



# **ROCKWELL COLLEGE SUBSTANCE USE POLICY**

# Substance Use Policy Rockwell College

## Introduction

This policy sets out the framework within which Rockwell College will address and manage issues relating to substance use and misuse. The Policy was formulated based on the DES Guidelines for Developing a Substance Use Policy (2002) and in consultation with staff, Board of Management, parent and pupil representatives.

**Definitions:** By 'substance', we mean alcohol, tobacco, vapes and drugs – i.e. any substance which changes the way the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. Rockwell College recognises that substances, both legal and illegal, are available in the local community and that the college has an important role to play in terms of education, prevention and support in the handling of drug-related incidents.

## Scope

This policy applies to the pupils and staff – teaching and non-teaching- of Rockwell College and relates to all situations where pupils and staff are involved in authorised college activity inside or outside of normal college hours.

## Rationale

Rockwell College ("the college") aims to provide a safe and secure environment for all its pupils to develop and learn. The College is committed to the welfare, care and protection of its pupils and staff and believes that this policy contributes to the furthering of these aims and is a statement of that commitment.

## Aims

It is the objective of this policy:

- To act in conjunction with the college's Code of Behaviour in addressing areas of substance use/misuse.
- To equip the college to deal with issues relating to substance use in a planned and considered way and in accordance with its statutory responsibilities.
- To reinforce the role of the college in contributing to local and national strategies in relation to substance use education & prevention.
- To minimise the dangers caused to young people by substance misuse within colleges/ communities.
- To manage incidents of substance misuse in a clear and consistent manner.
- To support parents and pupils in understanding and addressing substance misuse.

This policy is formulated in the context of:

- The Education Act 1998
- The National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008
- DES Circular 18/02 and the Guidelines for Developing a Substance Use Policy
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 & 1984
- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- The Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002
- DES Child Protection Procedures for Primary & Post-Primary Colleges

## **1. Substance Use Education & Prevention**

Rockwell College will provide for the appropriate education of its pupils in relation to substance use/misuse. Education programmes are effectively carried out within the broader context of the Wellbeing Programme at Junior level and via a range of subjects at Senior level including (but not limited to) Religion, Biology and Home Economics. All pupils will receive the DES-prescribed mandatory number of periods of Wellbeing during the three years of the Junior Cycle. Age-appropriate methodologies will be used in this instruction.

In-class education will be supported by visiting speakers to address pupils on related issues. These speakers will attend at the invitation of the College and will be supervised by staff.

As in all matters relating to education, parents/guardians have a key role in relation to Substance Use issues. With this in mind, Rockwell College aims to:

- Provide advice and support to parents/guardians on matters relating to Substance Use where practical and possible
- Provide opportunities to parents/guardians, through the Parents' Association, for parents to educate themselves on related issues
- Encourage cooperation between college and home in supporting pupils

Rockwell College requires the support of parents/guardians in:

- Recognising the importance of Substance Use education programmes
- Educating their children in relation to Substance Use
- Assisting and cooperating fully with the College as it endeavours to deal justly and fairly with matters that may arise

## **2. Management of alcohol, tobacco, vapes and drug-related incidents**

In matters that involve the use/misuse of alcohol, tobacco, vapes or drugs, Rockwell College will make every effort to manage the welfare of the individual pupil(s) involved but with consideration for the welfare of the entire pupil body, the staff, legal considerations and the reputation of the College. Both the disciplinary response and the pastoral response will be considered at all times in the best interests of all concerned.

An 'incident' may include (but it not restricted to);

- The misuse or suspected misuse of alcohol, tobacco, vapes drugs and/or any mind-altering substances on the college grounds or on a college-related activity.
- Behaviour that is erratic, unusual or intoxicated and may be connected to the misuse of substances.
- Information being disclosed or discovered in relation to substance use/misuse
- The discovery of substances or related paraphernalia
- Possession and/or supply of substances on the premises or on a college-related activity.
- A person acting out of character.

## Procedures:

- Where it is apparent that there is an immediate threat to a pupil/pupils or any members of the college community, the college reserves the right to suspend or temporarily remove from the college any person involved in a suspected abuse/misuse incident pending a full investigation of the matter.
- The college will take all necessary steps to fully investigate the incident and will take the time deemed necessary to do this in the best interest of all concerned.
- In order to fully investigate an incident or allegation, the college reserves the right to engage in a search of college property e.g. lockers and desks. College management may require pupils to empty their pockets or bags where there is a reasonable belief of involvement or culpability. Failure to comply with a request of this nature will be treated as a serious disciplinary issue in line with the Code of Behaviour policy.
- The college may take possession of banned or prohibited substances or other paraphernalia and reserves the right to hand over any materials to outside authorities if deemed appropriate.
- Written statements from persons connected may be taken by the college to facilitate the investigation.
- At its discretion and in the best interests of the whole college community, the college may liaise with outside authorities or bodies including, but not limited to the Gardai, HSE/Tulsa, NEPS or others.
- Full communication with parents will be undertaken without undue delay insofar as this communication does not compromise a full investigation and that it is in the best interest of all concerned.
- The pupil(s), together with parents/guardians will be allowed reasonable time to respond to the matters involved.
- The findings of the college will be communicated to parents/guardians and the pupil involved, together with any penalty/sanction imposed on foot of the findings.
- In a suspected incident, the college may request a parent to have their child tested for substance use.
- Sanctions may include oral and written warnings, suspension and expulsion. The college retains discretion in considering the gravity of the issue and imposing sanctions accordingly. The college may compel pupils to attend counselling from outside agencies if this is deemed to be the most appropriate course of action. Every effort will be made to ensure that the sanction is reflective of the gravity of the situation but that the long-term educational needs of the pupil are not compromised. However, in all cases the best interests of the college community will take priority.
- In keeping with the provision of support, pupils involved in substance abuse/misuse will be provided with pastoral support. This support may be provided by different staff members including (but not limited to) the Chaplain, Guidance Counsellor, Year Head or Class Tutor. Outside agencies may be involved also at the discretion of the college.

## Roles of parties involved:

### **1. Principal**

On behalf of the Board of Management, the Principal is the person responsible for all matters related to this area. Another staff member of appropriate position may be nominated by the Principal to investigate issues in relation to substance use/misuse when appropriate.

All matters of abuse or suspected abuse must be reported to the Principal. The investigation of matters will be overseen by the Principal but may involve other staff members as deemed necessary and appropriate to the investigation.

The Principal will communicate with parents /guardians on matters related to reports, investigations, the outcome of investigations and sanctions.

The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any substances or paraphernalia connected with reports and, if required, is responsible for handing over these materials to outside agencies or authorities.

The Principal will be responsible for the secure storage of documentation and records associated with the incident, in line with best practise in relation to data protection.

If contacted by media following an allegation, the Principal will not comment on matters under investigation but may, if deemed prudent, clarify matters following completion of an investigation.

## **2. Parents/Guardians**

Rockwell College welcomes collaboration between the college and parents/guardians in all matters pertaining to the academic, social and pastoral development of the pupils. Parents/guardians are asked to recognise that they are in partnership with the college in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance misuse.

Recognising this partnership, parents/guardians are responsible for supporting the college's policies, instructions and restrictions in matters associated with substance use/abuse.

Parents are expected to assist and cooperate fully with the college as it seeks to deal justly with reports that are made in this matter.

## **3. Staff**

In the case where incidents of substance misuse are known, the facts as known must be reported to the Principal or, in her absence, the Deputy Principal.

The staff members are expected to be positive role models in relation to tobacco/vape/drug/alcohol use, notwithstanding the right of staff to privacy in matters outside their work.

In cases where information is brought to a staff member, that member has a duty to remind the reporting person that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Staff with responsibility for administering medication will adhere to medical guidelines and record all such medical interventions accordingly. Responsible practise is expected from staff in the storing of medicines, chemicals and other substances.

#### **4. Board of Management**

The Board of Management is responsible for the ratification and implementation of this policy and for its review on a regular basis.

The Board will ensure that the Principal will adhere to her responsibilities as devolved by the Board and that the policy will be applied fairly and consistently.

#### **3. 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 it is practical and possible. Where possible, whole-staff training will be incorporated into the annual programme of on-site in-service for staff.

#### **4. Ratification & Review**

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Rockwell College on \_\_\_\_\_ following a period of consultation. The Board of Management will review this policy and all related procedures on an on-going basis to ensure legal compliance, adherence to Department of Education & Skills procedures and the maintenance of best practise.



Chairperson, Board of Management

25 March 2019

Date