

Substance Misuse Policy

Version 2.1

September 2026

Document Version Control

Version	Date	Description
1.0	Nov 2004	Original Version
1.1	Apr 2007	Appendix I added
2.0	Sep 2024	Major policy revision
3.0	Sep 2026	Major policy consultation and revision

1. Introduction

1.1. Intention and Aims

As a Catholic school within the Benedictine tradition, Glenstal Abbey School is committed to promoting the health, happiness and well-being of each of its students. In our school we live by our core values of Reverence, Respect and Responsibility. We believe in reverence for God and each person uniquely created in God's image, respect for ourselves and others, and responsibility for creating an environment where everyone is safe and cherished. We promote a healthy environment where everyone can grow and flourish. Accordingly substance misuse is incompatible with the culture and ethos of the Glenstal Abbey School.

The school seeks to educate our young people in responsible use of the gifts of creation and medicine, and to educate in an age appropriate way, about the dangers of substance misuse.

The school recognises that parents/guardians are the primary carers and educators of their children, and their support is essential in any prevention strategy. We ask that parents/guardians acknowledge the importance of these programmes and cooperate fully with the school

1.2. Drug Definition

For the purpose of this policy, a drug is any substance which changes the way the body functions mentally, physically or emotionally. It includes over the counter and prescribed medicines, alcohol, nicotine products (tobacco and non-tobacco), tobacco pouches, vapes, solvents, aerosols, cannabis (herbal, resin, etc), amphetamines (including MDMA, ecstasy, khat), cocaine (including crack-cocaine) and opioids (including morphine, fentanyl, heroin), ketamine and all illegal substances as defined in Irish Law.

Performance enhancing substances (creatine, etc) are included in the Nutrition and Supplementation policy

1.3. Dissemination of Policy

This Substance Misuse Policy will be available on the school website.

Students will be made aware of this policy as part of their drugs education within the context of SPHE/CSPE lessons

2. Use of Drugs at Glenstal Abbey School

2.1. Jurisdiction of Substance Misuse Policy

This policy applies to all students enrolled in Glenstal Abbey School at all times during the day and night, during school organised/supervised activities/events, regardless of whether or not these activities/events are on or off the school premises and grounds. It also applies when students are travelling to or from these school organised and supervised activities and events. The policy includes all temporary and exchange students.

If a student fails a drugs test as a result of consuming a drug or drugs which he alleges were consumed outside the school grounds, or during a break from school, the school still has jurisdiction to deal with the failing of a drugs test as if the drugs were consumed on the premises.

2.2. Legitimate Medicinal use of Drugs

Glenstal Abbey School does not accept the possession, use or supply of drugs in the school at any time during the school day, or on school organised trips/activities during non-school time by any member of the student community. The only exception is for legitimate medicinal use and the school should be informed in advance.

Students are absolutely forbidden to share prescribed/over-the-counter medication with others.

All prescribed drugs should be administered at the Health Centre or by a Houseparent only.

With the permission of the Head of School / Principal students may be permitted to carry medicines needed for particular situations or context e.g. an inhaler, epipen, or medicine needed during a school activity.

2.3. Supplements

Please refer to Glenstal Abbey School Sports Nutrition Policy.

3. Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Education Programmes

3.1. Our educational aims in relation to Drug Education are:

- To increase the self-esteem, confidence and wellbeing of our students
- To equip our students with personal and social skills
- To enable students to make wise, healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge and by challenging attitudes
- To increase understanding of the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse
- To enable students to identify sources of support and intervention
- To help adult members of the school community to recognise the symptoms of substance misuse
- To minimise any harm which might be caused by involvement in a drug incident by offering supportive interventions
- Develop a planned and considered response to incidents involving substance misuse with a view to the protection of the person(s) involved and the maintenance of a safe environment for the wider school community. Due care will be taken in deciding on the balance between a pastoral and disciplinary response.

3.2. These aims will be met in the following way:

- All teachers who wish to be involved with SPHE/CSPE will be actively encouraged to seek appropriate training
- Any teacher teaching any Drug Education Programme will be given the opportunity to avail of training
- Use the outside supports available from the HSE to the school to provide a wide range of supports to the whole school community including health education and promotion, smoking or vaping cessation support, and adolescent counselling services

3.3. Glenstal Abbey School is committed to providing a comprehensive, timetabled drug education programme for all students.

- At Junior Cycle this is incorporated into the SPHE wellbeing programme currently running in the school.
- At Senior Cycle level it is incorporated into the RE and SPHE wellbeing programmes and, where possible, as part of the Transition Year programme.

SPHE Whole School Approach to Substance Misuse

In line with all educational programmes at Glenstal Abbey School, which emphasise the formation and development of the whole person, SPHE is a programme that provides students with the unique opportunity to develop the skills and competence to learn about themselves and others, to make informed decisions about their health, personal lives and social development. Recognising the significance of addressing substance misuse as a crucial component of a student's health and wellbeing, Glenstal Abbey School has integrated a comprehensive substance misuse education programme within the Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, at both the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. By drawing upon the rich resources offered by the HSE and Department of Education, our SPHE classes are designed to impart essential knowledge and skills related to substance misuse prevention, promoting responsible decision-making, and building resilience among students. Through engaging and age-appropriate activities, our educators aim to empower students with the information and tools needed to make informed choices regarding substance use, fostering a safe and supportive environment for their holistic development.

Other Programmes we use at Glenstal Abbey School

- HSE's 'Making Healthy Choices' for Junior Cycle and 'Know The Score'
- 'Alcohol & Drugs' (A parent guide on how to communicate with your child about alcohol and other drugs developed by the HSE, 2018)
- 'Straight Talk' A guide on teenage drinking, (produced by the North West Alcohol Forum in conjunction with the Health Promotion Unit 2006)
- HSE Vaping and E-Cigarette Information; 2023

3.4. Guest Speakers

We believe that trained teachers are in the best position to carry out drug education within the school community, but sometimes it may be appropriate to use an outside speaker to supplement or reinforce the work done in class.

3.5. Parent/Guardians

Opportunities to participate in HSE Drug Awareness Programmes will be made available to parents.

4. Substance Misuse Incidents

4.1. Examples

The following are examples of a substance misuse or suspected substance misuse incident:

- Failing a drugs test
- Emergencies when the person may be unconscious or requires medical assistance
- Intoxication/unusual behaviour
- An odour from clothes or personal possessions leading to suspicion of drugs misuse
- Suspicion/rumour of drug use, possession or dealing
- Disclosure by another person
- Failure to disclose knowledge of a drug incident to the appropriate authorities
- Possession of a legal/illegal drug on the school premises or on a school related activity
- Selling/supplying legal/illegal drugs
- Attempting to procure drugs on school premises
- School grounds being used for drug or alcohol activity
- Possession of any drug paraphernalia which is associated with the use of any drug, substance, chemical or agent
- Drug paraphernalia found on school property
- Misuse of aerosols, including spray deodorants
- Possession of thinners, petrol, lighters, or any other solvent
- Possession of steroids, stimulants, etc.

Refusal to submit to a drugs test is regarded as a failed drugs test.

4.2. Warning signs of Adolescent Substance Misuse

Physical	Emotional	Family	School	Social Problems
Fatigue	Personality change	Starting arguments	Decreased interest	New friends who make poor decisions and are not interested in school activities
Repeated health complaints	Sudden mood changes	Negative attitude	Negative attitude	Problems with the law
Red/glazed eyes	Irritability	Breaking rules	Drop in grades	Changes to less conventional styles in dress and music
Lasting cough	Irresponsible behaviour	Withdrawing from family	Many absences	
	Low self esteem	Secretiveness	Truancy	
	Poor judgement		Lack of concentration	
	Depression		Apathy	
	General lack of interest		Giggly or high spirited	

5. Banned Substances and Disciplinary Procedures

5.1. Smoking and Vaping

Smoking and vaping are absolutely prohibited, as is the possession of cigarettes, lighters, matches and vapes on the school premises, its vicinity and during school functions and activities, including residential activities. For the avoidance of doubt, smoking includes the use of any electronic cigarette or device whose function is to vaporise and deliver to the lungs of the user a chemical mixture typically composed of nicotine, propylene glycol and other chemicals. This also includes the parts of any such device, a cartridge containing a liquid of nicotine and/or other chemicals, a heating element and a mouthpiece. Pipes and shisha pipes are also forbidden, as is the use of smokeless tobacco and all pouches containing nicotine (snus).

5.2. Alcohol

The possession, purchase, supply to another, or drinking of alcohol is absolutely

forbidden on the school premises, its vicinity, and during school functions and activities. Sixth Year students, who are aged 18 or older, may be permitted to drink alcohol during certain school functions such as the Graduation Dinner, at the discretion of the Head of School.

5.3. Illegal Drugs

In Glenstal Abbey School, the possession, purchase, supply to another, or consumption of illegal substances (drugs) during the school day or during school activities, events or trips is strictly forbidden and will also be subject to disciplinary action.

5.4. Solvents

Aerosols, solvents and indelible markers are not to be brought to school and may be confiscated.

5.5. Suspicion of Misuse

Where a student is suspected of being in possession of illegal substances, the school may conduct a search and this may include asking a student to empty his pockets, to open lockers, bags etc. so that a search can be carried out. A full record of any confiscated items will be kept and they will be retained in a secure place pending the completion of any investigation. Any drugs will be passed to An Garda Síochána. Parents/guardians will be informed.

5.6. Procedure to be followed in the event of a Substance Misuse Incident

The wellbeing of students and staff will be the primary concern in responding to all incidents.

- If drug use is suspected, a nurse should be contacted to evaluate the student's condition (over the phone if not on site / on call service) and advise if the student requires medical attention and / or is in immediate danger. (this is being checked with NB (HR)). If a nurse is not available, then continue as below.
- Where there is an immediate danger to the person concerned, staff will call an ambulance immediately. The Member of staff will inform the Head of School / Deputy Head / Deputy Principal as soon as possible.
- In any case where it is apparent that there is an immediate danger to other students or the whole school community, the Deputy Principal / Deputy Head, will arrange the removal of student from the premises and / or from any specific school activities.

- Where a student is not in immediate danger, a member of staff will inform the Principal/Head of School, Deputy Principal / Deputy Head, and arrangements will be made to begin the investigation including taking a drugs or alcohol test. Written statements may be taken from other students.
- The incident will then be followed up.
- The parents/guardians should be notified as soon as possible and may be asked to attend school and remove their son.
- Great attention should be taken for personal health and safety when dealing with a confirmed incident involving illegal substances and drug paraphernalia. In the event of an incident the Deputy Principal / Deputy Head may decide to seal off / secure an area until the arrival of the Gardaí.
- In all cases a full investigation will take place in accordance with the school's disciplinary policy and procedures.

5.7 Returning to school

Any student accepted back to school following involvement in a confirmed substance misuse incident may be asked to comply with a period of assessment, which will be monitored by the Deputy Principal / Deputy Head, during which the student may be required to:

- attend counselling to be organised and paid for by their parents
- submit to regular drug testing. The cost of testing will be billed to the student's expense account.

Prior to this testing, the student will be asked to sign a consent form and consent will be formally sought and noted from the parent/guardian.

A clear agreement will be drawn up between the Head of School and the student's parents, placing the student on probation. The student must show that he is committed to staying away from any involvement in substance misuse.

5.8 Confidentiality

The prime focus in any incident relating to a student is the wellbeing of the student. The need for great care in this area is recognised, as the student may approach a teacher or other member of staff (nurse / housemaster etc.) because they trust her/him and need help. This will be treated as a Safeguarding referral. It is important that in all suspected or confirmed drug incidents that a limited number of people are involved in managing the incident. Teachers and house

staff will be informed on a "Need to Know" basis. The student's parents, the Head of School, Deputy Principal / Deputy Head, Nurses, Houseparents,, Guidance Counsellor, Deans, and person/s directly involved in the case will be informed, and all written documentation will be held confidentially by the Deputy Head. The student will be informed about what is happening and why. Tusla may be consulted if necessary.

5.9 Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians of students, including those over 18 years, will always be informed if there is a substance misuse incident in the school and of the disciplinary consequences. Whenever possible support and /or intervention will be offered to the student(s). In the first instance, this support will be offered by the Guidance Counsellor.

5.10 Gardaí

The Head of School / Principal or deputies will contact the Gardaí or the Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) in the event of a confirmed incident involving illicit substances.

5.11 Counselling and Pastoral Care:

The school may ask that other agencies be involved once confirmation of an incident has taken place: i.e. HSE. Drug testing; Counselling; G.P. etc.

In response to all incidents pastoral support will be offered and in some cases parents may be asked to arrange a referral to a substance misuse counsellor.

6. Training

The Board of Management of Glenstal Abbey School has a strong commitment to ongoing staff training. Up to date information and resources need to be available to the whole school community.

6.1. Staff

The school will make available training to staff involved in delivering Social, Personal and Health Education Programmes. First-Aid training will be offered to all staff, and is obligatory for Housemasters.

7. Drug Testing

7.1. Drug and alcohol testing on the basis of a reasonable suspicion for all students

- If any student is suspected of using drugs (see definition above), by a mandated person or any member of staff, or may have violated the prohibited use or consumption, possession, selling, buying, manufacturing, transferring or dispensing of unauthorised drugs, the suspected behaviour will be documented by a Staff member and immediately reported to the Head of School / Deputy Head / Deputy Principal. The Senior Manager will then appoint staff to speak to the student concerned and arrange for a drugs test to be administered if appropriate.
- The student will be given an opportunity to explain the behaviour and the explanation will also be documented by the member of staff, and be raised with the school's DLP/DDLP (Head of School / Deputy Head / Deputy Principal) immediately. This is a duty of all mandated persons.
- As part of the investigation of such suspected behaviour, the school may require any student to undergo on the spot drug and/or alcohol 'narrow window' testing via a breath or saliva sample. The test(s) will be administered by two members of staff. As this needs to happen quickly, it may not be possible to have the student's parent or guardian present during this test.
- The school may also require a student to have a regular test as part of a disciplinary procedure, or re-integration, see 5.7 above.
- Refusal to take a test is treated as a failed drugs test
- The cost of testing will be billed to the student's expense account only if the test results are positive

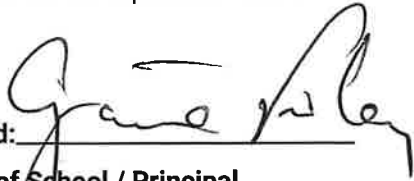
8. Review and Evaluation

The policy will be reviewed every two years or in the light of changing information, by the Board of Management.

This Policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 21 September 2026.

Signed: 
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 21/9/2026

Signed: 
Head of School / Principal

Date: 21/9/26