



Rathdown School

Substance Use Policy

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1. **Scope**

- a) The phrase 'Substance Use' refers to the use of any of the following:
- Alcohol
 - Tobacco
 - Illegal drugs or controlled substances and all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977)
 - Solvents
 - Prescribed medication
 - Non-prescribed medication, including vitamins, herbal remedies etc.
- b) This policy applies to Senior School day students, Senior School boarding students outside of the boarding situation, teachers (full-time, part-time and teachers of individual students), parents/ guardians, any users of the school building and live-in boarding staff, principal and family, visitors, contractors and all users of the school buildings and grounds. A separate policy document details Substance Use Policy in relation to boarding students in the Boarding House.
- c) This policy applies to every area of the school buildings and grounds with the following exceptions:
- (i) personal residences on school grounds
 - (ii) materials stored in the Science storage area for use in Science classes.
- d) This policy applies at all times throughout the whole year and during all school activities on and off the premises. The Substance Use Policy (and the Code of Behaviour - see Appendix A) apply to activities that take place on the school grounds, on a school trip or in the course of school-based or school-related activities. Reports of or information pertaining to the possible supply, possession or use of drugs by pupils off the school premises or any other breach of the Substance Use Policy will, where thought appropriate, be communicated to parents. The school does not accept responsibility for taking disciplinary action in such cases but reserves the right to take action where there is a threat to the health and safety of pupils.

2. **Relationship to School's Mission**

Rathdown School's Substance Use Policy is firmly rooted in the Christian principles that underlie and permeate our school's vision and aims. As such, it is the responsibility of the Board, staff, parents and pupils to work together to ensure the welfare of all who make up the community of Rathdown School. The topic of Substance Use is one of great and increasing concern which places a particular responsibility on the school to create and maintain structures and policies that are effective, transparent and caring.

3. **Rationale**

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

- b) The Education Act (1998) provides that we should promote the social and personal development of students and provide health education for them.
- c) The National Drugs Strategy, “Building on Experience”, is now Government policy and it requires us to have a substance use policy in place.
- d) The report from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs entitled “Drug Use prevention (November 2001) underlines the importance of schools developing substance use policies.
- e) The 1999 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and other Drugs (ESPAD) Report highlighted the seriousness of the problem among sixteen year olds in Ireland, as compared to the other 29 ESPAD countries surveyed. Alcohol was identified as being the dominant drug of misuse in Ireland whilst the use of tobacco and other drugs was above the ESPAD average.

4. Goals and Objectives

This policy aims:

- a) To promote a healthy, safe and drug-free environment for all in Rathdown School.
- b) To educate our pupils with information and skills and train them for the future.
- c) To place clear, transparent and fair procedures in place for dealing with incidents relating to substance abuse.
- d) To provide education and training for staff in coping with substance use incidents.

5. Policy Content

(i) Education regarding substance use

A. Social, Personal & Health Education [S.P.H.E.] Syllabus.

SPHE is the only subject through which students are educated in relation to Substance Use. It is a mandatory subject for all students at Junior Cycle. In Rathdown School, SPHE is taught to all students in 1st – 4th Year. The Junior Certificate classes follow the Department of Education & Science syllabus (see Appendix B). SPHE teachers in Transition Year follow the DES Guidelines for Senior Cycle for which excellent books and material are available. SPHE is not taught to 5th and 6th Years at this time.

SPHE is part of a spiralling curriculum¹ where the issue of drugs is dealt with each year (as on the syllabus) using DES textbooks and other material and age-appropriate material from the Health Boards, prepared for schools. We have implemented a clear policy to ensure that each topic on the spiralling syllabus is dealt with annually, using different material and emphases each time and ensuring that the material is adapted to suit the ethos of the school and the needs of a particular class.

¹ In a ‘spiralling curriculum’ a number of topics are returned to in successive years to examine different aspects of each topic.

B. Speakers

Outside speakers are occasionally used to supplement the SPHE course and Rathdown School PTA hold information meetings for parents and staff .

C. Other aspects of the school curriculum

Issues relating to drugs or substance use may arise in classes such as Religious Education (usually in discussion of moral or ethical issues or decision making), but do not form part of the curriculum. School Assembly takes place four times a week and, at least once a week, is taken by a form group around a specific theme. Issues relating to substance use are frequently chosen and the material for these Assemblies is developed under the guidance of the School Chaplain.

(ii) Administration of Medication to Day Pupils

As a statement of principle, prescription or non-prescription medication required by a pupil should be administered at home by parents/ guardians or by the pupil's medical provider wherever possible. We recognize that in some cases and under some circumstances it may be necessary for a pupil to receive medication during school hours.

The phrase 'medication' covers not just 'over-the-counter' conventional medication but also herbal remedies, vitamins and other non-traditional forms of medicine.

Section A: Self-medication

Pupils aged 16 or over

In the case of **pupils aged 16 years or over**, the following conditions apply to the possession of and self-administration of medication in school:

1. The medication must be kept in a locked locker at all times except in the case of 'instant use' items such as inhalers etc.
2. Under no circumstances whatsoever is any medication to be given to another pupil or misused in any way. Any breach of this stipulation will be considered a severe breach of discipline and dealt with accordingly. In any case where misuse of medication is suspected, it will be confiscated and the parents/guardians immediately informed.

Pupils aged under 16 years of age

In the case of pupils **under 16 years of age**, the following conditions apply to the possession of and self-administration of medication in school:

1. An application must be made by a parent or guardian in writing for permission for a pupil to bring any medication onto the school premises. Where such permission is being sought for a limited period of time (1-2 days) such application may be made by letter. Permission for an extended period must be made on the appropriate form (Appendix C). Where approval is given it will be authorised in writing to the parent/guardian.
2. The school reserves the right to refuse permission for self-medication. Such a refusal may be appealed by the Parent/ Guardian to the Board of Management.

3. The medication must be kept in a locked locker at all times except in the case of 'instant use' items such as inhalers etc.
4. Under no circumstances whatsoever is any medication to be given to another pupil or misused in any way. Any breach of this stipulation will be considered a severe breach of discipline and dealt with accordingly. In any case where misuse of medication is suspected, it will be confiscated and the parents or guardians immediately informed.

Section B: Administration of medication by staff

In the case of the administering of medication to any day pupil, the following conditions will apply:

1. No medication will be given to a pupil without the prior permission of a parent/guardian. Routine medication for minor injuries (cuts, bruises, minor burns) can be given by staff where permission has been granted by a parent/guardian (see Appendix
2. A parent or guardian may request that a medication be administered during school hours and/or on school-related activities. Such a request must be made in writing on the appropriate form (Appendix D). While such requests will be facilitated wherever possible, the school may, in certain circumstances, refuse to accept such requests. This decision may be appealed by the Parent/Guardian to the Board of Management.
3. (a) Any medication required by a pupil and approved for administration in the school must be in the original properly labelled container with clear instructions.

(b) All medications that are categorized as controlled substances must be transported to and from the school by the parent or guardian. The number of doses of any controlled substance is recorded by the school Nurse in the presence of the parent/ guardian.
4. (a) For any approved request the Principal may authorise teachers, nursing staff or any other person to administer the medication. Such authorisation must be in writing. This procedure may only take place with the agreement of the member of staff concerned.

If the Principal is to be the authorised person to administer medication then s/he should be approved by the Chairman of the Board of Management.

(b) Before any person is authorised, the Principal (or Board of Management as appropriate) ensures that the person is adequately trained to administer the medication. Such training includes an understanding of the effects of a missed dose and what actions should be taken in this or any other emergency.

(c) The school ensures that staff authorised to administer medication are covered by the school's insurance policy to do so.

(d) A register is maintained of all medication held on the school premises and a log kept of all medication administered.

5. Medications must be stored in a separate locked drawer or cabinet. If, in any circumstances, the medication being stored is a controlled substance, the locked cabinet must be securely affixed to a wall. Medications requiring refrigeration must be kept in a locked refrigerator separate from food products.
6. Should the authorised member of staff, in the exercise of professional judgement, question the administering of any particular medication as excessive or otherwise potentially harmful to the pupil, they will cease to administer the medication and notify the parents or guardians and the doctor (as advised by the parents). They will also consult immediately with the Principal and others as appropriate.

Section C: Special Medical Conditions

Where a pupil is suffering from a chronic medical condition requiring constant or regular medication, parents or guardians will be required to present the school with a Medical Action Plan (see Appendix E). In cases of self-medication such as insulin injections or epinephrine the school will require a written doctor's statement that the pupil understands and has demonstrated a knowledge of when and how to self-administer the medication involved.

Section D: Exemptions

Emergency health procedures, including emergency administration of medication are not subject to this policy.

Drugs or medicines provided or administered by the public health authority to prevent or control an illness or disease outbreak (such as meningitis) are not governed by this policy.

Section E: Privacy

Proper consideration is at all times given to the right of privacy of both pupils and parents/guardians in relation to medical information. Within the constraints of the need for supervision, the pupil's right to privacy in the administering of medication will be respected.

(iii) Management of alcohol, tobacco and other substances

- (a) The use of tobacco is forbidden in all parts of the school and grounds at all times.
- (b) The consumption of alcohol is forbidden in all parts of the school and grounds except with the prior permission of the Principal.
- (c) The use of illegal drugs or controlled substances, and all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act (1977) is forbidden.
- (d) Solvents may only be used by members of staff, and by pupils when under the direct supervision of a member of staff.
- (e) Medication of any kind may only be used in accordance with the terms of this policy document.

(iv) **Management of alcohol, tobacco and drug-related incidents**

(a) **Pupils:** Management of incidents involving pupils in which school rules relating to substance use have been breached fall under two headings: disciplinary and pastoral care.

(i) *Disciplinary:* as with any disciplinary incident, such incidents are dealt with under the school's Code of Behaviour (see Appendix A). It should be noted that the Code of Behaviour differentiates between offences involving substances that are not illegal in themselves (alcohol, tobacco) and illegal substances. In all of these cases the Code of Behaviour lays down automatic minimum penalties. It is school policy that all cases involving illegal substances are reported to the Garda Síochána.

In the case of incidents related to prescription or non-prescription medication, each instance is investigated as with any disciplinary incident and dealt with on its merits.

(ii) *Pastoral care:* as part of our duty of care to the pupils, the school supplies both pupils and parents involved with information on counselling and, if deemed appropriate to the individual situation, referral to an appropriate support agency.

(b) **Staff**

Management of incidents involving staff in which rules relating to substance use have been breached will be dealt with in accordance with established disciplinary procedures.

(c) **Procedures for Staff in incidents involving possible breaches of the Substance Use Policy by pupils**

Where an incident involving, or believed to involve, a contravention of the Substance Use Policy occurs, staff should observe the following procedures:

(i) Where a pupil or pupils are believed to be in possession of or under the influence of a prohibited substance, the Principal and Deputy Principal should immediately be informed. Such pupils should be supervised until the Principal or Deputy Principal arrive. Pupils and their belongings (including schoolbags and lockers) should only be searched by the Principal or Deputy Principal in the presence of a parent or guardian, even if the pupil gives her consent.

Further investigation of such incidents will be conducted by the Principal and Deputy Principal in accordance with the Code of Behaviour (see Appendix A). The parents/guardians of pupils involved will be informed at the earliest possible opportunity.

All staff involved will, at the earliest possible opportunity, make a written record of what occurred and forward it to the Principal.

(ii) Incidents relating to breaches of the Substance Use Policy should be considered confidential and not discussed with pupils, parents or staff not directly involved.

- (iii) All external inquiries relating to such incidents, including media inquiries, will be dealt with by the Principal and/or the Chairman of the Board of Management.

(d) **Training and Staff Development**

The Principal ensures that all staff receive adequate direction and training in recognising and dealing with the issues surrounding Substance Use. This includes familiarity with the signs and symptoms of substance abuse, knowledge of the laws applying to alcohol, tobacco and drug use, familiarity with the procedures to be followed in any incident in which they may be involved and familiarity with the school's Substance Use Policy.

Inservice training in the school takes place at least once every three years to ensure all staff are kept up to date with changes and developments in this area. The Principal (or another designated staff member) will instruct new members of staff and the induction process will include familiarisation with the Substance Use Policy.

The school makes every effort to facilitate and encourage members of staff who wish to receive further training in this area.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The following is a summary of the roles of the various constituent parts of the school in relation to the Substance Use Policy.

The Board of Governors determines the values on which the operation of the school is based.

The **Board of Management** manages the school in accordance with the Education Act (1998) and the values of the school as determined by the Board of Governors. It has final approval of the contents of the Substance Use Policy and the power to make any subsequent amendments to the Policy.

The Principal is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the Substance Use Policy, for ensuring that inservice training takes place and that all staff are adequately trained and informed to implement the Policy.

The SPHE Programme Co-ordinator and the other SPHE teachers are responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the SPHE curriculum in Rathdown School.

Senior School staff are responsible for familiarising themselves with the provisions of the Substance Use Policy, its implementation within their own areas of responsibility and participating in the general monitoring and evaluation of the Policy.

Other staff, including supervisors, are responsible under the general authority of the school management for familiarising themselves with the provisions of the Substance Use Policy and for bringing to the attention of the relevant authorities any matters that may arise in this area.

Students are responsible for being familiar with and observing the Substance Use Policy and, through the School Council, taking part in the monitoring and evaluation process on a regular basis.

Parents/guardians are responsible for being familiar with and observing the Substance Use Policy and, through the PTA, taking part in the monitoring and evaluation process on a regular basis.

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review procedures.

It is an essential part of the Substance Use Policy that it be monitored, evaluated and reviewed on an ongoing basis as part of the school planning process.

The SPHE programme co-ordinator will meet with the Principal at least once every term to review the situation. A Substance Use Policy committee, consisting of the Principal, Deputy Principal, SPHE Programme Co-ordinator, three representatives from the Board of Management (one parent, one teacher and one Governor) and a representative from the School Council, will meet at least once a year. Additional meetings will be held at the discretion of the Principal or Board of Management. This Committee will report annually to the Board of Management on the current state of the Substance Use Policy and on proposals for amendment or development.

In addition, there will be ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the policy through discussion at staff meetings, meetings of School Council and the PTA.

Appendix A
Rathdown School Student Code of Behaviour
(see separate document)

Appendix B
Education concerning Substance Use in the SPHE Course

Copies of the full syllabus for Junior Cycle are available at the Department of Education and Science website www.education.ie

Year	Topic
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why drugs? • Alcohol • Solvents • Smoking and Its Effects • Smoking: Why, Why not?
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Effects of Drugs • Alcohol and Its Effects • Alcohol: Why, Why not? • Cannabis and Its Effects • Cannabis: Why, Why not?
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecstasy: realities • Heroin: realities
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitions of Drugs and Attitudes • Information about Drugs and Their Effects • Images of Alcohol and Tobacco • Alcohol in Advertisements • Aspects of Decision Making • Drug Abuse • Resisting Peer Pressure • Alternatives to Smoking and Drinking

Appendix C

Application for consent for a pupil aged less than 16 years to self-administer medication

a) To be completed by parent/guardian

Student's Name _____

Address _____

Name of Medication _____

Dosage Required (ml or tablet) _____

Condition Requiring the Medication _____

Length of time for which this permission is being sought _____

For emergencies or any issues arising I can be contacted at _____

I have read and am happy to abide by the provisions of the Substance Use Policy.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

b) To be completed by the student

Student's Name: _____ Form: _____

I undertake that all medication shall be kept locked away at all times except when in use. I undertake not to share medication with another student. I have read and am willing to abide by the provisions of the Substance Use Policy. I understand that any breach of the rules relating to the use of medication will constitute a serious breach of discipline.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D
Parental Consent and Request to administer medication

Student's Name _____

Address _____

Name of Medication _____

Dosage Required (ml or tablet) _____

Condition Requiring the Medication _____

I _____ request that my daughter be given the above medication in the specified dosages.

In an emergency requiring medical attention I authorise the school to contact

Doctor: _____

Address _____

Phone No: _____

and to convey my child to a hospital by ambulance or otherwise.

For emergencies or any issues arising I can be contacted at _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix E
Parental Consent to administer routine first aid

Student's Name _____

Address _____

I _____ agree that my daughter/ward may receive routine first aid and medication where felt necessary by a member of staff for minor cuts, bruises or burns (e.g. application of antiseptic or burn cream, cleaning of cuts, application of plaster/bandage).

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F
Action Plan for Pupils with a Medical Condition

Pupil's Name: _____

Address: _____

Class: _____

Medical Illness: _____

Usual Medical Treatment when pupil is well: _____

She displays the following symptoms when unwell _____

Medication to be used/ action to be taken when symptoms develop at school: _____

I _____ parent/ guardian authorise the school to administer the above medication in the event of emergency. I further authorise the school to contact

Doctor: _____

Phone Number: _____

and to convey my child to a hospital by ambulance or otherwise

Signed: _____

Date: _____