



Substance Use / Misuse policy

March 2023

The substance use policy of Comeragh College addresses education concerning both Alcohol, Tobacco, vaping, illicit use or intent to supply drugs, possession of drugs, use or supply of drug paraphernalia and the procedures for managing any incidents relating to these substances.

Scope of the policy

The policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, staff, parents, guardians, and users of the school building.

Relationships to the Mission Statement

The policy is in keeping with the school's mission statement as follows...

“At Comeragh College we aim to provide a quality education for life in an innovative responsive and caring learning environment.”

Rationale

Comeragh College is a school with a proactive approach in its care and education of its students towards a healthy lifestyle. Its aim is to prevent substance misuse while at the same time having strategies in place in the event of such problems arising.

The rationale of the policy is:

- To promote the health and wellbeing of each pupil
- To ensure that the pupils' parents and staff will be informed of the policy
- To set the policy in the current context of Irish society
- To view substance use/misuse as an issue for all schools; in a society where drugs, legal & illegal are widely available it is important for schools to develop policies and procedures in advance of drug related issues coming to attention
- To meet the requirements of the Education Act.

Aim

Our aim is to ensure that we work towards creating safe healthy environments and that we help our learners develop the skills and attitudes necessary to be able to cope with a drug orientated society. This is a very difficult task and requires huge effort from parents, schools, community, Gardaí, Health Agencies and Government departments.

- To provide information for pupils and parents on alcohol, tobacco, vaping and the illicit use of drugs and possession of drug paraphernalia.

- To provide staff with clear and specific procedures to guide good practice.
- To provide students with the skills and competencies that would enable them to avoid a substance misuse culture in their lives.
- To make each member of the school community aware of the school policy its procedures and sanctions.
- To provide support and awareness of this support, to pupil's parents around the issues of substance misuse.

Definition of a Substance

Drugs can be defined as all mood-altering substances which can cause changes in the way the human body functions, either mentally, physically, or emotionally. They can be both legal and illegal and can include tobacco, alcohol, solvents, and medication.

Drug Education

Aim of Drug Education

The aim of drug education is to give the learners the knowledge skills and attitudes to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and to enable them to make informed choices about drugs.

Programme delivery

The programme will be delivered to students through the SPHE programme in Junior Cycle. In LCA and TY it will be delivered through Social Education. Other classes where possible will receive this programme through RE or SPHE and speakers will be involved as appropriate to reinforce work done in the classroom. Where possible we will link in with other services locally to provide a broader education for our students.

Parents and Drug education

The parents are the primary educators and have the most influence on the lives of their children as role models over the whole range of behaviours. They are therefore crucial in any prevention strategy. The school will always endeavour to respond to parents' specific needs for information and support regarding this issue.

Use of visiting speakers

Drug education is best led by classroom teachers. Where outside speakers or agencies are used, it will be planned and integrated into the programme and compliment the school's approach.

Management of Drug Incidents

Introduction Statement

This School will endeavour to handle any alcohol or illicit drug incident in a firm but fair manner. The school will prioritise health, safety and welfare of the individual(s) involved, other members of the school and the wider community. The school will fulfil any legal obligations that apply.

Outline of Restrictions

The possession, use and supply of drugs and/or drug paraphernalia, including presenting under the influence of drugs is viewed as unacceptable and a health and safety concern in the school. Furthermore, as mandated persons the school may be obliged to refer concerns to The Child and Family Agency and the Gardai will be notified.

When and to whom policy applies

Except where otherwise stated, the policy applies to all students, staff and other users of the school or around its boundaries including the bus stop (this includes parents and any visitors attending the school). The policy applies is in force on the school premises during school time or when involved in school activities. The exception is the correct and supervised use of cleaning agents and curriculum related materials/ingredients as specified by the staff member involved. We must also ensure that these materials and cleaning agents are securely stored.

Internal Lines of reporting and key individuals

All alcohol, vaping and illicit drug incidents must be reported to the principal who will inform the student director and other staff as appropriate. Students are themselves encouraged to inform a member of the teaching staff if an incident occurs. While on school related excursions, the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Note: Where suspicion is based on disclosure, the rights and anonymity of persons will be upheld.

Recording of incidents

Written records will be kept of incidents in breach of this policy and will be stored in a confidential file by the principal. Reference should be made in the student's normal file indicating that further information is in the possession of the principal. Records should include any warning and/or advice given to the individual and the consequences of repetition of the behaviour. In written records, the recording of information only is preferable; any opinion must be stated as such.

Confidentiality

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it is not possible to **guarantee confidentiality** to students in relation to alcohol, vaping or illicit drug incidents, including disclosure of their own drug use. Information may need to be shared, for example, with certain staff members, with the parents of those involved, or with an appropriate external agency. However, discretion within these limits will be observed. The limits of confidentiality will be explained to the student prior to disclosure where this is possible. Students wishing to speak to someone in confidence may ask the school to put them in contact with an external agency that may meet their need.

Drug Testing

The Principal/ Board of Management shall have the right to require any student to undertake a drugs test (by a doctor specified by Comeragh College).

The Principal/ Board of Management shall have the right to require a student to undertake a series of drugs tests in event of:

- (a) a positive result on a test and/or
- (b) a student been found in possession of drugs and/or
- (c) the student has been before the courts in any matter in relation to drugs and/or
- (d) a student enrolling into the school has been expelled from another school due to a drug related issue.
- (e) a student has been hospitalised as a result of drug use or arrested by Gardai for same the school may request a negative blood/urine drugs test from a specified doctor by Comeragh College.

In the case of a student who is a minor, parents/guardians will be required to accompany their child to the appointment with the doctor (arranged by Comeragh College). Results will be sent to parents and parents are required to furnish same to school.

Note: A positive drug test result constitutes a breach of the policy. Parents will be required to arrange for the student to engage with a drug rehabilitation programme. The student will be required to complete the programme. Students will be required to take subsequent tests if the school is concerned by his/her behaviour. If they fail any of these tests, they may face expulsion.

Informing parents

It is the policy of Comeragh College to inform the parents/ guardians in relation to all matters covered in this policy to include

Suspected Use or possession

Actual Use of possession

Dealing or Suspected Dealing

This section of the policy relates to students only. Parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity if their minor son/daughter is involved in a drug-related incident, as parental involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents will in such cases be invited into the school in due course to discuss what has happened and the course of action to be taken. The student will be informed that their parents are being notified. Parents will then be given the name and number of an appropriate external agencies should they wish to seek further support for themselves.

Informing Gardai

In incidents involving the use, possession, or supply of illicit drugs or possession of drug paraphernalia. It is the policy of the school to inform the gardai. Garda advice may be sought about other incidents on a case, by case basis. The decision to involve other agencies will rest with the principal and/or other key staff. The school asserts its right to inform gardai of any illegal drug activity affecting the welfare of the school community.

Consequences

A proactive approach to prevent a recurring behavioural habit forming, will be taken.

As per the Code of positive behaviour policy of this school a points system of firm and consistent sanctions will apply to students involved in alcohol, vaping or any illicit drug incidents.

Sanctions, including suspension or expulsion maybe imposed depending on the seriousness of the incident.

In all cases of repeated breaches of the policy the student may be expelled.

In all cases of

1. Use of illegal substances
2. Possession of illegal substances
3. Supply of illegal substances
4. Possession of paraphernalia with substances
5. Possession of paraphernalia without substances
6. Individual Use of paraphernalia
7. Shared Use of paraphernalia

In all cases of repeated possession of illegal drugs or drug related paraphernalia the student may be expelled.

If a student fails a series of drug tests (as requested by the school) the student may be expelled.

Consuming or carrying of alcohol/illegal substances or related paraphernalia is strictly forbidden on school premises, while on school tour (or trips) or in the carrying out of any school related business. The consequence will be immediate suspension, for a first offence.

Sanctions will be graded depending on the degree and severity of the incident up to and including expulsion.

Support/Pastoral issues in the event of an incident

This applies to the students involved and their parents

1. On-going contact will be offered to the parents and students by relevant school personnel.
2. In-school support will be available to the students by relevant school personnel
3. Parents will be notified about contact details for agencies that can be of support to them.
4. Where necessary the general parent body will be informed and updated on substance use and information will be posted on the Comeragh College website.

Useful points of contact

Suir Valley Community Based Drugs Initiative, Youth Resource Centre, 56 New Street, Carrick-on-Suir 051 645775

Drug and HIV Helpline 1800 459 459

Drugs.ie or Text Drugs to 5190

HSE Substance Misuse Service (Clonmel) 052 77919

The number of **Carrick on Suir Garda Station** is 051 642 040 and **Clonmel Garda Station** 052 617 7640

http://www.drugs.ie/downloadDocs/2017/DLTH_2015.pdf

Disposal of illegal drugs

Gardai will be informed and asked to deal with the disposal of the relevant substances. The illegal substance will be secured with the minimum of handling in the presence of two staff members and held until the arrival of the gardai. Records will be taken and signed by both staff members and the garda representative when the substance is transferred into the custody of the gardai.

In the event of an incidence while on a school trip. the principal will be informed as soon as possible, and the procedure outlined in the policy will be adhered to. The health and safety of the offending student will be held as the priority.

Power of search

The school retains the right to search any part of school property and any bags, lockers, jackets, vehicles, or other belongings on school property or at school events. Students may be given the option to volunteer the drug prior to search.

Where there is reasonable cause to believe a student has on their person (including clothes actually being worn) a drug in breach of this policy, they will be asked to volunteer the drug. If they refuse the Gardai may be called in to conduct the search. Two staff members must be present during any form of search. An attempt will be made to notify a minor students parent/guardian prior to Garda search. In emergencies, medical/emergency services will be sought.

Health and Safety

The physical state of the suspected student/person will be given immediate attention and care in accordance with the general health and safety policy of the school. Normal emergency first aid procedures will apply and will be administered by certified personnel if necessary. All incidents are referred to the principal and records are kept in the health and safety logbook.

In circumstances where a student is diagnosed with a health condition, be that mental or physical, the school must have regard to the safety, health and welfare of the student and all others with whom the student may have contact. The school owes a duty of care to all who are attending at it, this includes all students and staff.

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Availability, storage and use of solvents.

Cleaning and educational volatile substances will be stored securely when not in use under supervision of authorised personnel. We endeavour to use non-toxic products where possible.

Medication

Where a student is using medication, parental approval must be sought, and this must be put on the student's file.

Action Plan for implementation of Policy

This policy will come into effect from March 2023. Every parent/guardian will be informed that this policy is on our school website and be invited to collect a hardcopy from the school office.

Media

The school principal will make a statement to the media where necessary, following legal advice.

Review

The policy and procedures will be reviewed regularly. The review will take cognisance of changing legislation. The policy will be revised as necessary in the light of the review.