



Coláiste Thulach Sheasta

Substance Use Policy 2024



Tipperary
ETB

Bord Oideachais & Oiliúna Thiobraid Árann
Tipperary Education & Training Board

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Introduction

Coláiste Thulach Sheasta, Newport College is a post primary Community College under the patronage of the Tipperary Education and Training Board (TETB). We are a state, co-educational, multi-denominational school underpinned by five core values: excellence, care, equality, community and respect.

As an ETB Community College, we give equal opportunities to all students in the community we serve, and we strive to provide high quality education through respectful, positive, supportive and responsive learning environments and respect.

In all aspects of school life all members of our school community are treated equitably regardless of their race, gender, religion/belief, age, family status, civil status, membership of the Traveller community, sexual orientation, ability or socio-economic status.

We value:

Excellence: Excellence includes excellence in education, training, and support. It is underpinned by the core values of care, respect, community, and equality. Excellence encompasses outcomes, experiences, and expectations of people involved.

Care: Care is about the welfare, wellbeing, and safety of all who are involved in education and training. It is exemplified in meaningful relationships, connectedness, and empathy, alongside support and solidarity.

Equality: Equality is about treating everyone equally and recognising and celebrating the diversity of those involved in education, training, and youth work. It is exemplified in targeting resources on those who have need and prioritising a culture of inclusion.

Community: Community encompasses learners, their families, staff, and the local communities in which our services are based. It is about having shared vision, values and purpose, a sense of belonging, and a voice that is listened to. It is exemplified in productive collaboration, positive contributions, and effective communication amongst all stakeholders.

Respect: Respect is about upholding the dignity, rights, and recognition of the identity and background of all those involved in education, training, and youth work. It is exemplified in relationships between all stakeholders, and decision-making that impacts positively on the rights, feelings, and aspirations of the diversity of people.

Substance Use Policy

This policy addresses both the **education** concerning alcohol, tobacco, smoking/vaping, solvents and illicit use of drugs and the **procedures** for managing any incidents relating to these substances.

Scope of the Policy

The ethos of Newport College encourages all connected with the college to provide a safe and secure learning environment and to attend to the welfare, care and protection of our pupils.

Young people are faced with many challenges that affect their health and well-being. Exposure to tobacco, vaping, solvents, drugs and alcohol is part of this reality. Every school has a duty to inform students, parents and staff of the dangers associated with substance abuse and to implement procedures aimed at curbing such abuse.

Our policy on substance abuse applies not only to students, but also to staff, visitors and users of the school buildings and facilities and to all related school activities.

Visiting speakers are to be made aware of this policy by their invitees.

Relationship to the Mission Statement

The policy is in keeping with the school's mission statement as follows

'We strive to provide a holistic education in order to maximise the potential of each student academically, emotionally and socially, with respect for self, others and the environment as core values, embracing individuality and honesty, to enable a productive learning and teaching environment'.

Consultation on Policy

- Year head discussion group
- Discussion with staff
- Student Council focus group
- Parent's Association focus group
- Board of Management

Definition of a Substance

Drugs can be defined as all mood-altering substances which can cause changes in the way the human body functions, either mentally, physically or emotionally.

They can be both legal and illegal and can include tobacco, alcohol, solvents and medication.

Drugs Education

It is the policy of the school to inform students, parents and staff of the dangers associated with substance abuse in a number of ways:

During **student assemblies** either the Principal, Deputy-Principal or relevant Year-Head will refer to the school policy and to the problems associated with substance abuse. The students will also be informed of procedures and possible sanctions to be imposed in the event of a breach of the policy.

Teachers of **Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)** will incorporate a module on substance abuse, outlining the dangers involved. In the Senior Cycle, TY and LCA, teachers of **Wellbeing, Religion, Social Education (LCA)** and **Guidance** will collaborate to incorporate a similar module.

During the academic year **guest speakers** with expertise in the area of substance abuse may be invited to speak with students, their parents and staff in relation to substance abuse. These speakers would include members of An Garda Síochána, HSE and members of various related agencies and organisations. A teacher will be present with the group during the presentation.

Parents are the primary educators and have the most influence on the lives of their children as role models over the whole range of behaviours. They are therefore crucial in any prevention strategy. The school will always endeavour to respond to parents' specific needs for information and support regarding this issue.

Management of Drugs Incidents

This school will endeavour to handle any alcohol or illicit drug incident in a firm but fair manner, with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individual(s) involved, other members of the school and the wider community, and to fulfil any legal obligations that apply.

The possession, use and supply of drugs or presenting under the influence of drugs is viewed as unacceptable in this school.

Reporting and Recording of Incidents

All alcohol and illicit drug incidents must be reported to the principal who will inform any relevant staff members as appropriate. Students are also encouraged to inform a member of the teaching staff if an incident occurs. While on excursions, the teacher in charge will be responsible for the implementation of the policy.

Written records will be kept of incidents in breach of this policy and will be stored in a confidential file by the Principal.

Reference should be made in the student's normal file (VSWare) indicating that further information is in the possession of the Principal.

Confidentiality

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it is not possible to guarantee confidentiality to students in relation to alcohol or illicit drug incidents, including disclosure if their own drug use. Information may need to be shared in a confidential manner, for example, with certain staff members, with the parents of those involved, or with an appropriate external agency. However, discretion within these limits will be observed.

The limits of confidentiality will be explained to students prior to disclosure where this is possible. Students wishing to speak to someone in confidence may ask the school to put them in contact with an external agency that may meet their need.

Drug Testing

The Principal shall have the right to require any student to undertake a drugs test (by a doctor specified by Newport College)

The Board of Management or Principal may require a student to undertake a series of drugs tests in event of:

- a) a positive result on a test and/or
- b) a student been found in possession of drugs and/or
- c) the student has been before the courts in any matter in relation to drugs
- d) a student enrolling into the school has been expelled from another school due to a drug related issue.

In the case of a student who is a minor, parents/guardians will be present before a test takes place and will be informed of the results of the test.

Note: A positive drug test result constitutes a breach of the policy.

Informing Parents

Parents will be notified at the earliest opportunity if their minor son/daughter is involved in a drug-related incident, as parental involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents will in such cases be invited to the school to discuss what has happened and the course of action to be taken. The student will normally be informed that their parents are being notified. Parents will then be given the name and number of an appropriate external agency should they wish to seek further support for themselves.

Informing Gardaí

In incidents involving the use, possession or supply of illicit drugs it is the policy of the school to inform the gardaí. Garda advice may be sought about other incidents on a case, by case basis. This decision will rest with the principal and/or other key staff. The school asserts its right to inform gardai of any illegal drug activity affecting the welfare of the school community.

Sanctions/Disciplinary issues

A proactive approach to prevent a recurring behavioural habit forming, will be taken.

As per the discipline policy of this school a graded system of firm and consistent sanctions will apply to students involved in vaping/smoking, alcohol and/or illicit drug incidents.

Sanctions, including suspension or expulsion may be imposed depending on the seriousness of the incident.

Smoking/Vaping:

Students of the college are not allowed to smoke, vape (e-cigarettes) or have nicotine in their possession while on the school premises or on a school activity. Any student in breach of this rule may be suspended. In the case of a repeated breach the student and his parents may be brought before the Board of Management.

Alcohol:

The most widespread problems in relation to substance abuse is in the area of alcohol. The consumption or possession of alcohol by students either in the school or on college activities is strictly forbidden. Neither is it acceptable for a student to attend school under the influence of alcohol. The principal/deputy should be informed, and parents/guardians contacted as soon as possible. Students in breach of this rule may be suspended or in the event of a repeat breach may be expelled.

Support/Pastoral issues in the event of an incident

This applies to the students involved and their parents.

- On-going contact will be offered to the parents and students by the school counsellor/home school liaison co-ordinator.
- In-school support will be available to the students by relevant school personnel
- The student care team will be informed about any incident and relevant issues in order to provide a holistic approach of support to the student concerned.
- Where necessary the general parent body will be informed and updated on substance use through presentations and information talks at this time.

Community Substance Misuse team	061-317688
Ana Liffey Drugs programme (over 18s)	(01) 878 6899
Newport Garda Station	061 378102
Drug and Alcohol helpline	1800 459 459
Drugs.ie	
Email support service (helpline@hse.ie).	

The successful implementation of this policy will result in:

- a substance misuse free environment
- students who make positive health choices
- Well informed parents on the issue of substance use and the school policy and a caring committed and well-trained staff with the full support of the board of management and the ETB.