



# Coláiste Pobail Setanta

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## Substance Abuse Policy Ratified by the BOM 23-5-18

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### Our Mission Statement:

*Our College is a vibrant learning community where, students, parents and teachers are encouraged supported and challenged in pursuit of the highest standards of achievement and academic excellence.*

*We foster equality respect and integrity in our college. We embrace diversity and recognise that everyone is unique and has a positive contribution to make.*

### The School Ethos:

This College is a health promoting College. We care for the welfare and protection of the whole College community, which includes students and staff. Respect for self, others and the environment is a basic principle underpinning and informing all the work we do In Colaiste Pobail Setanta and is central to this policy document. Coláiste Pobail Setanta has an obligation to educate, protect and where necessary, discipline our students in its care with regard to substances and illegal drug use. In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the substance abuse policy forms part of the Colleges Learning Code. The College is mindful of the law in all situations surrounding all substances, smoking (including vapeing), alcohol and illegal drugs.

### Coláiste Pobail Setanta promotes a drug-free and alcohol-free environment for all students

It is our belief that values are formed primarily in the home and that parents have the main responsibility for the behaviour and attitudes of their children with regard to substances.

The aim of the College is that each pupil should develop to his or her full potential and become a constructive and caring member of society. Given this, we feel it is essential to do all that we can to ensure that pupils are in a safe environment while in the College.

This policy addresses all substance misuse issues, including, but not limited to smoking, alcohol use, illegal drug use and misuse of prescribed drugs.

Substance abuse incidents dealt with by the College include incidents which occur;

- Within the College
- Going to and from the College
- During College trips
- During Extra-curricular activities
- Incidents of substance abuse outside of these times will be dealt with by the College only in certain circumstances, see Learning Code.
- Incidents of a more serious nature e.g. supply of substances on school grounds will be dealt with by the official authorities, e.g. Gardai / Juvenile Liaison Officers



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## Rationale

This policy has been formulated to protect all the pupils and staff in this College and has been distributed to every student and their parents/guardians on enrolment. Issues outside the College impact on the College Community - one of these is the use/abuse of substances. The management recognises that the issue of substance use/abuse is very serious with the potential to affect students and staff. The College in arriving at a policy to deal with the possession of, distribution of, and use of substances is conscious that each situation is unique and thus, a flexible response is required. By substances the College means legal drugs, (analgesics e.g. Panadol / Aspirin etc.,) illegal drugs and misuse of prescribed drugs, solvents etc. The Substance Abuse Policy is one among many that serve to endorse the College's ethos.

Coláiste Pobail Setanta asserts its right to protect and promote its ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

The College policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in Circular 18/02.

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

## Coláiste Pobail Setants Position:

It has been agreed that a Drug is defined as a substance, which changes the way the body functions mentally, physically and emotionally. Alcohol and tobacco are included in this definition. The College is committed to addressing the needs of the whole College Community in relation to drugs. We believe that teachers, parents, Board of Management, students and other relevant personnel need to work together, and that co-operation is essential to the acceptance and implementation of the policy. The possession use or supply of drugs in the College, or on College trips or in non-school time by any student of the College Community is not acceptable. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use of which the College must have prior knowledge.

## College Policy

### Prescribed Medication

Parents of students taking prescribed medication should inform the College in writing of that fact. Teachers are not obliged to personally undertake the administration of medicines. It is recognised that children with long-term recurring health problems, such as Asthma, Diabetes, Epilepsy etc. be accommodated within the College. However, proper procedures for the administration of medicines must be made. Parents should be encouraged to provide maximum support and assistance in helping the College accommodate the student. This would include such measures such as self-administration (where necessary and only after approval from a G.P.) or under parental supervision. In the case where a student is suffering from a life-threatening illness as set out above, parents should consult with the Principal or Deputy Principal and Year-Head and should also outline clearly in writing, what



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can and cannot be done in a particular emergency situation with particular reference to what may put the student at risk. In the case of medical emergencies, where teachers have been given medication to administer, only the smallest dose possible should be administered to ensure recovery, until a medical expert can take over. Confirmation of this should be obtained from the G.P. responsible for the child, before the College would agree to administer such life saving medication in its care.

No member of staff has the authority to administer or provide any medication to a student, should that student feel unwell while at school e.g. complaining of a headache or toothache.

This policy is focused on four key areas:

- Drug Education and Information Programmes to enable young people to identify sources of appropriate personal support
- Managing Drugs Related Incidents
- Training and Staff Development
- Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

## 1. Drug Education and Information Programmes

The Principal is responsible for providing a comprehensive programme on alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs in so far as these topics are part of the curriculum in such subjects as SPHE, CSPE, RE, Science, and Home Economics, whose teachers will assist in the delivery of the programme. The Principal in conjunction with the Parents Association is responsible for providing programmes and or information for parents as identified needs arise. The Principal, in consultation with the wider community, may set up a drug policy working group to monitor and review all issues relating to the school's drug policy.

### Our educational aims in relation to drug education are:

- To increase the self-esteem and confidence of young people
- To equip young people with personal and social skills
- To enable young people to make informed, healthy and responsible choices
- To provide honest and age appropriate information on drugs
- To minimise the harm caused by drug use by offering supportive interventions

### Role of Parents

*Parents are expected to: -*

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes.
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse.
- Assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.



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In the event of an abuse incident, the College will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the College Community.

## Concern re: students and illegal substance use outside school

When the College authorities are made aware that a real concern exists where a student may be involved in illegal substance use outside school, the following procedure is followed:

- The parents/guardians of the student will be informed either in writing or by phone by the Principal about the concern.
- It will be pointed out that the College is not accusing the student of using illegal substances but has a concern that this might be the case.
- The parents/guardians will be invited in to the College to meet and discuss the concern with the Principal if they so wish.
- In addition the Principal will provide the parents/guardians with the phone number and a contact name for a Local Drug Awareness Support Service

## 2. Managing Drug Related Incidents

### *In School Investigation*

All incidents involving the use of drugs will be investigated immediately.

Where the College forms a strong suspicion of drug, use, possession or dealing, the school reserves the right to follow the following steps.

- a) Complete the "Abuse Incident Report Form". In the event of an incident, the College will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
- b) Investigate thoroughly, in so far as it is possible with regard to the resource available, all aspects of the incident that the College deems relevant to the incident.
- c) Inform the parents/guardians by phone or writing. In the case of a suspected abuse incident the College will immediately inform parents/guardians. This will be done without prejudice to the College's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any abuse incident.
- d) In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the young person/s, time will be taken to assess the situation before responding. A written report will be completed on all incidents involving alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
- e) Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the College Community, the College reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the College any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
- f) As part of the investigation, the College will instruct the student to make available his/her belongings for investigation or to require that pockets, bags and lockers be emptied in such a case (more than one staff member should be present where possible and parents will be informed beforehand), and to question the student pending a meeting with parents



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- g) The College will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- h) The College will maintain a written record as part of the file of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communication with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- i) The College, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- j) Information obtained by the Principal and person/s directly involved in the case and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal.
- k) Parents will be informed, and the College will offer support and information as required.
- l) Drug incidents are complex and in situations where the College rules regarding drugs are broken, the sanctions and punishments will be implemented depending on the nature and severity of the offence. These will be consistent with College rules regarding other breaches of conduct. See the Learning Code and this document.
- m) Presenting Findings
- n) If circumstances merit an investigation is continuing, the College will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:

## Presenting Findings

If circumstances merit an investigation, the College will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner

- a) Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and his parents—at the discretion of the College—in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make his own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that s/he would wish to make or have made on his behalf.
- b) The College will allow the student concerned and his parent's reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The College will take into account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
- c) The College shall shortly thereafter inform the student and his parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved in / or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.



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## Potential Actions

In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the College and / or the Board of Management may follow the following actions:

- Disciplinary procedures will be followed if College rules are broken and suspension, and or, expulsion may be an option. Procedures are in place to handle specific drug incidents.
- Implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension of three days duration, a suspension of more than three days duration, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion.
- Parents/legal guardians, or students of 18 or over, may appeal any decision to expel, or to suspend for 20 school days or more, to the Board of Management, the DDLETB and to the Department of Education and Science (Education Act 1998, Section 29).
- If the person has a drug problem then referral to an appropriate service will be recommended.
- Tusla and The Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) of the Gardaí will be contacted by the Principal or a designated person in the event of a confirmed illegal drug incident and any illegal drugs found on the premises will be dealt with by the JLO.
- The College can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account.
- The College should also ensure that pastoral supports are offered to the student / students and parents affected by an incident of substance abuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a tutor, counsellor etc. will be made available as appropriate.

## Drugs Testing

In cases where there is strong evidence/strong suspicion to suggest that a student may have taken intoxicants of any kind, the Principal, in the best interests of the student and the College, may require the parents/guardians, or the student if 18 years or over, to arrange for a medical test from a doctor and the results made available to the College. The College may also require medical evidence that a student is clear of intoxicants before allowing him/her to return to College in the interests of health and safety.

## Duty of Staff

Teachers in their pastoral role may encounter changes in a student's behaviour and attitude on occasion, or over a period of time.

The duty of teachers and staff to the College Community precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident.



# Coláiste Pobail Setanta

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The Board of Management requires all staff to report immediately, via the incident referral form, any incidents where pupils/employees/visitors encounter the use/suspected use of alcohol/drugs on the College premises or during a school related activity (e.g. outing or tour) such as;

- Individuals who exhibit symptoms/behaviour that may suggest the use of drugs/alcohol.
- Individuals who are involved in the distribution, purchase or use of drugs/alcohol.
- The discovery of suspect substances/ paraphernalia in the school.

The College personnel will seek to establish the facts and to be clear about the nature of the incident before deciding on a course of action. There will be no assumption of guilt. Opinions will be stated as opinions, not facts.

The student should not be confronted openly before his/her peers. There should be no assumption of guilt regarding substance misuse, as there are a variety of conditions, which might mimic the suspected misuse of substances. The possession of tablets may be for medicinal use.

The teacher is entitled to request the surrender of a suspicious substance. This should be done with minimal fuss. The teacher should not seek to search the student or his/her possessions. Where there is a refusal to co-operate the student should be brought to the Principal/Deputy Principal whose responsibility it is to proceed with the matter.

The Principal/Deputy Principal will recognise that the health/safety and the well being of the student/ students are paramount and will seek medical aid if deemed necessary. The student will be provided with the appropriate guidance and support they need.

## Pastoral Care Team

The relevant support systems of the school will be mobilised: Year-Head, Tutor, Guidance Counsellors, S.P.H.E. Co-ordinators, Class Teacher etc.

Where considered necessary, legal advice will be sought. If illegal drugs/ paraphernalia are found on College premises the College will/ may contact the Gardaí about its safe disposal. It is the responsibility of the Principal/ Deputy Principals to summon such persons as may be helpful to the issue.

Teachers in their pastoral role may encounter changes in a student's behaviour and attitude on occasion, or over a period of time. This may be for a variety of reasons and may not necessarily be indicative of substance misuse. The role of the teacher carries a duty of care towards the pupil, which involves a degree of confidentiality. However this does not preclude reporting a genuine suspicion or fear. The quality of the relationship between teacher and pupil is central to noticing a change in behaviour. Teachers should always discuss with colleagues and Year Head any significant altered behaviour or performance of a pupil.



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## Issue of Confidentiality

The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.

The College recognises the importance in limiting, as far as practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing a substance use incident and that it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, it should ensure that students and their parents accept that:

- The duty of teachers and staff to the College Community precludes them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with an abuse incident or suspected abuse incident.
- The College may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Medical Services, Tusla, Gardaí, Health Board, Probation Service or Officers of the Court.
- The College may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.
- The College may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident and/ or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations or DES guidelines.

## Media

The Principal or a nominated spokesperson will handle all media queries. The College will not comment on individual cases but may refer to the College policy and the procedures in place to manage any drug-related incident.

## 3. Training and Staff Development

Provision will be made as follows for:

- The College will facilitate training for staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes.
- Staff will be offered appropriate information and awareness training.
- First-aid training will be made available to key staff.

## Parents and Board of Management

The College will provide opportunities to attend information evenings and workshops in relation to drugs and the College policy.

## Students

Colaiste Pobail Setanta will offer all its students drug education programmes within the context of their SPHE, CSPE, RE, Science, and Home Economics, whose teachers will assist in the delivery of the programme.



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Self-Referral: When a student (or his/her parents or legal guardians) confides that (s)he has a problem with intoxicants, the matter will be treated in confidence and with understanding. Parents or legal guardians of students will be informed and the College will co-operate with and facilitate medical or other professionals involved, insofar as reasonably possible, having regard to the welfare of the student and of others.

## 4 .Monitoring of the Policy

The Principal, assisted by the drug policy working group, will regularly monitor and update aspects of the policy on the three areas of:

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parent, Staffing and Management Training

## Review of the Policy

The policy will be reviewed regularly, or in the light of changing information, by the drug policy working group.

## Evaluation

As part of a policy review, teachers, parents, students, Board of Management and other relevant groups will be involved in the evaluation of this policy when it has been in place for one year and any amendments will be incorporated into the policy.

Three main areas of the policy to be evaluated are:

- Drug Education Programmes
- Managing Drug Related Incidents
- Parents, Staff and Management Training and courses offered to the school community.

## Dissemination of Policy

Copies of the policy will be disseminated from the main school office. All new staff and parents of new students will be given a copy of the policy as part of their induction to the school.

## Definitions

**The College** includes College buildings, grounds; play areas, public areas where student congregate coming to and going from school.

**Banned or Prohibited Substances.** All substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. The College reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the College qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance.



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**Drug Paraphernalia.** Any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances, and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

**Incident.** Any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occurs in the College or during College functions or outings, field-trips, tours, etc. or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned, to other students or to the policy or reputation of the College. The College reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes an abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the policy.

**Parents.** For the purpose of the policy, parents should be defined to include natural parents, foster parents, or guardians of the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in loco- parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of an abuse incident.

**The Principal.** In the policy the reference to the Principal should be taken to mean the Principal for the time being appointed by the College and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the Deputy Principal where the Principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy Principal.

## Signs and Symptoms of Teen Substance Use

What parents should look for:

- Changes in friends
- Subtle changes in conversations with friends, e.g. being more secretive, using 'coded' language
- Changes in motivation, alertness, concentration, perception, coordination and reaction time.
- Being agitated or drowsy and with pupils of the eye dilated
- Increased secrecy about activities and possessions
- Change in clothing choices
- Increased need for money
- Use of perfume, deodorants and incense to mask smoke or chemical odours
- New or increased use of mouthwash and breath mints to hide the smell of alcohol
- Possession of drug paraphernalia e.g. pipes, rolling paper etc and inhalant products
- Missing prescriptions drugs.

The following are possible examples of drug incidents:

- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious



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- Intoxication/uncharacteristic behaviour
- Suspicion of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Person seeking help from another member of staff
- School grounds being used for drug activity
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property

*This list is not exhaustive*



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## Referral Form for Suspicion of Substance Abuse

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Referred by \_\_\_\_\_

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

Nature of Incident

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Description of items in the student's possession

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Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Date of referral to Principal \_\_\_\_\_

Parents contacted on \_\_\_\_\_

Referred to Counsellor on \_\_\_\_\_