



St. Patrick's NS Strangsmills

Substance use policy

Revised: 2026

www.strangsmillsns.ie

16875G

Introductory statement:

This policy addresses the education of children in relation to alcohol, tobacco, solvents and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

Rationale:

It is necessary to devise a policy on substance use at this time in consideration of the following;

- ✓ The National Drugs Strategy is Government Policy and it requires schools to have a policy in place
- ✓ The report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs underlines the importance of schools developing drugs policies.
- ✓ To develop a shared understanding of the term 'drugs' and to define the school's agreed position in relation to drug related issues.
- ✓ To equip the school to deal with issues relating to substance misuse in a planned and considered way and in accordance with their statutory responsibilities
- ✓ To assist teachers in their classroom experience

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

St. Patrick's N.S. Strangsmills is a co-educational, Catholic primary school which strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed.

We will, in our school, strive to promote, both individually and collectively, the professional and personal development of teachers through staff development programmes. We will encourage the involvement of parents through home/school contacts. We will endeavour to enhance the self-esteem of everyone in the school community, to imbue in the pupils respect for people and property and to encourage in them the idea of being responsible. We will promote gender equity amongst staff and pupils.

Aims:

- ✓ We hope the implementation of this policy will ensure the welfare, care and protection of every young person as provided for in the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

- ✓ We wish to ensure that the school complies with legislative requirements and principles of good practice.
- ✓ We wish to make a contribution, in the area of education and prevention through the SPHE programme.
- ✓ We wish to minimise the dangers caused to children by drug misuse and drug misusers within schools/communities
- ✓ We wish to manage drug related incidents in a planned manner
- ✓ We wish to support parents and pupils in addressing drug misuse.

Guidelines (content of policy)

The substance use policy will address issues in relation to

- 1. Current provision regarding alcohol, tobacco, and drug education*
- 2. Current practice in relation to drug use*
- 3. The management of alcohol, tobacco and substance-related incidents*
- 4. Training and Staff Development*
- 5. Parental Involvement*

General:

This policy applies to all students, teachers, parents and all who use our school premises. It applies to all periods during school time whether in classrooms or recreation grounds and to all school related activities.

The school does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs, alcohol and tobacco on the premises or grounds, by any member of the school community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal (essential long term) use. In such cases the school has to be informed by the parent/guardian and must furnish to the school, a written application to the Board of management.

Under our Health and Safety policy the school also ensures that all medicines/ chemicals /solvents/cleaning agents/aerosols etc. are stored in a safe and appropriate manner.

Any breaches of these policies will be dealt with under the code of behaviour for pupils and code of conduct for teachers (Teaching Council/INTO/Dept. of Ed).

1. Current provision regarding alcohol, tobacco, and drug education

Education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs will be provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education Programme. SPHE includes a component on drug education (The programme is school-based, developmental and delivered as recommended in the SPHE Curriculum for primary schools.)

Education concerning substance use will be provided through specific modules and integration with existing subjects across the curriculum. Where relevant, such education will also be dealt with through specific programmes such as Stay Safe, Walk Tall, R.S.E. programmes etc.

Time allocation will be in accordance with the provisions of the S.P.H.E. programme.

Outside visitors/speakers will be invited to enhance the work done in class in the context of the full SPHE programme when available.

Visitors contribute to drug education in the context of a supportive school environment.

Visitors work will be undertaken in the presence of a teacher on all occasions.

Information on alcohol, tobacco and drug education is disseminated through the S.P.H.E. programme.

2. Current practice in relation to drug use

The school understands 'drugs use' to mean,

'Any substance which changes the way the body functions – mentally, physically or emotionally'; 'A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels'. (It includes: alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, solvents, over the counter drugs, prescribed drugs, illicit drugs)

The school promotes awareness with the assistance of the Gardaí, HSE or other relevant agencies. The school has links with the Garda Liaison Officer and Local Health Nurse. The policy is aimed at students, teachers, parents/guardians, and all users of the school building.

3. The management of alcohol, tobacco and substance-related incidents

Incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use might include:

- *Use or suspected use on the school premises*
- *Intoxication/unusual behaviour*
- *Disclosure about use*
- *Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia*
- *Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school-related activity*
- *Use and/or supply off the school premises*

An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco and drug use may include a referral to a support agency. While it may be necessary to use the sanction of expulsion, care will be taken to avoid the alienating of a pupil from mainstream sources of help, which may result in this pupil becoming more involved in the culture of drug misuse.

The school policy will seek to inform teachers about issues relating to confidentiality and appropriate reporting procedures. The school will clarify an agreed procedure for involving parents/guardians, liaising with Gardaí, and responding to media inquiries.

It is the schools view that situations and locations in which young people are most at risk in relation to drug use will occur in the wider community and off the school premises.

At present incidents relating to (a) alcohol, (b) tobacco and (c) drug misuse are currently considered as contravening the school's code of behaviour and are dealt with accordingly.

The school staff have a shared understanding of 'a drug related incident'. The reporting procedure for such incidents is the notification of the Principal. Parents will be involved in incidents involving their own child through a process of information and consultation.

Where appropriate parents will be consulted regarding incidents relating to an accusation against another child. In the event of serious incident outside medical help will immediately be sought. Students involved in substance misuse may be referred to the H.S.E. or its agents after consultation with their parents or guardians. The

Chairperson of the B.O.M. is designated to respond to the media. As far as possible the school will follow up on incidents, which may take place.

Incidents related to adults:

School staff:

Every school employee shall, while at work, ensure that he or she is not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace, in the interests of the safety, health and welfare of the employee and others. In the case of employees who are at work under the influence of an intoxicant, disciplinary procedures may be implemented.

External contractors:

Should the Principal and/or Deputy Principal have reasonable grounds to believe that an employee of any contractor is unfit for work, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal shall ask the contractor to remove his/her employee from the workplace.

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe any person, other than a staff member or employee of a contractor, is unfit to be on the premises, due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, the staff member shall report his/her belief promptly to the Principal and/or Deputy Principal, who shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace.

Parents/guardians and visitors:

If a member of staff has reasonable grounds to believe that a parent or adult collecting a pupil from school or presenting themselves on the premises for another reason is unfit to be on the premises or to take care of the said pupil, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal will be informed and the duty of care will apply to the pupil. All necessary steps will be taken to protect the pupil and safeguard their best interests.

In the event that a staff member or any other person, referred to above, refuses a reasonable request to remove him/herself from the premises, the Principal and/or Deputy Principal may call the Gardaí to forcibly remove the person in question.

The Board of Management acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of staff. An Employee Assistance Service (telephone: 1800 411 057) is available to teaching staff. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the teaching staff, the Board of Management may request such staff member to contact the Employee Assistance Service.

The Board of Management also acknowledges its responsibility in promoting the welfare at work of all other staff members. In the event that substance abuse appears to be adversely affecting the performance and/or attendance pattern of any member of the non-teaching staff, the Board of Management may request such staff member to seek counselling or other professional intervention.

All incidents, relating to the presence of persons at school, under the influence of an intoxicant, shall be recorded and reported as soon as possible to the Board of Management.

The Board of Management shall consider all such reports and decide on the appropriate action to be taken in the circumstances of each particular case.

4. Training and Staff Development

As far as possible staff will avail of training and information courses available. Teachers Should be familiar with the contents of the NDP 'Handbook for Teachers – Understanding Substances and Substance Use' which is available at

<https://www.drugs.ie/resourcesfiles/guides/2802-3498.pdf> There is a shared understanding of the contribution that an SPHE programme can make to the prevention of drug misuse.

All staff are aware of the contribution they can make to the prevention of drug misuse within their own classrooms (e.g. by developing a supportive class/school environment).

It is the responsibility of all staff to make themselves aware of all policies including the substance use policy of the school. The policy is available on the school google Drive.

5. Parental Involvement

Parents are the primary educators of their child/ren and so education of their child in this area must be undertaken by parents as well as by the teachers.

Through the cooperation of the Parents' Association Information evenings may be held from time to time to educate and inform on issues relating to drug misuse. Previously talks were organised by the Parish for 6th class children.

Success Criteria

Indicators of the success of the policy will be as follows;

- Awareness by the pupils of the consequences of substance and alcohol abuse and tobacco consumption for their physical/ emotional health of themselves and others.
- Feedback from teachers, pupils, parents/community/Gardaí/HSE/others
- No incidents relating to substance misuse
- Efficient and sensitive dealing with any incidents, which arise.

Roles and Responsibility

The primary role of substance use by children rests with parents. In the school context the responsibility for the development, implementation and evaluation of this policy rests with the teaching staff, under the guidance of the B.O.M. and supported by the Parents' Association.

Monitoring

This policy will be monitored on an on-going basis by the Principal, leadership team and Board of Management. Reviews of practice and policy will be taken on a regular basis and changes and amendments made as necessary.

Ratification and review:

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on June 30th 2026. The policy will be reviewed in the school year 2030/2031 or earlier if necessary.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson of BOM