



St. Louise de Marillac Primary School

Substance Use Policy

Introduction

St. Louise's Primary School is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance use and drugs. We believe that the Board of Management, teaching staff, support staff, ancillary staff, parents/guardians and pupils need to work together to implement this policy which applies during the school opening hours (including break times), during school outings and during any school-related activities that may take place outside of school opening times.

Relationship of Policy to School Ethos

St. Louise's Primary School believes that the personal and social development of each member of the school community is important. Education flourishes in an environment where good relationships are encouraged, where people feel valued and respected and where there is genuine tolerance and support for those in difficulty. This philosophy underpins and informs all the work we do and is central to this policy document.

Why is this policy necessary?

We, the Board of Management, the parents/guardians and the staff of St. Louise's Primary School, are concerned about the general wellbeing, health and education of our children. We recognise that the increasing use and misuse of legal and illegal substances in our society is having a seriously negative impact on family life, the wider community and consequently, on the life of the pupils in our school.

While we recognize that the child spends only part of his/her life in school, and that the primary role of substance misuse prevention lies with parents/guardians, we also recognise that the school has an important role to play in educating children regarding the use and misuse of legal and illegal substances.

The school will support and co-operate with those agencies and individuals who work in this area. The school sees itself as having a role in the process of enabling students to increase control over and improve their physical and mental health.

We endeavour to promote the well-being of students by:

1. Providing a safe and healthy environment
2. Promoting positive healthy behaviours
3. Increasing knowledge about health and substances, as knowledge is empowering
4. Promoting the self-esteem and self-awareness of pupils
5. Promoting key mental health messages
6. Collaborating with other agencies in the community.

To this end, in response to the encroaching drug culture in our society we feel the need to implement a comprehensive policy to address the problem of substance use and misuse. We aim to put prudent procedures in place that will be consistent and provide safety and protection for everyone in the school community. This policy applies to teachers, parents/guardians, pupils, the Board of Management,

school staff and any student teachers, work experience students, volunteers and other personnel who may be working with school staff and/or pupils in a temporary capacity.

A drug can be defined as any substance, which causes changes in the way the human body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. For the purpose of this policy, we are concerned with:

- **drugs which have the power to change a previous mood and the way a person thinks about things;**
- **drugs on which the taker may become physically or, more often, psychologically dependent.**

The policy will focus on the following four areas:

1. Education concerning substance use and strategies for the prevention of substance misuse e.g. Walk Tall; Grow In Love; Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, Botvins Lifeskills Programme if resources allow
2. Management and procedures for dealing with alcohol, tobacco, vapes and drug-related incidents in the school
3. Provision for training and staff development to improve their response to the problem of substance misuse
4. Monitoring, review and evaluation.

1. Education concerning substance use and strategies for prevention of misuse

Education in this area is provided in the broad context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme based on the SPHE Primary School Curriculum. It is developed and delivered in the context of a supportive, whole-school environment.

- The **Walk Tall** Programme forms a very significant part of SPHE and is the primary resource used for education in substance use. It is an educational support programme, the main aim of which is prevention of misuse of substances. The programme hopes to give children the confidence, skills and knowledge to make healthy choices and also seeks to avert experimentation with substances and so reduce the demand for legal and illegal drugs. The programme is developed for use from Junior Infants through to Sixth Class and will be presented to the children by their class teacher.
- Grow In Love (or equivalent Religious Education programme)
- Stay Safe (Child Abuse Prevention Programme)
- RSE (Relationships and Sexuality Education) programmes are also used in the area of drugs education, where relevant.
- Botvins Lifeskills programme is delivered to pupils in 4th, 5th and 6th class where resources allow and helps them to make informed decisions in relation to the use of drugs.
- *Working Things Out* Resilience and Skills Building is delivered to 6th Class pupils if resources allow.
- ❖ The work may be further supported through the use of the following resources: peer education, drama groups, videos depending on resources available. Visiting speakers may also be invited to talk to the children and parents when deemed appropriate. The speakers may be from the Gardaí, the Local Drugs Task Force, Ballyfermot S.T.A.R. (Substance Treatment and Rehabilitation) and other relevant agencies. The Principal and Assistant Principal with responsibility for SPHE may invite the speakers, organise the class along with the class teacher and monitor the contributions. Where appropriate, the children may undertake project work and this will be directed and monitored by the class teacher.

2. Management and procedures for dealing with alcohol, tobacco, vape and drug-related incidents in the school

- The school does not accept the possession, use or supply of alcohol, tobacco, vape or drugs in the school or on school trips by any member of the school community.
- The only exception is for legitimate and medicinal use and the school has to be informed. (Please refer to the school's Administration of Medication policy).

Smoking and Vaping and managing a smoking/vaping related incident

- The school and its grounds is a strictly no smoking or vaping area. Under current legislation, smoking is prohibited in all parts of the school buildings and grounds, including staff room and school yards. (Tobacco Regulations 1995, 1998).
- "No Smoking" and "No Vaping" signs are displayed in the school.
- Visitors will be requested to comply with the no smoking and no vaping policy.
- Pupils are not permitted to smoke or vape or possess cigarettes or e-cigarettes on the school premises or at school-related events that take place outside school hours.
- Pupils found smoking or vaping or in possession of cigarettes or e-cigarettes will be reported to the Principal. Cigarettes / e-cigarettes will be confiscated. Parents/guardians will be informed. Incidents will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure. Sanctions will apply up to and including suspension or expulsion.
- Tobacco will not be permitted as a prize for school raffles.
- Any person found smoking or vaping in the school or grounds may be subject to prosecution, which could result in a fine, and the person in charge of such areas, i.e. the principal, could also be subject to a fine. (Section 4, Tobacco Act, 1998).

Alcohol and managing an alcohol-related incident

- The school is an alcohol-free area, except where the principal or Board of Management has sanctioned its consumption at an adult-only function outside of school hours.
- Pupils, staff or parents/guardians will not be allowed to consume alcohol in school or during any school activities, except where the principal or Board of Management has sanctioned its consumption at an adult-only function outside of school hours.
- If a teacher is of the opinion that a pupil is under the influence of alcohol, s/he will immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken.
- Where a pupil comes to school under the influence of alcohol, their parents/ guardians will be called to take them home.
- If parent/ guardian is not available to come to the school to collect the pupil then the pupil must continue to be supervised by an adult.
- Pupils breaking these rules will be dealt with according to the school's Code of Behaviour.
- If alcohol is required for an adult only school function, permission shall be sought from the Board of Management or Principal.
- If a member of staff is unfit to work due to substance misuse they will be requested to leave the premises by the principal. The disciplinary process will commence with verbal warning, etc. In the event of a repeat incident the BOM will be informed and the disciplinary process will continue.

Illegal drugs and solvents

- Students, staff and parents/guardians are forbidden from being in possession of or using illegal drugs or solvents in the school premises.
- Only the adults in the school may use Tippex (fluid corrector) for its intended purpose.

- Should a pupil bring Tippex (fluid corrector) to school it will be sent to the Principal's Office where it will be kept and returned when a parent/ guardian visits the school.
- Aerosols may be used for art and craft purposes only and always used under adult supervision.
- Pupils should not bring spray deodorants / hairsprays to school. Should a pupil bring spray deodorant / hairspray to school it will be sent to the Principal's Office where it will be kept and returned when a parent/ guardian visits the school. Deliberate breaking of these rules will be dealt with in accordance with school's Code of Behaviour and disciplinary procedure.
- Air freshener aerosols may be used in the toilet areas by school staff where necessary.
- Caretakers check the car-parks, sheds, playground areas regularly. If any drug-related paraphernalia is found, the principal is informed. The items are collected and disposed of safely in the presence of a witness.
- If any suspect drugs, tablets or powder are found on the school premises they will be removed from the area and will be locked away in the presence of a witness. The Gardaí will be contacted to dispose of them.
- Teachers are advised not to transport illegal substances at any time.
- Pupils are advised to inform an adult member of the school staff if they find any drug-related items in the school grounds. The safety of other pupils is maintained until the items are removed by the caretaker or another responsible member of the school staff.
- If a staff member is of the opinion that a student is under the influence of illegal drugs or solvents, s/he will:
 - immediately inform the Principal and consult on what action should be taken. The advice and assistance of Tusla (child protection agency), the Community Garda may be sought.
 - the principal may request a meeting with the parents / guardians of the pupil to voice concerns about the pupil.
 - A written record will be made and parents/ guardians will be informed of this.
- Where the school suspects dealing of illegal drugs, an investigation will be carried out by the principal and another person appointed by the Board of Management.
- Parents of any pupil involved will be informed.
- The advice and assistance of the Community Garda will be sought.
- The school's Board of Management will expect parents / guardians to inform the Principal or teacher if they suspect their child of drug taking.

Managing a drug-related Incident

Drug-related incidents are complex. In situations where the school 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 the breaching of other school rules as outlined in the school's Code of Behaviour.

The following are examples of a drug incident:

- Use of alcohol, tobacco, vape, solvents or other drugs and illegal substances by individuals on the school premises; (An exception may be the use of alcohol by adults at a Board of Management sanctioned event);
- Bringing, sharing or selling alcohol, tobacco, vape, solvents or other drugs on the school premises or on school-related outings;
- Disclosures about alcohol, tobacco, vape or other drug use in school to teachers or other school staff;
- Individuals under the influence of alcohol or drugs coming to school to see or to collect children;
- Finding alcohol, drugs or drug paraphernalia on the school premises;
- Dealing with aggressive (possibly alcohol/drug-related) behaviour from a parent;

The school recognises that drugs, both legal and illegal, are available in the local community and that the school, being part of this community, may have drug incidents which need to be handled in a consistent and sensitive way.

We acknowledge that in all situations involving drugs, there needs to be a balance between the needs of the person, the needs of the school community and the reputation of the school. Listening, separating fact from myth and offering support will be our initial approach to the situation.

- In all cases where there is no immediate danger to the person(s) it is important to take the time to assess the situation before responding.
- Disciplinary procedures, according to the school's Code of Behaviour, will be followed if school rules are broken.
- Each incident will be dealt with individually depending on the nature of the incident.
- A limited number of people will be involved in managing the drug incident. People will be informed only on a "need to know" basis. The Principal, Deputy Principal (with responsibility for behaviour management), SPHE Co-ordinator, Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) teacher and the reporting/class teacher will normally be directly involved.
- All written documentation will be held confidentially by the Principal.
- In situations of confirmed use/possession or supply, then all the details will be recorded. (See Incident Report Form. Appendix A) and acted upon.
- Generally speaking, in most cases, involving pupils, the school will want to involve the parents/guardians. This needs to be handled sensitively and, wherever possible, support offered to them. In the first instance, this support will be offered by the HSCL teacher.
- In the event of a confirmed drug incident, the Principal will contact the Gardaí.

Dealing with aggressive (possibly alcohol/ drug related) behaviour of a visitor to school

All visitors to the school are asked to go to reception and state their business to the secretary. If for some reason the visitor is a parent whose child needs to be collected early, the secretary / other staff member will proceed to the child's classroom while the visitor waits in the reception area. Should any visitor be aggressive / offensive or engage in unreasonable behaviour, they may be asked to leave and return at a later time. At dismissal times no teacher will be left on their own in the yard with a parent / visitor.

If behaviour is persistent or becomes aggressive / offensive the support of another staff member will be sought. The request to leave the premises will be repeated. Should this request be unsuccessful the assistance of the Gardaí will be called. Please see our Dignity in the Workplace policy for more detail.

Dealing with parent/ guardian who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they come to take a child home

If a parent/ guardian is behaving in an anti-social manner they will be asked to leave the premises. Refusal to comply may necessitate calling the Gardaí. If a parent/guardian is clearly under the influence of alcohol/drugs, for the child's safety, the Principal/DLP may make a decision not to allow the child into his/her custody and may call the next of kin/emergency contact person for the child. The DLP may consult and decide to make a Child Protection referral to Tusla/duty social worker.

Disclosures about alcohol, tobacco or other drug use to teachers or other staff

A report is made to the principal who will then speak to the child.

Teachers cannot offer total confidentiality to a young person who discloses drug involvement.

The pupil will be informed about what is happening and why.

The wellbeing of the pupil and the teacher / staff member is the prime focus.

Parent/ guardian may be informed. A referral may be made to Tusla if the disclosure is deemed to be a child protection issue.

3. Staff Development and Training

Depending on resources available, the school will provide:

Staff Training

- Continuing professional development to teachers in teaching aspects of the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in each class as offered by OIDE
- Professional development in the *Walk Tall* programme as appropriate;
- First Aid Training will be made available to specific staff members

Parents & Board of Management

- The school will provide opportunities at regular intervals to attend information sessions and workshops on issues relating to drugs and the school policy.

4. Monitoring of the Policy

This policy will be available from the principal's office. The policy is available on Teams for staff members and on the school website for parents. Pupils may be made aware of aspects of the policy as part of their SPHE programme.

The policy will be regularly evaluated and updated where necessary. The policy will be reviewed, in consultation with the wider school community, in the light of changing information or of any suggestions for amendments/improvements that may come to its notice.

Review of School Substance Use Policy

This policy was reviewed by the staff and parents/guardians in March 2026. In accordance with the school's systematic cycle of review of plans and policies the Substance Use Policy will be further reviewed in the academic year 2028/2029.

This reviewed policy was presented to the Board of Management for ratification on 20th April 2026.

Signed: Vincent Jackson

Chairperson BoM

Date: 20/4/2026

St. Louise de Marillac Primary School
Drumfinn Road
Ballyfermot
Dublin 10

INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Name of Child: _____

Class: _____

Teacher: _____

Room No: _____

Date: _____

Description of Incident

Follow up

Signed: _____

Position: _____

Signed: _____

Position: _____