

**VICTORIA COLLEGE BELFAST**  
(incorporating Richmond Lodge School)

**DRUG AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY FOR PUPILS**

**1. Rationale**

Victoria College is committed to the health and safety of the whole school community and will take action to safeguard the wellbeing of everyone. As part of our statutory duty to promote pupils' wellbeing, we have a role to play in preventing drug misuse as part of our pastoral responsibilities. This policy takes cognizance of the DE Circulars 2014/25 and 2015/23 and CCEA guidance 2015.

**2. Ethos**

This policy reflects our College ethos which seeks to foster pupils who make wise decisions and who are equipped to be good citizens who contribute to the world of work and their local and global community. We promote and develop good relations with all stakeholders and seek to engage with outside agencies such as the Independent Counselling Service for Schools (ICSS) and the PSNI.

**3. Definition**

For the purpose of this policy, the terms drug and substance include any product that, when taken, has the effect of altering the way the body works or the way a person behaves, feels, sees or thinks.

Substances include:

- Volatile substances such as correcting fluids or thinners, gas lighter fuel, aerosols, glues and petrol;
- Controlled substances such as cannabis, LSD, ecstasy, amphetamine sulphate (speed), magic mushrooms, heroin and cocaine;
- New psychoactive substances (NPS), formerly known as legal highs\* which contain one or more chemical substances that produce similar effects to the illegal drugs and are sold as incense, salts or plant food and marked 'not for human consumption' to avoid prosecution;
- Other substances such as amyl or butyl nitrite (known as poppers) and unprocessed magic mushrooms;
- Alcohol, tobacco and tobacco – related products, including nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) and electronic cigarettes (see Appendix 4);
- Over the counter medicines such as paracetamol and cough medicine; and
- Prescribed drugs, such as antibiotics, painkillers, antidepressants, antipsychotics, inhalers and stimulants such as Ritalin.

\*We no longer use the term legal high because it is misleading. The public perceived that 'legal' meant safe. This is not the case, as these substances are not regulated and there is no way of knowing what chemicals they contain. The UK Government has published an NPS resource pack for informal educators and practitioners. It is available on the C2k digital library, Equella. You can find further information on NPS at [www.drugscope.org.uk](http://www.drugscope.org.uk)

#### **4. Aims and Objectives**

To encourage a lifestyle free from the use of any substances that could have a negative impact on an individual pupil's long term health and well being and that of those around them.

To achieve this the College will follow the procedures and sanctions set out in the policy (ref. 8 and 9) and Appendices.

#### **5. Drugs Education Programme**

The College wants pupils to make informed and responsible decisions about drugs by increasing their knowledge and by developing in them appropriate values, attitudes and skills. Drugs Education is delivered via two main strands – the Learning for Life and Work programme and speakers coming into College to address pupils and their parents. The content and emphases of all these programmes will be in line with the statutory requirements of the NI Curriculum and will be reviewed annually.

#### **6. Links with other agencies**

The College will establish and maintain contacts with the Belfast Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team (DACT) of the EA, with the PSNI and with other suitable agencies involved in dealing with any drugs problems. Counselling for drugs related problems is available through the College's counselling service, where outside agencies may be recommended. Relevant documents produced by CCEA are appended to this policy and can be found online.

#### **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **All staff should:**

- lead by example
- present a united message on the dangers and unacceptability of substance abuse by pupils or others
- be aware of signs and symptoms of substance abuse
- monitor evidence of abuse by pupils in their classes, and communicate all concerns promptly. (Appendix 3 has some signs and symptoms to be aware of and emergency first aid procedures)
- be aware of the specified procedures for dealing with drug-related incidents or suspected substance abuse by a pupil
- act strictly in accordance with the school's guidelines and instructions given by other agencies entitled to be involved, for their own protection and that of the pupils.

### **The Principal**

It is the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that correct procedures are followed if an incident involving the misuse of drugs occurs.

The role involves:

- ensuring the welfare of pupils
- determining the circumstances surrounding incidents
- agreement on the appropriate pastoral / disciplinary response in liaison with the Vice Principal and key pastoral staff
- contact with the parent / guardian of pupil/s involved
- handling, storage and safe disposal of any drug/drugs related paraphernalia
- liaison with the PSNI, EA and the Board of Governors.

### **The Designated Teacher for Drugs Incidents (DTDI)**

This is the Vice Principal and this role involves:

- oversight of co-ordination of planning of curricular provision in conjunction with the co-ordinator of Personal Development
- implementing procedures as outlined in this policy for dealing with an incident involving the misuse of drugs
- regularly updating staff on the policy and the procedures for dealing with a drug related incident
- liaison with the Principal on any drug related incident and with other staff responsible for pastoral care
- the induction of new staff and training of existing staff as appropriate
- liaison with outside agencies, and
- receiving any substance and associated paraphernalia found in the College.

**Pastoral Care Staff** (Senior Teachers and Heads of Year) have a duty to:

- counsel and encourage them to avoid the misuse of drugs
- make available to the Designated Teacher for Drugs Incident (DTDI) any information on the “drugs scene” inside or outside of school, which they may receive while carrying out their pastoral duties
- assist the Principal or Vice Principal in inquiries, as directed.

**The Board of Governors should:**

- examine and approve the completed policy and procedures
- ensure the policy is readily available to parents

There will be a designated Governor to work with the Principal in relation to drug related issues.

**Parents/Guardians should:**

- inform and discuss with their child the implications of drug use/misuse
- support their child if they become involved with drugs

- support the school in the development and implementation of this policy, including the school's procedures for handling incidents of suspected drug misuse.

**The Estates staff should:**

- be vigilant around the school grounds, checking for drug-related paraphernalia
- isolate and secure the area if drugs should be found
- inform the Principal who will inform the PSNI immediately
- ensure the safe storage, handling and disposal of potentially harmful substances such as solvents and cleaning fluids especially in cloakroom/toilet areas and cleaners stores.

## **8. Procedures for dealing with drug related incidents and suspected drug misuse**

Guidelines and procedures for dealing with drug-related incidents are detailed in Appendix 2 (Checklist for Handling Drug Incidents).

A suspected drug related incident is described as one of the following:

- suspect drugs or paraphernalia are found on the school premises
- a pupil is suspected of being in possession of drugs
- a pupil is found to be in possession of drugs
- a pupil is suspected of supplying drugs
- a pupil is found to be supplying drugs
- a pupil is suspected of being under the influence of drugs

Please note the above covers any instance of involvement in a suspected drug related incident on College premises, when in school uniform, when taking part in any school approved activity, including sporting fixtures, school visits and trips.

When an incident occurs the member of staff involved should:

- make the situation safe
- send for support
- administer first aid if necessary
- secure any drugs/associated paraphernalia found and pass to the Vice Principal for storage in a safe place until dealt with by PSNI.
- report the incident to the DTDI.
  - The DTDI will report to the Principal, who will first contact parents to make them aware of the situation and then contact the PSNI.
  - An Incident Report Form (Appendix 1) will be completed and a copy sent to the Drug and Alcohol Coordination Team of the EA, the PSNI and a copy retained for the School's confidential file.

## **9. Sanctions**

The Principal and relevant Senior staff will follow the procedures outlined in the Behaviour for Learning Policy balancing the need for compassion and the pupil's

welfare with the need to send a clear message about illegal actions and behaviour and the impact on the school community.

Fundamental to dealing with incidents of the suspected drug misuse is the principle of 'in loco parentis', and the College will always take the steps that would reasonably be expected of any parent to safeguard the wellbeing and safety of all the pupils in its charge.

## **10. Confidentiality**

Staff should not give a pupil any undertaking of confidentiality when dealing with a drug-related incident. They should make the boundaries of confidentiality clear to students and reassure the student that only those who need to know will be informed. If a pupil discloses information concerning controlled substances, the member of staff must notify the Principal/Designated Teacher for Drugs who will then coordinate the College's procedures for handling suspected drug-related incidents.

When an allegation is made against a pupil or a member of staff, the College will make every effort to maintain confidentiality and guard against unwanted publicity while an allegation is being investigated or considered.

## **11. Outside Agencies**

The PSNI may be involved, either in diagnosing traces of drugs or – if laws are alleged to have been broken – in the investigation of drugs incidents. Counselling and continuing access to education will be managed in conjunction with the EA and other relevant agencies.

## **12. Prescribed medicines in school**

The College will operate safe procedures in respect of pupils taking prescribed or proprietary medicines in school. These matters are set out in a separate Administration of Medicines Policy. Any pupil taking prescribed medication should present a letter to the Head of Year. Any pupil found in possession of, or taking drugs or medicines, outside the terms of these arrangements will be subject to the sanctions set out in this policy. These guidelines will be updated periodically and communicated to pupils and parents.

## **13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Board of Governors. The policy will be kept under review by senior members of staff who will keep Governors informed of any difficulties that may arise.

## **Appendices**

**Appendix 1 Drugs Incident Report Form**

**Appendix 2 Checklist for Handling Drug Incidents**

**Appendix 3 Signs and symptoms of drug use**

**Appendix 4 Electronic cigarettes on school premises**

## **Appendix 1 Drugs Incident Report Form**

### **Pupil Details**

Pupil Name:

Year:

### **Incident Details**

Date of incident:

Time of incident:

Location of incident:

Reported by:

First aid given: yes/no

Ambulance called: yes/no

Administered by:

Time of call:

Parent informed: yes/no

PSNI informed: yes/no

Name of PSNI officer:

By whom with date and time:

By whom with date and time:

Referral number:

Where substance is retained OR

Destroyed/passed to PSNI:

Witnessed by:

Time and date:

Description of the Incident:

Actions taken:

Form completed by:

Position:

Date:

Signature:

Principal's Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 2 Checklist for Handling Drug Incidents

This is a guide on the key procedures to undertake when a drug incident occurs in school (*extract from Education Authority Policy*):

1. Ensure the safety of the individual pupil involved, of other pupils, yourself and other staff. On finding a situation with suspected substance:
  - get help immediately from another adult
  - assess situation, to see if this is a life-threatening situation or not.

If an emergency:

- if necessary contact an ambulance
- put person under the influence of the drugs in the recovery position
- ensure airways are cleared
- remove any other bystanders from the immediate vicinity.

Then in all cases:

- carefully gather up any drugs / paraphernalia / evidence in the vicinity and keep safely
- ascertain which substances / drugs have been taken and how much
- secure all drugs and paraphernalia and give to the Principal / Designated Teacher immediately, who will lock them away and contact the parents.

2. Ensure all incidents are properly investigated and recorded:
  - never accuse pupils of drug dealing/possession; these are alleged illicit substances until substantiated by the PSNI
  - conduct search procedures according to school policy. (Never search personal belongings without permission. School property such as lockers, cupboards or desks may be searched)
  - ensure all drugs are safely and securely stored or destroyed, making sure that this is witnessed by another adult and recorded
  - gather details and data from all the eye-witnesses at the scene
  - all statements and phone calls should be recorded, signed and dated
  - record all information on official incident form and sign and date, or ensure accurate details are given to whoever is writing the form and co-sign
  - ensure that all procedures are followed
3. Ensure appropriate individuals and agencies are informed and contacted as needed:
  - Principal and Designated Teacher
  - Parents / Guardians of pupils directly concerned
  - PSNI (Community and Schools' Involvement Officer (CSIO) or Uniform Branch)
  - Chairperson initially and subsequently the Board of Governors
  - Education Authority Pastoral Care Advisor
  - the Education Welfare Officer



- no media statements, only the Principal should do this
- other pupils, parents and staff are only told on a need-to-know basis.

## Appendix 3

If someone is having a bad time on drugs, they may be:

- anxious;
- tense;
- panicky;
- overheated and dehydrated;
- drowsy; or
- having difficulty with breathing.

### Emergency First-Aid Procedures

According to Drugs: Guidance for Schools in Northern Ireland (CCEA, Revised Edition 2015), this is the current best advice available on what to do if someone is in difficulty because of misusing drugs.

- It is important to find out what they have taken as this could affect emergency aid, for example, it will help the ambulance crew. Loosen clothing and call for an ambulance immediately.
- If the person has taken a depressant substance, for example, solvents, alcohol, sleeping pills or painkillers, it is likely that they will be drowsy or unconscious. If the person is drowsy, it is important to try to keep them awake by talking to them or applying a cool damp cloth or towel to the back of their neck. You should not give them anything to eat or drink as this could lead to vomiting or choking.
- If they are or become unconscious, put them into the recovery position, clear their airway if blocked and keep checking on any changes to pulse and breathing rates.
- If they stop breathing, begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, starting with chest compressions. (If you have not been trained in CPR or are worried about giving mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a stranger, you can do chest compression-only (or hands-only) CPR). Stay with the person until the ambulance crew arrive and then tell them all the facts, including what the person has taken. This is very important as it could save his or her life.
- If the person has taken a stimulant, such as amphetamines (speed) or ecstasy, they may show various signs of distress. If the person is panicking, try to reassure them. It is important that they calm down and relax. Get them to breathe in and out, deeply and slowly. Help them by counting aloud slowly. If they start to hyperventilate and can't control their breathing, ask them to breathe in and out of a paper (not a plastic) bag, if there is one available.
- If the person has taken a hallucinogen, such as LSD, magic mushrooms or cannabis in combination with ecstasy, they may become very anxious, distressed and fearful. They may act in an unusual way. It is very important to reassure the person – tell them that you will look after them, that they are in no danger, that it is the effects of the substance and that these will soon wear off. You may want to take them to a quiet place, keep other people away and continue to reassure them. Just stay with them and talk calmly to them until the ambulance arrives.

## **Appendix 4**

### **Electronic cigarettes on school premises (DE Circular 2014/25)**

Electronic cigarettes are battery-powered vapour inhaler devices that generally contain nicotine, along with propylene glycol and glycerine. They were developed as an alternative to tobacco products and have become increasingly popular.

The Chief Medical Officer (CMO) for Northern Ireland has advised that schools prohibit electronic cigarettes on their premises, in line with tobacco products, because:

- nicotine is very addictive and there is a risk that using electronic cigarettes could act as a gateway into smoking for many young people;
- evidence suggests that adolescent exposure to nicotine may also have long term consequences for brain development;
- the availability and promotion of electronic cigarettes is reversing progress made by smoke-free legislation to de-normalise smoking; and
- there is insufficient evidence to determine whether the vapour produced by electronic cigarettes causes damage to users' health in the long term. The same applies to the impact of second-hand vapour the user exhales.

There is also a potential risk that users might fill the refillable cartridges used in some electronic cigarettes with substances other than nicotine. This has the potential to serve as a new and potentially dangerous way to deliver other drugs.