

# Coachford College



## Policy on Substance Abuse

### 1. General

#### Mission Statement

*We are a community*

*Together we share mutual respect in a positive environment*

*We develop individual potential in all fields*

#### 1.1 Scope

This document was prepared on behalf of, and in consultation with, the Coachford College staff, students, parents/guardians and Board of Management. It applies to the entire school community, staff, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building.

It is informed by the school's mission to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment in which each student can reach their individual potential in all fields.

#### 1.2 Context

This Policy has been developed in line with our school ethos, Mission Statement and characteristic spirit, and is informed by the National Drugs Strategy and other relevant legislation and policy. It should be read in conjunction with the school's Child Safeguarding Statement/Risk Assessment, Safety Statement, Wellbeing Policy, Appropriate Behaviour Policy, Suspensions and Expulsions Policy, School Outings Policy, No Smoking Policy, Data Protection Policy (CETB) and Dignity in the Workplace Charter. The school's Mission Statement sets out the school's vision for the encouragement of the pursuit of excellence and the creation of an environment conducive to the highest standards of achievement in a community in which mutual respect is shared in a positive environment, with wellbeing at its core.

#### 1.3 Rationale

The prevalence of tobacco, nicotine, alcohol and other drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education.

The school recognises and accepts various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug use, and in particular drug misuse.

The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy and all other relevant legislation and policy.

## **2. Content**

### **2.1 School Policy**

Coachford College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of tobacco, nicotine, alcohol and/or other banned or prohibited drugs or drug paraphernalia by any person in the school or during any school related activity.

An exception is made for the use of properly prescribed drugs. The parents and/or guardians of students taking prescribed medication, and/or adult students, as relevant, should inform the school in writing of the fact ahead of the medication being brought to school.

### **2.2 Educational Programmes**

Coachford College, within the resources available to it, will provide appropriate education programmes for all of its students.

The programme of education will be age appropriate and will seek to build on and complement the existing Wellbeing programme – SPHE, RE, PE, CSPE, Science etc.

Parents/Guardians are asked to:

- Acknowledge the importance of these programmes;
- Recognise that they are in partnership with the school in relation to informing and educating their children regarding substance abuse, and
- Assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents which may arise.

### **2.3 Procedures for Managing Incidents**

In the event of an abuse incident, the school will seek to strike a balance between the welfare of the student or students involved and the welfare of the school community as a whole and the reputation of the school.

- The school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected abuse incident pending a complete investigation of the incident.
- The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate any alleged abuse incident and will take whatever time is necessary to do this.

- The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with an abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies.
- In the event of an incident, the school will seek statements from all persons involved in, concerned with, or having knowledge of the incident and will record these statements.
- The school will maintain a written record of all stages of the investigation of an incident, including records referred to in the above steps, communications with other people or agencies involved or concerned with the matters under investigation, the investigation outcome, decisions taken and the rationale for these decisions, any penalties or disciplinary measures imposed following an investigation, and the management and outcome of any appeal that may arise following an investigation.
- Coachford College, at its own discretion, will liaise with any appropriate outside authority and seek advice or assistance, as it deems appropriate in relation to its investigation of an incident.
- If the circumstances merit, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents/guardians.
- The student will have a reasonable opportunity to reply to the matters at issue. The school will take into account any response made and any relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
- The school will inform the student and their parents/guardians of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the student has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the sanctions that it intends to impose.
- In related to a verified and investigated incident may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions up to and including expulsion from the school.
- Coachford College can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take into account mitigating circumstances that it believes ought to be considered.
- The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
- The school will ensure that supports are available to those affected by an incident of substance abuse.

### **3. The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident Investigation**

The Principal, or a person delegated by the Principal, is responsible for all matters relating to this area. The Principal may nominate the Deputy Principal or Year Head or other nominated staff to act on his/her behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (or nominee) in this regard include the following:

- The Principal is responsible for abuse incidents arising at the school.

- All reports of suspected abuse incidents must be reported to the Principal.
- The Principal ensures that the specified procedures are followed throughout the investigation.
- The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident.
- The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with the same upon appropriate advice.

The school may wish to contact the parents or guardians of a student for a variety of reasons regarding a suspected abuse incident.

In such an event the school will immediately inform parents/guardians, particularly when there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a child, and share any available information that may help parents/guardians in attending to their child's health and wellbeing. Such actions will be undertaken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage an abuse incident.

Coachford College recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved and managing an abuse incident and it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident.

The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any student when they come in contact with a suspected abuse incident.

Coachford College may be required in a given situation to contact such authorities as Tusla, An Garda Síochána, HSE, etc. as required. The school may need to engage the expert assistance of an appropriate third party to properly investigate an incident. The school may be duty bound to notify certain persons about an incident under statute, regulations or DES guidelines.

The school will not comment publicly on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policies and procedures for managing incidents.

#### **4. Training and Development**

The school will endeavour to provide training to staff, Board of Management, parents/guardians and students.

The school will offer all students programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and drug education within the contexts of the Junior and Senior Cycle programmes as part of the school's Wellbeing Programme.

#### **5. Monitoring, Reviewing and Evaluating**

The school will monitor, review and evaluate the policy and all related work and procedures on an ongoing basis to ensure legal compliance and the maintenance of best practices.

This Policy was drawn up in consultation with all school partners. It will be reviewed annually and/or as deemed necessary.

The Plan was adopted by the Board of Management of Coachford College on May 22nd 2023, having been signed by the Chairperson and the Principal.

*Niamh Lehane*

Chairperson of the Board

Date: *22/05/2023*

*J. Keenan*

Principal

Date: *22/05/2023*