



Presentation Secondary School

Church Street, Castleisland, Co. Kerry



Substance Use Policy 2024 – 2025

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16th December 2024



Our vision is to prepare accomplished, confident and independent young adults, who follow their passions, develop a love of learning and become positive role models in society.

1. Policy Statement

Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland is committed to ensuring a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for all students. This policy addresses the use, possession, and distribution of substances that are harmful or illegal, including alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, vapes, non-validated prescription medications, and the misuse of over-the-counter medications. The policy aligns with the Government of Ireland's National Drugs Strategy, relevant legislation, and is supported by the school's Child Protection Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment, Anti-Bullying Policy, Code of Behaviour, SPHE Policy, Wellbeing Policy and other relevant school policies.

2. Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to all students of Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland while on school premises, during school-related activities, and when representing the school in any capacity. The policy covers the use, possession, distribution and influence of:

- **Alcohol**
- **Illegal drugs and controlled substances**
- **Cigarettes and other tobacco products**
- **Electronic cigarettes (vapes)**
- **Non-validated prescription medications**
- **Misuse of over-the-counter medications**
- **Any other psychoactive substances (e.g., solvents, inhalants)**

3. Legal and Strategic Framework

This policy is informed by the following legislation, strategies, and Department of Education guidelines:

- **The Education Act 1998**
- **The Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2017)**
- **The Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 and subsequent amendments**
- **The Public Health (Tobacco) Acts 2002 and 2004**
- **The Health Act 2007**
- **The Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act 2010**
- **The National Drugs Strategy 2021-2025: Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery**
- **Department of Education Circulars related to Substance Use and Student Welfare**

4. Aims of the Policy

- To prevent the use of substances that can harm students' health and development.
- To educate students about the dangers of substance use and promote healthy lifestyle choices.
- To align the school's approach with the Government of Ireland's National Drugs Strategy, which emphasises harm reduction, prevention and support.
- To provide a clear framework for responding to incidents of substance use within the school community.
- To support students who may be at risk of substance misuse.
- To ensure the responsible management of validated prescription medications within the school setting.
- To integrate this policy with other key school policies, including Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, Code of Behaviour, SPHE, and Wellbeing.

5. Prevention and Education

- **Student Wellbeing Co-ordinator:** Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland has a designated Student Well-Being Coordinator responsible for overseeing student wellness initiatives and providing support in promoting a healthy school environment.
- **Wellbeing Week:** All students participate in an Annual Wellbeing Week, which focuses on mental and physical health, resilience, and positive lifestyle choices.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Students receive 400 hours of wellbeing education across the Junior Cycle. This includes subjects like SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education), PE (Physical Education), CSPE (Civic, Social, and Political Education), and Guidance. From September 2027, all Senior Cycle students will receive a minimum of 60 hours of SPHE across 5th and 6th year and a minimum of 20 hours in Transition Year (one class per week).
- **Guest Speakers and Workshops:** The school will organise workshops and invite experts to talk to students about the risks associated with substance use and the importance of mental health.
- **Parental Involvement:** Information sessions for parents and guardians will be offered to provide guidance on recognising and addressing substance use issues.
- **Health Promotion:** The school will participate in national health promotion programs, to encourage positive lifestyle choices among students.
- **Detection Measures:** The school has vape sensors in all student bathrooms and smoke detectors in every building and classroom. These sensors are critical in ensuring the early detection of smoke-related devices and vapes, contributing to the overall safety of the school environment.

6. Prohibited Conduct

- **Possession or Use of Substances:** Students are prohibited from possessing, using or being under the influence of alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, vapes, non-validated prescription medications, over-the-counter medications misused for purposes other than intended, or any illegal or controlled substances while on school grounds or during school-related activities. This includes all school trips, outings, and any overnight stays, not just day trips.
- **Distribution:** The distribution or sale of any prohibited substances, including non-validated prescription and misused over-the-counter medications, to other students or individuals is strictly forbidden.
- **Paraphernalia:** Possession of drug-related paraphernalia, including vape devices, is not allowed on school premises.

7. Prescription Medications

7.1 Approved Prescriptions:

- Students who require validated prescription medications for medical conditions or allergies (such as buccal midazolam, EpiPen, antihistamines, etc.) must have these medications approved for use in the school following consultation and approval by their parent or guardian.
- Prior written approval from a parent or guardian is required, detailing the specific medication, dosage and clear instructions for its use, including when and where the student will take the medication.

7.2 Storage and Administration:

- **Storage:** Approved medications will be securely stored in the school office or other designated areas (Staff Study). Medications that require refrigeration will be stored in an agreed and secure refrigerator.
- **Access:** Access to these medications will be limited to authorised personnel, such as Leader of School Medication and staff members trained in administering medications.
- **Administration:** The administration of prescribed medications will be carried out in a private and secure setting, respecting the student's dignity. The school will maintain a log of all medications administered, noting the time, dosage and administering personnel.

- **Emergency Medications:** For emergency medications like Epipens, all teaching and SNA staff will be trained in their use. A care plan, including emergency procedures, will be established in collaboration with the student's parent or guardian.
- **Self-Administration:** In certain cases, where appropriate and agreed upon by the parent or guardian and the school, students may self-administer their medication under supervision. This arrangement must be documented in the student's care plan.

8. Response to Substance Use

- **Immediate Action:** If a student is found to be in possession of or using any prohibited substance, including non-validated prescription medications and misused over-the-counter medications, the school will take immediate action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students. This may include:
 - Confiscation of the substance.
 - Medical assistance if necessary.
 - Notification of parents or guardians.
 - Suspension of the student pending a full investigation.
- **Investigation:** The school will conduct a thorough investigation into any incidents of substance use. This investigation will seek to balance the welfare of the student(s) involved with the welfare of the entire school community and the need to uphold the school's reputation. The investigation may involve:
 - Interviews with the student(s) involved.
 - Collection of witness statements.
 - Consultation with external agencies (e.g., Gardaí, social services) if required.
 - Consideration of the impact on the school's reputation and community wellbeing.
- **Consequences:** Disciplinary actions may include:
 - Suspension or expulsion, depending on the severity of the incident.
 - Mandatory participation in a drug or alcohol education program.
 - Referral to counselling services for the student and their family.
- **Confidentiality:** The school will handle all incidents with confidentiality and sensitivity, ensuring that the rights of all individuals involved are respected.

9. Support for Students

- **Referral to External Agencies:** When appropriate, students may be referred to external support agencies for further assistance, including counselling services.
- **Reintegration:** Students returning to school following suspension for substance-related issues will have a reintegration plan, including regular check-ins with a designated staff member.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Senior Management:** The Principal and Deputy Principal are responsible for the implementation and monitoring of this policy.
- **Teachers and Staff:** All staff members are required to uphold the policy and report any incidents of substance use or suspected substance use to the school management.
- **Students:** Students are expected to adhere to this policy and report any concerns regarding substance use to a trusted adult in the school.
- **Parents/Guardians:** Parents and guardians play a vital role in supporting the school's substance use policy and are encouraged to communicate with the school if they have concerns about their child.

11. Monitoring and Review

- **Policy Review:** This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to any significant incidents or changes in legislation or national strategies.
- **Feedback:** Feedback from students, staff, parents and the Board of Management will be considered in the review process.

- **Incident Reporting:** All incidents related to substance use will be documented and data will be analysed to identify trends or areas for improvement in the school's approach to substance prevention.

12. Communication of Policy

- **Student Council:** The policy will be communicated to the Student Council and each Student Council representative will present the policy to their respective year group.
- **School App:** The policy will be shared with parents and guardians via the school app to ensure wide accessibility.
- **Parents Forum:** The policy will also be shared with the Parents Forum, which includes representatives from various year groups, to facilitate parental engagement and support.
- **Student Journal:** The policy will be included in the student journal and discussed with students at the beginning of each school year.
- **School Website:** The policy will be available on the school website for access by parents and the wider community.
- **Parent-Teacher Meetings:** The policy will be a topic of discussion at parent-teacher meetings and other relevant school events, where necessary.

Appendix 1: Support Resources

Support Helplines and Websites for Substance Use Issues:

- **HSE Drugs and Alcohol Helpline:** 1800 459 459
- **Childline:** 1800 666 666 | www.childline.ie
- **Samaritans Ireland:** 116 123 | www.samaritans.org/ireland
- **SpunOut.ie:** www.spunout.ie
- **Jigsaw:** 1800 544729 | www.jigsaw.ie

Appendix 2: Substance Usage Report Form

[Substance Usage Report Form](#)

Field	Details
Name of Student	
Year Group	
Date of Incident	
Reporting Teacher	
Description of Incident (Facts)	
Substance Involved	
Who Has Been Informed?	
Follow-Up Date	
Follow-Up Actions	

Instructions:

1. Complete this form for each incident related to substance use.
2. Submit the form to the Principal or Deputy Principal immediately after the incident.
3. Ensure confidentiality is maintained throughout the reporting and investigation process.

This policy will help Presentation Secondary School, Castleisland maintain a safe and healthy learning environment by preventing and addressing substance use among students.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 16/12/24

Signed: Mary O'Keefe Signed: Piera Pagan

Chairperson of the Board of Management Principal & Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 16/12/24 Date: 16/12/24