



## Substance Use Policy

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| <b>Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School Policy Document</b> |
| <b>Policy Status: 2024</b>                                                    |
| <b>Approved by BOM: 08/02/2024    Due for review in 2026-2027</b>             |

### Mission Statement

Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School is a developing school which opened on 27<sup>th</sup> of August 2018. It is a multi--denominational, co--educational secondary school, democratically run, and child-centered, recognized by the Department of Education and Skills (DES). As such it operates within the regulations laid down by the DES. We are committed to keeping our school free of drugs and drug abuse; and to reporting and acting upon incidents and reasonable suspicions.

Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together Secondary School (MPETSS) is committed to an inclusive, student-centred educational experience based on collaboration, cooperation, and creation. We strive to create a community of academic excellence which is welcoming, democratic, diverse and safe. Our vision is for students to become independent lifelong learners who reach their full potential and become active members of society. In MPETSS we work to develop empathy and an understanding of difference in our ever-changing world.

## **COMMUNITY – COLLABORATION – CREATION**

At its heart, MPETSS has a vision as a creative hub of learning & teaching where teachers are facilitators and students learn through trial and error. No setback is a failure, rather an opportunity to review, regroup and try again. We aim to equip students with skills of the 21st century which can be used to adapt and flourish to give them the best opportunity for their unique success.

### **Introduction**

MPETSS is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school in relation to substance abuse. Action will be taken to safeguard their wellbeing. The formulation and implementation of a structured and comprehensive substance use policy is necessary. This policy has been formulated to protect all the students and staff in the school. The school authority is conscious that each situation is unique and thus a flexible response is required, including in instances where a student is over the age of 18. This policy applies to students, all staff, and all users of the school property/grounds. It is applicable any time the school is in operation, including during school-related activities on or off school grounds and on school trips. It has been drawn up in collaboration with teachers, parents, students, and the Board of Management, with guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills, and the National Drug Strategy 2001 – 2008.

The central objective of the substance use policy of MPETSS is the welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

### **Definition**

For the purpose of this substance use policy refers to:

- a) Alcohol, Tobacco, (or tobacco products), and all vaping products
- b) Illegal Drugs

- c) Illicit use of other substances e.g. sprays, solvents, chemicals, medicines (prescribed or otherwise) and many other substances in daily use.

A drug is any chemical which has the potential to alter how the body works, or how the person behaves and feels. The supply, use, possession, sale or distribution of tobacco (or tobacco products), alcohol, vaping products or illegal/prohibited substances on school grounds, on school trips, during any school related activity/outing, will not be tolerated. Nor will the school tolerate any intention of any student to influence or coerce another student to engage in the use of tobacco (or tobacco products), alcohol, vaping products or illegal/prohibited substances on school grounds, on school trips, during any school related activity/outing, or on the way to or from school. MPETSS reserves the right to act on any information it may receive regarding the use, possession, or distribution of illegal/prohibited substances on school grounds, on school trips, and during any school related activity/outing.

Prescribed medication may be taken in the school if approved by the Principal, and on receipt of consent from parent/guardian.

### **Scope of Policy**

This policy applies:

- a) to the whole school community during school time
- b) During school related activities
- c) to school users during school time
- d) work experience.

### **Relationship of this policy to the characteristic spirit of the school**

MPETSS seeks to enable each student to develop their potential. The school, in its mission statement, strives to “create a community of academic excellence which is welcoming, democratic, diverse and safe”. This substance use policy reflects the whole school mission statement.

## **Rationale**

The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges that affect their health and wellbeing. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco (or tobacco products), vaping products and drugs is part of this reality. Vigilance and support during school time is therefore our concern. In accordance with the Education Act 1998 the school promotes the social and personal development of students and provides health education for them. This policy has been drafted in response to the National Drugs Strategy.

## **Aims and Objectives of the Policy**

The school provides a comprehensive education for all students in substance use issues through the SPHE programme. The school will endeavour to handle any issues with regard to substance use in a firm but fair manner with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individual(s) involved and of other members of the school and any legal obligations that apply. The school seeks to facilitate a safe and healthy environment and promote positive healthy behaviours through:

- a) Increasing knowledge about health through provision of educational programmes, promoting informed, healthy and responsible choices
- b) Promoting the self-esteem of individuals
- c) Provide clear structures and procedures for managing substance abuse incidents
- d) Working with parents, teachers and outside agencies

## **Prevention Education and Prevention Strategies**

MPETSS will provide age-appropriate education programmes for all its students. This will add to and complement all existing programmes being taught in school in many subjects.

Parents/guardians are asked, and expected to

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes

- Recognize they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and education the children in their care regarding substance abuse
- Assist and cooperate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.
- Support all aspects of this policy fully and cooperate in its implementation.

To assist the parents in their role the school will

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes.
- Encourage and welcome parent/guardian consultation on the best use of available resources to support the school in its programmes and policy implementation.

#### **Procedures for managing alcohol, tobacco (or tobacco products), vaping, drug-related, and substance abuse Incidents:**

School authorities operate a zero-tolerance approach to any student or staff member who brings, or has in their possession, alcohol, drugs, solvents, vaping products, or any banned substance or drug paraphernalia with the intention of supplying it to another, or with the intention of negatively influencing another to engage with such substances in any way. Sanctions will follow. There is no finite list of banned substances, rather this list is constantly evolving. This list is available for all members of our school community to view on the school app.

In the event of a substance abuse incident, MPETSS will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student(s) involved, and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

- We are a 'telling' school. Every member of our school community is encouraged to report suspected incidents to the Principal/Deputy Principal/Progress Leader, or any other member of teaching staff.
- The suspected incident will be investigated thoroughly.

- MPETSS will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances/paraphernalia it finds, carefully recording such items and retaining them securely pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by outside agencies.
- Parent/Guardian shall be contacted and informed by the Principal/Deputy Principal of the incident. The involvement and support of parent/guardian is expected and essential.
- MPETSS retains the right to **search** any part of school property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy may be contained within. A personal physical search by staff of a student is not permitted. Students will be given the option to hand over any substance prior to a search. A refusal to cooperate may result in the student being removed from the school, a parent/guardian being contacted, and/or a Garda called to conduct a search.
- Where there is no immediate danger to the person(s), it is important to take time to assess the situation before responding.
- Where a person presents a danger to themselves or any other member of the school community they will, for reasons of health and safety, be removed from the school environment and placed in the care of the family or other appropriate personnel.
- Where there are incidents requiring medical intervention suitably qualified medical personnel will be contacted.
- Gardaí are informed about incidents that are illegal. The Principal in consultation with other key staff, will make this decision.
- All cases will be handled as sensitively as possible, and support will be offered.

## **Sanctions**

MPETSS authorities recognize that every incident is unique and reserve the right to suspend or remove temporarily any student(s) involved in a substance abuse incident, while an investigation is carried out. If the investigation concludes that a student(s) is/are in breach of the Substance Use Policy or Code of Positive Behaviour, sanctions will be put in place. The following sanctions may be implemented as outlined in the Code of Positive Behaviour:

- warning,
- compensation for any damage/costs incurred by the school,

- detention, suspension and expulsion.
- Students may be required to enter into a behaviour contract guaranteeing compliance with school requirements and attendance for counselling.

The school management will expect parents/ guardians to inform the Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Progress Leader if they suspect their child of taking these substances. The Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Designated Teacher will monitor individuals suspected of taking these substances. The Principal/ Deputy Principal may seek medical confirmation of a student's fitness to attend school where deemed necessary. The Principal, Deputy Principal or another designated school representative will handle all media enquiries. They will not comment on individual cases when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents. The school will endeavour to provide pastoral supports to student(s)/parent(s) affected by an incident of substance abuse.

#### **The Administration of Medicines, including 'Over The Counter' (OTC) medications**

The Board of Management requests that parents are to ensure that Principal/ Deputy Principal/ Progress Leaders are made aware of any medical condition suffered by any student

Details are required from the parent/ guardian giving the name of the child, name and dose of medication and if/when parents are to be notified and how they can be contacted. This medical form is on the school app.

The Board of Management has a duty to safeguard the health and safety of students when they are engaged in authorised school activities. It is not permitted for students to bring OTC medications, eg paracetamol, to school. Where a student is authorized by their parent/guardian to take OTC medications from time to time, the OTC medication must be clearly labelled, and left in the school office where it will be kept in the First Aid press until it is requested. An administration of Medication system is in place.

#### **Confidentiality**

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality to individuals in relation to substance use incidents. Information may need to be shared with certain members of staff, the Parents/ Guardians of those involved or with an

appropriate external agency. The limits of confidentiality should be explained to the individual prior to disclosure where possible.

### **Success Criteria**

That the school is free of drugs and drug abuse; that incidents and reasonable suspicions are reported and acted upon.

### **Conclusion**

School authorities operate a zero-tolerance approach to any student or staff member who brings, or has in their possession, alcohol, drugs, solvents, vaping products, or any banned substance or drug paraphernalia with the intention of supplying it to another, or with the intention of negatively influencing another to engage with such substances in any way. Sanctions will follow.

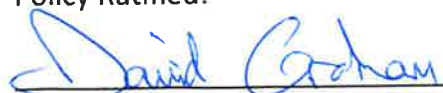
As with all MPETSS Policies, accepting an offer of a place is also an acceptance of all school policies. Parents/Guardians should ensure that these procedures are clearly understood.

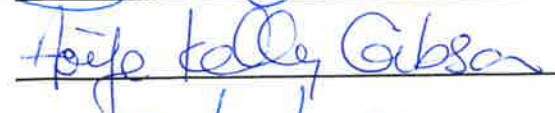
MPETSS believes that the personal and social development of each member of the school community is important. Education flourishes in an environment where value, respect, tolerance, fairness and support for all are evident. Positive relationships are encouraged. School policies are intended to ensure a high standard of behaviour, respect, courtesy, and safety within our school community.

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be implemented by the Board of Management. It will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and as the need arises.

Policy Ratified:

 Chairperson Board of Management

 Principal and Secretary Board of Management

Date: 