



## **MOUNT TEMPLE SUBSTANCE USE POLICY**

**Reviewed June 2023**

The central objective of our school's substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. The National Drugs Strategy, 'Building on Experience' is now Government policy and it requires schools to have a substance use policy in place. The policy addresses both education concerning alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

### **Scope**

Our substance use policy sets out the framework within which the whole school community manages issues relating to substance use. It reflects the unique ethos of the school and aims to develop a shared understanding of the term 'drugs'. 'A drug is any chemical which alters how the body works or how the person behaves or feels'. The policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents /guardians and users of the school building. The policy applies to all concerned during school time (including breaks) and also applies to all school related activities.

### **Relationship to the school's ethos**

The characteristic spirit of Mount Temple is one of mutual respect. Our motto is "All Different, All Equal". We aim to provide a safe but caring and secure environment for learning. The school makes all reasonable efforts to support those who are experiencing difficulties – but must at all times, be conscious of the needs of the student body at large. Mount Temple Comprehensive School strives to be a welcoming place for all its students. We endeavour to be fair and just and to have a positive approach in our structures and behaviour management strategies and to be consultative in decision-making. This 'Substance Use' policy is in line with our overall approach and reflects the school ethos.

## **Rationale**

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drugs is part of this reality. Mount Temple needs to reflect upon how we might provide for the needs of their student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues.

## **Goals/Objectives**

- The central objective of the school's substance use policy is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. The policy addresses both education concerning alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drugs and the procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.
- We are acknowledging the very serious problem of drug misuse in our society. We believe that schools can make an important contribution in the area of education and prevention.

## **Policy Content**

The policy content is divided into three sections:

1. Education concerning substance use.
2. Management of alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drug-related incidents.
3. Steps dealing with any incidences

### **1. Education concerning substance use**

Education about alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) & RSE programme, which is developmental and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment.

- The SPHE programme is compulsory for all students. It is part of the core curriculum and is delivered on the basis of one class period per week. It contains a module at junior cycle, in each of the 3 years, on substance use.
- The SPHE programme has a key role in developing an informed and sensible attitude to substances. In challenging students to avoid the use of illegal substances, the school will strive to provide a drug free environment.

- The SPHE programme also makes use of peer education approaches. “Drug talk” from a teacher may be viewed with suspicion by students; from specially trained peers or older students it can have a greater impact and credibility.
- The use of an outside visitor/ speaker to enhance the work done in class will always be considered in the context of the full SPHE programme and will be undertaken in the presence of a/the teacher.( See circular C10043/18 ) Talks at Assembly will also be undertaken.

## **2. Management of alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drug related incidents**

The school will respond to incidents involving alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drug use in a planned and considered way. In certain cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice. Due care will be exercised in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. An appropriate pastoral response to an incident involving alcohol, tobacco, vaping and drug use may include referral to a support agency. Where a member of staff requires support, the school may consider facilitating links with support agencies provided by the state and teachers unions.

- The school’s rules are outlined on the school App and are very clear on the issue of substance abuse/use:

“Possession of any illegal substances and abuse, misuse or unauthorised possession of illegal products is completely prohibited. Any transgression of this regulation will warrant removal from class and the imposition of further sanctions. A final decision on the severity of the sanction rests with the Board of Management”.

- The school rules also outlined on the student’s school App concerning smoking/vaping: “In accordance with Department of Health regulations, smoking is strictly prohibited, inside or outside the school, in the school grounds. To smoke/vape or be in the company of smokers/vapers within the school complex is considered a serious offence and serious sanctions will be imposed”.

### **Our understanding of a drug-related incident would include:**

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, tobacco and vaping on the school premises or during a school-related activity.
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- Finding these substances and/or associated paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply on the school premises or during a school related activity.

### **Management of students under the influence of a substance which are being taken in school or on school related activities**

- The reporting procedure for such incidents is for the teacher /student /parent /other to report the matter to a teacher /year head /deputy principal /principal. While a verbal report will be investigated, a written report may be required.
- Parents/Guardians will be notified in relation to incidents involving their own child.
- The involvement of parents/guardians in incidents relating to another child will be a matter for the discretion of the Principal.
- Mount Temple comprehensive school is an educational establishment and only has very limited facilities for dealing with incidents requiring medical intervention – basic first aid. Where we believe that a medical intervention is required, we will notify the parents of the student involved and may decide to call for an ambulance.
- We may also involve the Gardaí in a proactive approach (through, for example, the student support programme).
- We encourage parents to avail of any support agencies available at the local level –where students involved in substance misuse might be referred.
- Where a substance related issue leads to an inquiry from the media, only the Principal (or Deputy Principals in the absence of the Principal) should respond. No other person is authorised to speak on behalf of the school.
- There are various mechanisms in place which facilitate the following up of incidents which take place – Guidance Counsellors internally and externally, Chaplain, Year Heads and Dean of Students, Deputy Principals and Principal.
- The Board of Management reserves the right to request a medical report verifying that the student is drug-free, before allowing a student to return to school, and tests may be required to continue if the student is to stay.

### **3. Steps dealing with any incidences**

#### **A)Smoking or Vaping**

Our current Code of Behaviour states that, “Vaping is treated in the same manner as the use of tobacco”. ‘Vaping’ is the term used for inhaling vapour through an E-cigarette or other electronic vaping devices. The device operates by heating a pod of liquid that turns into vapour. Vaping on the school grounds is not permitted by any persons under any circumstances. Occurrences of a person vaping on the school grounds will be managed in the context of the school’s current Substance Use Policy and Code of Behaviour.

In an effort to deter students from vaping, the management of the school may install vaping detectors inside buildings within the school. This may include areas that are deemed 'hot spots' for vaping incidents such as toilet areas.

- Where a student is found to be vaping within the school grounds, including inside of buildings, the vape will be confiscated, parents/guardians will be contacted and the student may be kept in school, out of circulation, under supervision, until the guardians arrive to discuss the situation.
- If a student is found to be vaping within the school grounds on a subsequent occasion or occasions, following contact with their parents/guardians, sanctions may include being sent home for the remainder of the school day.
- Where a student is found in the company of another student vaping, their parents will be contacted. If it happens again, it will result in a Wednesday detention.
- If a student is found in the company of another student vaping on a subsequent occasion, their parents/guardians will be contacted and the student may be kept in school, out of circulation, under supervision, until the guardians arrive to discuss the situation.
- If a student is found in the company of another student vaping on a third or subsequent occasion, following contact with their parents/guardians, sanctions may include being sent home for the remainder of the school day.
- If a student is found to be supplying vapes to other students, their parents will be contacted and the student will be kept in school, out of circulation, under supervision, until the guardians arrive to discuss the situation. Any incidents of distributing e-cigarettes, vapes or vaping fluid will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

## **B)Substances affecting someone's behaviour**

Symptoms of substance use/misuse may include a deterioration in work over time, dilated pupils, erratic or uncharacteristic behaviour. Any staff member who is worried about the behaviour of a student should consult immediately with the counselling staff or Year Head. The aim should be to seek help for the student as soon as possible. After consultation with the student, the counsellor will give appropriate feedback to the referring member of staff and the Year Head. Parents/guardians will be involved and the student may be referred for external treatment.

The care and management of a student in this category is dependent on the pattern and severity of the misuse. The Year Head, Dean of Students, Deputy Principals and any other appropriate member of staff, should investigate any incident which arises that involves pupils, in a school context, in negotiations concerning substances.

- A full report should then be given to the Principal.
- The parents/ guardians will be called to the school by the Principal and informed of the situation. The student will be suspended from school pending an investigation by the appropriate authorities and action taken according to the prevailing legislation.
- The duration of the absence from school will be determined by the nature of the drug taken, the level of dependency, recommendations from outside professionals and contact with parents/ guardians.
- If parents are unavailable for an extended period of time, and there is no functioning guardian, a student in this category may attend school, but remain out of circulation, under supervision.
- On return to school, the following system of care and management will apply: The in-house consequences will include the student being cautioned strongly concerning their long-term future in the school.
- A letter confirming this will be sent to parents/ guardians.
- The student will be obliged to enter a contract.
- If necessary, the Principal will inform the Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) to ensure that additional support is available.

### **C) Substances which are in someone's possession for their own use**

The member of staff who finds a student in possession of any substance should accompany the student to the Deputy Principal's office.

- They ask the student to hand over the substance and give it to the Deputy Principal.
- If a student refuses to hand over the substance, the Deputy Principal telephones the parents/guardian.
- The student will be kept in school, out of circulation, under supervision, until the parents/ guardians arrive to discuss the situation with the Deputy Principal.
- The student will be obliged to enter a behaviour contract which will be reviewed.
- In addition, the student may not participate in school trips.
- The Principal may inform the JLO to ensure that additional support is available to the student.
- The student will be assigned to a member of the student support team and a school counsellor will see the student.
- A case review will be held after a three month period.



