



St. Columba's College

Substance Abuse Policy

Updated December 2025 , next due for review December 2026

Person Responsible for updating policy: Head of Pastoral Care

Introduction

St. Columba's College has an obligation to educate, protect and where necessary, discipline young people in its care with regard to drugs and drug use. Although the College recognises that drug usage is increasingly common in society as a whole we must strive to minimise and remove its impact on our students while they are in our care. The College hereby clearly states that involvement with tobacco, **nicotine**, alcohol, illegal drugs, or misuse of medicines in school, on trips or in a manner that would affect life in, or the reputation of the College, is strictly forbidden. This policy is applied in conjunction with the other policies of the College, such as the Code of Behaviour Policy.

Values and opinions on drug abuse are formed primarily at home and parents/guardians by their own actions and attitudes have the main responsibility for the behaviour and attitudes of their children with regard to drugs. Parents/guardians have a supportive role to play regarding the education programmes offered by the



College and in warning their children of the very real dangers associated with the use of legal and illegal drugs.

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. Parents, pupils and staff should know that the College is a place which is drug free.

Definition of Drugs as Understood by the College

By drugs the College refers to, but not exclusively to, the following:

- Tobacco
- Nicotine
- Electronic cigarettes and vapes
- Alcohol
- Solvents
- Nitrous oxide
- All Illegal drugs, as described by An Garda Síochána
- Look-alike drugs
- Drug Paraphernalia
- Medicines

Drugs Education in the College

We recognise that education about alcohol, tobacco and drugs is most effective if provided in the broader context of a Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme which is developmental and delivered in the context of a supportive whole school environment. SPHE teachers are trained and regularly attend SPHE in-service training programmes.

Formal SPHE classes, including Relationships and Sexuality Education, (one 45 minutes class per week) are presented in all forms. Pupils learn about the risks of smoking, vaping, alcohol and drugs (both legal and illegal), and this is linked to modules on influences and decision-making.



As well as a formal substance abuse education programme in school, class work may be supported from time to time by inviting outside speakers to address the pupils on related issues where this is considered appropriate. Such presentations will always be done under the supervision of the class teacher and in accordance with Circular 0043/2018.

Education on substance abuse is also provided in other subject areas such as Biology.

Provision for training and staff development

All details of relevant training opportunities in relation to substance use/misuse will be circulated to staff. The College will support the attendance of programmes by staff insofar as is practical and possible. Where possible, whole-staff training will be incorporated into the annual programme of on-site in-service for staff.

Procedures for the Management of a Drug-Related Incident

Any pupil or member of staff who finds a pupil with drugs, or in a drug-related situation, must immediately report what he or she has heard, seen or found to a Housemaster (or one of the House staff), Head of Pastoral Care, Sub-Warden or Warden.

All unauthorised drugs will be confiscated and illegal substances will be handed over to the appropriate authorities.

Any parent who becomes aware of the inappropriate use of drugs or medication by pupils on the College campus, on official College trips or in any way related to the College is requested to inform the Housemaster, Head of Pastoral Care, Sub-Warden or Warden immediately. Remaining silent about drug use is not acceptable.

Where it is apparent that there is an immediate danger to the health of the pupil, medical intervention will be sought through the School Nurses. Parents will be notified as soon as possible.

Any involvement with the possession or use of illegal drugs is seen as a serious offense. Supplying illegal drugs to others is extremely serious. In both cases, the Warden reserves the right to dismiss a student involved in either of the above scenarios. This will be carried out in accordance with our expulsion and appeals procedures.

Sanctions relating to specific products



Tobacco

“Possession and use of tobacco or its derivatives are forbidden inside or outside the College in term-time, as well as any form of smoking. Repeated breaking of this rule is likely to lead to suspension.” Green Book

Pupils found smoking or in the company of smokers can expect to be given restriction. Depending on the frequency or location the College reserves the right to suspend any pupil found smoking during term time. This includes on the College campus, organised trips or while on an exeat. Persistent smoking may lead to the expulsion of the pupil involved. Vaping is considered to be the same as smoking. As is Snus and any other forms of nicotine based products.

Alcohol

“Consumption of alcohol inside or outside the College in term-time is forbidden. Pupils who bring alcohol into the College or return from exeat under its influence are liable to be suspended” Green Book

Any involvement with the possession, supply or consumption of alcohol is also strictly forbidden and may lead to suspension or expulsion as deemed appropriate. Repeat offenders will face expulsion. The College reserves the right to use a breathalyser if it deems necessary.

Illegal drugs

Possession of illegal drugs and controlled substances is strictly forbidden. Pupils who bring these into school will be required to leave the College; pupils who use such substances inside or outside the College in term-time are also likely to be required to leave.” Green Book

The College is obliged to report to the Gardai the possession of, or the providing of others with, illegal drugs. Involvement of any kind with illegal drugs is very serious and will be dealt with accordingly. This policy applies to pupils on the College campus, on trips, going to and from the College, or when representing the College in any way.

Pupils found in possession of, or providing others with, illegal drugs, may be suspended until all pertinent information is collected. The College will seek statements from persons believed to be involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the



situation. The College will take all steps required to fully investigate a situation involving illegal drugs and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this.



The College reserves the right to dismiss from the College any pupil involved with the possession, use, or supply of illegal drugs or substances.

After an incident

Following sanctions, the College will strive to support and assist students who have breached College policy.

Pastoral support will be made available to the pupil via Housemaster, Guidance Counsellor, School Nurse or Chaplain. Where appropriate the school will provide advice and information in relation to counselling and will make contact with relevant agencies if required.

A student involved with any of the above drugs may be requested to attend professional assessment and/or counselling at an appropriate treatment center. Attendance at such a center might be a requirement before their return.

In the event that it is considered appropriate a student involved in a substance abuse incident might be required to provide medical evidence to verify that the student is no longer using drugs.

Confidentiality

St. Columba's College recognises the importance in limiting, as far as practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing a substance abuse incident. We aim only to involve those properly concerned with an incident.

However, the College is required depending on the situation to contact such authorities/agencies as the Gardai, Tusla, National Educational Psychological Service etc.

The College may also need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident.

If contacted by the media following a substance abuse incident the College will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress, other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing such incidents.

Conclusion

Following sanctions, the College will endeavor to support and assist pupils who have breached the policy. While the College will do its best to offer pastoral care and support



the pupil involved in a drug-related incident, the safety and welfare of the whole College community have to be the College's first priority. This objective will be achieved if there is strict observance of the College's rules by the pupils, support for these rules by parents and fair implementation of the rules by staff and management.