



Midleton C.B.S.
Secondary School
An Edmund Rice School

Substance Use Policy

Ratified: 20th April 2026

Due for review: 2028

1. Introduction

Midleton CBS recognises its duty of care to all students and staff and is committed to promoting the health, wellbeing, and safety of the entire school community. This policy provides a structured and consistent framework for dealing with issues relating to alcohol, tobacco, nicotine, vaping, and drugs, both legal and illegal, within the school context.

The school's approach reflects the Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) Charter and the five key elements of the Charter:

- Nurturing Faith
- Promoting Partnership
- Excelling in Teaching and Learning
- Creating a Caring School Community
- Inspiring Transformational Leadership

2. Policy Rationale

The world in which young people live presents many challenges that impact their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, and drugs is a

reality. Schools must respond to these challenges appropriately, balancing education, prevention, and intervention.

This policy has been developed in line with:

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- The National Drugs Strategy
- The ERST Charter
- The Department of Education's Guidelines for Developing a School Substance Use Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies, including:

- Code of Ethics and Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- School Tours/Trip Policy
- Student Journal
- Administration of Medicines Policy

3. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to:

- All students, staff, and visitors on school premises or participating in school-related activities (e.g., matches, tours, retreats, or trips).
- All school times, including before and after class, during break periods, and while travelling to or from school.
- All substances, including alcohol, tobacco, vapes, e-cigarettes, snus, nicopods, illegal drugs, edibles, solvents, and the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medication.

This policy does not apply to the legitimate use of prescribed medication taken as directed by a qualified medical practitioner, or to over-the-counter medication taken within the recommended limits; it applies only to the misuse or inappropriate use of such substances. *See the Administration of Medicines Policy for further information.*

Students are expressly forbidden from:

- Purchasing, possessing, supplying, or consuming alcohol, tobacco, vapes, e-cigarettes, snus, nicopods, illegal drugs, edibles, solvents, or drugs while under school supervision or representing the school in any capacity.
- Arriving at school or any school-related activity under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or other intoxicating substances.
- Having any prohibited substances in their possession, system, or personal belongings while attending or representing the school.

The policy applies equally to all school-sanctioned events, whether held on or off campus, during or outside of school hours.

4. Aims and Objectives

- To provide a structured educational programme about substance use and misuse.
- To promote informed and responsible decision-making among students.
- To equip staff to respond appropriately to substance-related incidents.
- To ensure consistent procedures for managing incidents of substance misuse.
- To safeguard the welfare and wellbeing of the entire school community.

5. Education and Prevention

Substance use education forms part of the school's Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Wellbeing programmes. It is supported through:

- SPHE and RSE modules
- Religious Education and Wellbeing classes
- Senior cycle subjects (e.g., Politics & Society, Economics)
- Guest speakers and workshops approved by school management
- Pastoral care supports including Year Heads, Guidance Counsellor, and Mentoring Programme

Visiting speakers or external agencies are approved by the Principal and must align with the ethos of the school. Teachers are present for all external sessions.

6. Management of Substance-Related Incidents

A substance-related incident includes but is not limited to:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, drugs, vapes, tobacco, or other prohibited substances on school premises or during a school-related activity.
- Possession, sale, or supply of such substances or related paraphernalia.
- Intoxication or unusual behaviour suggestive of substance use.
- Disclosure by a student or discovery of substances or paraphernalia.

Confiscation of Substances or Paraphernalia:

Where prohibited substances, materials, or paraphernalia (e.g., vapes, alcohol, drugs, lighters, or related items) are found, they will be confiscated immediately by school management or designated staff. Items will be secured safely and may be:

- Returned directly to a parent or guardian, where appropriate; or
- Handed over to An Garda Síochána if the items are illegal or deemed to pose a serious risk to health and safety.

Procedures:

1. The safety and wellbeing of all students take precedence.
2. The Principal/Deputy Principal is notified immediately.
3. Parents/guardians are informed at the earliest opportunity.
4. An investigation is carried out and recorded in writing.

5. Relevant authorities (e.g., Gardaí, TUSLA, NEPS, CAHMS) may be contacted.
6. Appropriate sanctions and/or supports will be applied, balancing a pastoral and disciplinary response.

Sanctions may include suspension or expulsion in line with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the school's Code of Ethics and Behaviour.

7. Confidentiality and Child Protection

Confidentiality is respected insofar as it does not compromise the safety or welfare of any student.

If a staff member becomes aware that a student may be at risk, the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) must be informed immediately.

All procedures will comply with the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017).

8. Support and Referral

The school adopts a multi-agency approach where necessary, liaising with:

- TUSLA and Meitheal
- NEPS
- CAHMS
- General Practitioners
- Local Health Services

Students affected by substance misuse will be supported through counselling and referral to appropriate services. Staff training in SPHE, first aid, and wellbeing is facilitated on an ongoing basis.

9. Roles and Responsibilities

- Board of Management: Ratifies and oversees the policy.
- Principal and Deputy Principal: Implement and monitor the policy.
- Teachers and Staff: Deliver educational content and report incidents.
- Students: Uphold the rules of the school and act responsibly.
- Parents/Guardians: Support the school in enforcing this policy and guiding responsible behaviour at home.

10. Sanctions

Sanctions are applied in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Behaviour. The purpose of sanctions is corrective, not purely punitive, and may include:

- Verbal or written warning
- Behaviour report
- Detention or community service
- Suspension or expulsion in serious cases

Students who breach this policy during a school trip, match, or event may be sent home at the parents' expense and may be excluded from future extracurricular activities, in line with the school Tours/Trips policy.

11. Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with national guidelines and to maintain best practice. Evaluation will be informed by feedback from staff, students, and parents and by the school's review schedule.

12. Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 20th April 2026

Signed:  _____

Dónal Cronin

Chairperson - Board of Management

Signed:  _____

Niall Ahern

Principal