavan and Monaghan Education and Training Board Schools Substance Misuse Policy

1. Rationale

The central objective of our 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) and, in the case of students over 18 years of age, in common law. This reflects the need for CMETB 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. Characteristic Spirit

Virginia College is committed to providing quality teaching in a safe and positive learning environment. Whilst fostering academic and personal achievement, we aim to nurture an educational community of informed, responsible and caring citizens for an ever-changing world. The underlying philosophy is one of concern and caring for our students.

3. Scope of Policy

- 3.1.** This policy applies to all schools and centres for education established and maintained by Cavan and Monaghan Training Board (CMETB). The policy applies to the whole community of Virginia College with the exclusion of staff who are governed by the CMETB Workplace Substance Abuse Policy. The policy will apply at all times 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. 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. This includes illegal and prescription drugs, alcohol, tobacco, legal 'highs', medicines and solvents etc. which all come under the general heading of drugs.

3.3. Definition of School Related Activities

The term 'school related activities' applies to any activities on the school premises, on the way to and from school, lunchtime and breaks and during any school/centre related activities in any location outside the school centre 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, in an atmosphere of caring and concern, from the potentially harmful effects of alcohol and /or any substance defined as a drug in an atmosphere of caring and concern.
- To provide clear guidelines in regard to the use of alcohol and/or other substances by students.
- To ensure that other than possession of and use of prescribed drugs in accordance with the instructions of a medical practitioner, 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 Cavan and Monaghan ETB policies:

- School Code of Behaviour
- School Child Protection Policy
- CMETB Administration of Medications in Schools Policy
- CMETB Suspensions and Expulsions Policy as incorporated into the School Code of Behaviour
- Safety Health and Welfare Policy
- School Critical Incident 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 to other(s) for whom they have not.

It is generally accepted that tobacco and alcohol are the most widely abused drugs.

However, substances such as cannabis, ecstasy, magic mushrooms, solvents, cocaine, heroin as well as synthetic drugs such as Ecstasy, LSD, methamphetamine etc. are increasingly becoming a problem in our community. It has been recognised that drug use has serious negative effects on the educational experience, performance and attainment of young people. There are many short term and long term effects of drug use.

7.2. Substance or Alcohol use or Personal 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 disciplined under the School Code of Behaviour. Sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature of the offence.
- Students who are in the company of other students who are using drugs or alcohol, though they may not be in the act of using themselves, are deemed to be condoning the act of drug-taking or consumption of alcohol and will be disciplined in the same manner as the users in whose company they are found.

7.3. Student possessing with intent to supply substances in school

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

7.4. A limited number of staff will be involved in the management of suspected or confirmed drug incidents. Staff will be informed on a "need to know" basis. The Principal or Deputy Principal will hold all written records confidentially. Parents/Guardians will be informed sensitively, and support will be offered to them. In the case of illegal drugs, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact Garda Liaison Officer and Gardaí will deal with any drugs or drug paraphernalia found in accordance with Criminal Law.

7.5. Pastoral support will be offered in response to all incidents. If a student has a problem with substance misuse, referral to outside agencies will be recommended.

7.6. 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 well-being and welfare of the student and teacher must be a primary focus.

7.7. 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.

7.8. Management of Students 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 the student is not left unaccompanied at any time.
- The assistance of another member of staff will be sought, if appropriate and practicable, so that the safety of all students involved is not compromised.
- Medical assistance will be sought immediately.
- The parents/guardians of the student will be contacted as soon as possible.
- In the absence of parents/guardians, a staff member will accompany the student to their GP or hospital, if necessary.
- The student will be suspended from school.
- The school may require a medical certificate on return to school
- Parents/guardians should make an appointment with the Principal to discuss any ongoing or follow up treatment required, integration back into the school community and any supports recommended.
- 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 an appropriate caution/ sanction from Principal/Deputy Principal under the School Code of Behaviour.
- A letter confirming this will be sent to parents/guardians.
- The Garda Liaison Officer may be notified if deemed a criminal offence has been committed.
- The school reserves the right to request that the parent/guardian arranges to have the student screened for drug use on a periodic basis as part of an agreed return to school process.
- A formal written report will be made by the member(s) of staff involved.

7.9. 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 disciplined in accordance with the relevant sections of the School's 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, he/she must participate in the agreed programme of support.
- A student who continues to misuse substances may be suspended or expelled from the school following due process.
- A student who supplies illegal/illicit substances to another person(s) in the school will be suspended or expelled from the school following due process. In the event that the incident is deemed a criminal offence, school authorities may be required to notify An Garda Síochána.
- Illicit substances confiscated in the school will be passed on to the appropriate authorities for identification purposes.

7.10. Medication

- Medication will not be issued by school staff. If a student becomes unwell at school, parents/guardians will be contacted and asked to take the student home.
- The CMETB Administration of Medication in Schools Policy governs the administration of medicines in the case of students with on-going medical conditions.
- 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

7.11. 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 in school.

- Smoking 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 cigarette or other smoking paraphernalia are prohibited and will be confiscated.
- Students found smoking on the school premises or grounds or while in uniform or engaged in school activities, will be disciplined.
- Students who are in the company of other students who are smoking, though they may not be in the act of smoking themselves, may be deemed to be condoning smoking and will be disciplined as appropriate under the school Code of Behaviour.
- The use of electronic smoking devices 'vaping' is prohibited in all CMETB

schools and centres.

7.12. Disciplinary Action

- A student, who is found smoking by a member of staff in the school, will be reported immediately to the Principal/Deputy Principal and his/her parents/guardians will be contacted.
- In-school suspension from class will continue until a parent/guardian comes to the school to collect his/her son or daughter. He/she will face automatic suspension for the rest of that school day.
- Disciplinary action will be decided upon by the Principal and/or Deputy Principal in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
- The school reserves the right to remove certain privileges from students found smoking during school time e.g. participating in trips and tours including sporting and extra-curricular activities

8. Training & Development

8.1. Staff

- The School will facilitate training for staff involved in the SPHE programmes through the Education Centres and relevant HSE programmes.
- 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 information evenings on the School Drugs Policy and multi-session substance use education programmes for parents.
- This may be offered as part of the induction for parents/guardians of new students to the School.

8.3. Students

- The College provided 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.
- Age appropriate educational programmes from the community and visiting speakers will build on and enhance existing school programmes.
- TY students will study First Aid and engage in various awareness programmes such as 'Pour you dreams away'.

9. Availability of Policy

This policy is available to staff, students and their parents/guardians, persons

who work in the school on a part time and or temporary basis and it applies to all persons who encounter 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 annually 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 drugs, alcohol or other substances and an assessment of the needs of students and staff in regard to education and awareness about use of these, will form part of the review process. Results of this review will be submitted to CMETB.
- The policy may be reviewed periodically by CMETB, in light of emerging legislation and circulated Guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills, advice received from other agencies such as Tusla, HSE, Cavan and Monaghan Drugs and Alcohol Service.

This policy was approved by the Board of Management of *Virginia* College on the 20th January 2022.