

Substance Misuse Policy

DONABATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE



This Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Management every three years.

This Policy was agreed on:

24/2/26

Signature:

M. Lanni

(Chairperson to the Board of Management)

Donabate Community College

Donabate Community College is a post primary college, which opened in August 2008 under the Patronage of Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The college is co-educational and aspires towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment. The Board of Management is committed to the successful implementation of recent legislation, in particular the Education Act (1998), the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) and the Equal Status Act (2000). The Board fully subscribes to the principles of partnership, accountability, transparency, inclusion and respect for diversity, parental choice and equality.

College Mission

The Board of Management will promote Excellence. Our aim will be to create, with the assistance of parents/guardians, responsible citizens with pride in their community. The development of the whole person will be based on personal responsibility, inter dependence, respect for people and respect for property. Our college will seek to instil integrity, value discipline and punctuality and facilitate the best in academic and non-academic areas. We will value our culture, our tradition, be inclusive of religious beliefs and will seek to be a caring and compassionate community where justice and truth will be the central elements.

Policy Review and Ratification

Donabate Community College is committed to ongoing policy review to ensure clarity, relevance, and compliance with current legislation and best practices. Where amendments to a policy are of a minor or administrative nature and do not alter its overall meaning, purpose, or intent, the school may proceed to seek ratification from the Board of Management without further consultation with stakeholders. However, where substantive changes are proposed that impact the policy's intent, scope, or application, appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders will be undertaken before submission to the Board of Management for ratification.

National Drugs Strategy

This policy is informed by the National Drugs Strategy 2017–2025: Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery, which remains the current overarching framework guiding the State’s response to substance use. The strategy is based on four key pillars:

1. Supply Reduction
2. Education and Prevention
3. Treatment and Recovery
4. Research and Evidence

The Education and Prevention pillar highlights the vital role of schools in promoting wellbeing, resilience, and informed decision-making among young people, and in responding appropriately to substance misuse concerns within a supportive and preventative framework.

Department of Education Position

In line with Department of Education requirements, all post-primary schools are required to have a Substance Misuse Policy as part of their overall wellbeing, child protection, and code of behaviour frameworks.

The Department recognises that schools with clear, well-communicated policies are best placed to:

- Prevent substance misuse through education
- Respond effectively and proportionately to incidents
- Support students’ health, safety, and wellbeing

This policy is aligned with:

- The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (2018–2023; updated Wellbeing Framework 2023–2028)
- Circular 18/02 – Guidelines for Developing a School Substance Use Policy
- Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)

Legislative Framework

This policy operates within the context of the following legislation and statutory obligations:

- Education Act 1998
- Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Equal Status Acts 2000–2018
- Children First Act 2015 and Child Protection Procedures 2023
- Data Protection Acts 1988–2018 and GDPR
- Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018
- Public Health (Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products) Act 2023 (includes vaping/e-cigarettes)
- Misuse of Drugs Acts 1977–2017

Objectives of the Policy

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Safeguard the welfare, care, and protection of all students
- Promote education and prevention relating to alcohol, tobacco, vaping, drugs, and other substances
- Provide clear, fair, and consistent procedures for managing substance misuse incidents
- Support students through pastoral, wellbeing, and restorative approaches, where appropriate

Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All students of Donabate Community College
- All staff, visitors, and users of the school premises

- All school-related activities, including trips, extracurricular activities, and online contexts where relevant

School Position on Substance Use

Donabate Community College does not permit the possession, use, distribution, or facilitation of:

- Illegal drugs
- Alcohol
- Tobacco products
- Vaping devices, e-cigarettes, and nicotine-inhaling products
- Volatile substances
- Drug-related paraphernalia
- Misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medication

This applies on school premises, during school activities, and on school-related trips.

The only exception is the appropriate use of prescribed medication, where parents/guardians must inform the school in writing and procedures must comply with the school's Medication Administration Policy.

Education and Prevention Programmes

Substance use education is delivered as part of a whole-school wellbeing approach and is integrated into:

- SPHE and the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme
- Senior Cycle SPHE
- Science, PE, CSPE, RE, and Transition Year programmes

Education is:

- Age-appropriate
- Evidence-based

- Focused on decision-making, resilience, and harm reduction

The school also engages with external agencies where appropriate (e.g. HSE, Tusla-supported programmes, Gardaí).

Procedures for Managing Substance Misuse Incidents

The school will manage incidents in a manner that is:

- Fair and proportionate
- In line with the Code of Behaviour
- Focused on student welfare, safety, and learning
- Where there is an immediate risk to health or safety, the Principal may take temporary measures (including suspension) pending investigation.

The school may:

- Secure and record substances or paraphernalia
- Liaise with An Garda Síochána, HSE, Tusla, or other relevant agencies where legally required
- Maintain detailed records in compliance with GDPR and Data Protection legislation
- Parents/guardians will be informed promptly, particularly where there are health, safety, or child protection concerns.

Child Protection and Safeguarding

Any substance misuse incident that gives rise to a child protection or welfare concern will be managed in accordance with:

- Children First Act 2015
- Child Protection Procedures for Schools (2023)

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP) will be involved where required.

Training and Development

The school commits to ongoing training for:

- Staff (including Wellbeing, SPHE, and child protection training)
- Board of Management (child protection training)
- Students (SPHE, RSE)

Training will reflect current research, legislation, and Department guidance, including vaping and emerging substances.