

# Substance Abuse Policy 2025-2028

## Castleknock Community College



### Review Dates

|                    |               |                          |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Staff              | January 2011  | Reviewed                 |
| Parents            | February 2011 | Reviewed                 |
| Student Council    | May 2011      | Reviewed                 |
| BOM                | May 2012      | Ratified                 |
| Staff              | October 2017  | Reviewed                 |
| Parents & Students | November 2017 | Reviewed                 |
| BOM                | December 2017 | Ratified with amendments |
| Parents & Students | December 2021 | Reviewed                 |
| BOM                | February 2022 | Reviewed                 |
| Parents & Student  | March 2025    | Reviewed                 |
| BOM                | March 2025    | Reviewed                 |

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Due for next review January 2028

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## Introduction

### The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025

The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, “*Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery*”, sets out a detailed programme of action to be implemented by Government departments and agencies to tackle substance abuse, based on the four separate pillars of:

1. Supply Reduction
2. Education and Prevention
3. Treatment
4. Research

The second of these pillars relates specifically to the role to be played by the educational sector. One objective in this area is to create greater societal awareness regarding the dangers and prevalence of drug misuse. Another objective is to equip young people and other vulnerable groups with the skills and supports necessary to make informed choices about their health, personal lives and social development. The new strategy identifies two key objectives that are very relevant to schools. (See Appendix)

### The Department of Education Position

As part of its role as a government agency committed to implementing The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025, “*Reducing Harm, Supporting Recovery*”, the Department of Education and Science now requires that all schools have a Substance Use policy in place.

Research has shown that schools that have a developed strategy for responding to the issue of drug misuse, in all its forms, are best equipped to respond to drug-related incidents as they arise and are most successful in terms of drug prevention and education.

Given this fact, the best approach to developing such a strategy is through a formal policy formulated within the context of the school ethos and the framework of the school plan and centered on the well being of the young person and the school community. The National Drugs Strategy (2017-2025) recognises the importance of school based interventions. (See Appendix).

### Circular 18/02

Circular 18/02 and the Guidelines (October 2002) set down the rationale, objectives and the process to be observed in regard to formulating a policy on Substance Use.




*‘The world in which we live presents young people with many challenges which affect their health and well-being. Exposure to alcohol, tobacco and drugs is part of this reality. Schools need to reflect upon how they might provide for the needs of their student cohort and respond appropriately to what are sometimes sensitive and emotive issues’* (Guidelines, P1).

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## The Objectives

The Department recommends that the main objectives of a school policy should be:

-  The welfare, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
-  To address education relating to tobacco, vaping, alcohol and drug use
-  The procedures for managing incidents relating to these substances.

## The Process

The optimum policy formulation framework is one that includes and involves all of the school partners—school management, teachers, board of management, students, and parents—to produce a comprehensive written policy that would be made known to everyone to whom it applied.

Both the circular and the guidelines suggest a 7-step approach based on the ‘whole school’ model.

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## The Seven Step Approach

The process described here is an edited version of the guidelines issued by the DES—following consultation with various health and education bodies— as a basis for good practice in policy development. The core of these guidelines is a seven-step approach involving the following:

1. Establish a steering committee representative of the whole school community to develop the policy and then agree on how this committee will operate.
2. Carefully study relevant resource documents and legislation. To this end, the department provides a list of recent resource materials relating to education on substance use and tips on other sources of information. In addition, it recommends that schools develop a good working relationship with local Gardai and Environmental Health Officers to gain a full understanding of laws relating to tobacco, alcohol & drugs.
3. Review the existing situation in the school regarding such substance use policy issues as education programmes, existing school policies in the school plan and code of behaviour that could be relevant to substance use, and the current understanding, awareness and attitudes among the school partners in relation to drugs.
4. Prepare a draft policy statement. The department outlines a framework that could be used in drawing up the draft policy statement.
5. Publicise, revise, amend and finalise the draft policy. The draft policy should be circulated as widely as possible to gain the views of all the school partners, with revision of the policy being informed by feedback from this process.
6. Ratify, circulate and implement the agreed policy. The final policy ratified by the board of management becomes the school's agreed policy and should be circulated throughout the school community to ensure that everyone is aware of it. Staff must become familiar with the policy and prepare to put it into practice, and everyone needs to understand any changes that the policy implies for the school curriculum, rules, sanctions, and code of behaviour. In addition, it is recommended that parents and students sign a statement affirming that they have read the policy.
7. Monitor, review and evaluate the policy.

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## Substance Abuse Policy

This policy applies to the entire school community, including teachers, students, parents/guardians and users of the school building.

The Policy is part of a general pastoral approach being adopted by the school to ensure a healthy, caring and supportive learning environment. The Substance Use policy is one among many that serve to promote the school's ethos.

The school asserts its right to protect and promote its particular ethos by requiring certain standards of behaviour and prohibiting certain practices.

### The Rationale

The prevalence of tobacco, alcohol, and drug misuse pose challenges and opportunities for the school community as an important social partner in providing drug awareness and education through the formal & informal curriculum.

The Board recognises and accepts the seriousness of various research findings regarding the problems associated with drug and alcohol misuse.

The school policy aims to co-operate fully with the strategic plan adopted by the government under the National Drugs Strategy 2001-2008 and made mandatory for schools in circular 18/02 & with the subsequent National Drug Strategy 2017-2025.

The Education Act (1998) provides that schools promote the social and personal education of students and provide health education for them.

### The College's position on drugs

The College does not accept or tolerate the possession, use, or supply of banned or prohibited and/or drug paraphernalia by any student in the school, on school trips and outings, or during any school-related activity.

The College acknowledges that the only exception is for the use of properly prescribed medication and requests that parents of students taking prescribed medication inform the school in writing of that fact.

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## Programme for Alcohol, Tobacco, Vaping, Volatile Substances & Drug Education

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

This programme of education will be age-appropriate and will seek to build on and complement existing programmes already being taught in the school: SPHE, RE, Science, PE, and CSPE. From 2017 this work will be reflected in the College's Well Being Strategy.

### *Parents are asked / expected 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.
- Assist and co-operate fully with the school as it seeks to deal justly and effectively with any incidents that may arise.

### *To assist the parents in their role the school will:*

- Provide them with information on what is happening in the school regarding education programmes: Wellbeing Programme, SPHE, CSPE.
- Encourage and welcome consultation with parents on the best use of available resources in the community to support the school in its programme and policy implementation.

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## Procedures for Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Vaping, Drug Related, or Substance Abuse Incidents.

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

The College in managing and investigating a substance abuse incident will take the following steps:

1. Where it is apparent that there is immediate danger to students or the school community, the school reserves the right to suspend or remove temporarily from the school any student involved in a suspected substance abuse incident pending a further and complete investigation of the incident.
2. The completion of a *Substance Abuse Incident Report Form*.

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3. The school will take all the steps required to fully investigate and assess any substance abuse incident and will take whatever time it deems necessary to do this. Furthermore, the school may liaise with appropriate outside agencies to assist with the investigation.
4. The school will take possession of any banned or prohibited substances and drug paraphernalia associated with a substance abuse incident, carefully recording all such items and retaining them pending completion of the investigation, unless otherwise instructed by appropriate outside agencies. The disposal of drug paraphernalia will be conducted in consultation with the Gardai or other relevant agencies.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. The school, 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.
8. If the circumstances merit and the investigation is continuing, the school will put the full particulars of the incident to the students concerned and their parents in the following manner:
  - a. Copies of all records deemed relevant to the position of the student concerned and to the nature of the complaints or allegations that a student is facing will be made available to the student and their parents—at the discretion of the school—in time to permit the student a reasonable opportunity to make their own reply to the matters at issue and any representations that he would wish to make or have made on their behalf.
  - b. The school will allow the student(s) concerned and their parents reasonable time to respond to the matters at issue. The school will take in to account any response so made and any other relevant extraneous considerations or mitigating circumstances that may be appropriate to the specific case.
  - c. The school shall shortly thereafter inform the student and their parents of the school's findings and their reasons for these. If the school finds that the students has been guilty of or involved or implicated in an incident, it shall indicate the penalty or sanctions that it intends to impose in the circumstances.



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9. In relation to a verified and investigated incident, the Board of Management may implement disciplinary actions or sanctions, including but not limited to an oral warning, a written warning, a suspension, other sanctions short of expulsion, and expulsion. (See Suspension & Exclusion Policy 2025-28)
10. The school can, at its sole discretion, postpone the issue of sanctions to take account of mitigating circumstances or representations that it considers should be taken into account. The school asserts the right to exercise an appropriate show of mercy.
11. The school will endeavour to provide pastoral supports to the student / students and parents affected by an incident of substance misuse. These incidents can be sometimes traumatic for those involved and the services of a tutor, counsellor, chaplain etc would demonstrate the school's commitment to caring for all students at a time of personal crisis.

## The Involvement and Roles of Various Parties in an Incident/Investigation

The Principal or their delegate is the person responsible for all matters relating to this area. They may nominate the Deputy Principal or Year Head or other nominated staff to act on their behalf in the investigation of a substance abuse incident.

The duties and responsibilities of the Principal (hereafter to be understood as meaning the Principal or their nominee) in this regard include the following:

- (a) The Principal is responsible for dealing with substance abuse incidents arising at the school
- (b) All reports of substance abuse incidents or suspected incidents must be reported to the Principal
- (c) The Principal makes all decisions regarding investigation of an incident; communication with, liaison with, and reporting to relevant parties; and disclosure of information regarding an investigation
- (d) The Principal is responsible for keeping all relevant parties properly informed regarding investigation developments
- (e) The Principal is responsible for the secure and confidential storage of any written documentation and records associated with an incident
- (f) The Principal is responsible for taking possession of any banned or prohibited substances or drug paraphernalia and deciding what should be done with same upon appropriate advice
- (g) The Principal may seek the assistance of the Deputy Principal, year head, and/or school guidance counsellor in conducting an incident investigation

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The previous section has dealt with the procedure for communicating with parents and students in the event that a substance abuse incident continues to be investigated, and the school is required to put the particulars of the matter to the student or students concerned.

However, independent of such a development, the school may wish to contact the parents of a student for a variety of reasons regarding a suspected substance abuse incident.

In such an event, the school will immediately inform parents - particularly where there is a concern regarding the health and welfare of a student - and share any available information that may help parents in attending to their child's health and well-being and will keep parents and students, where appropriate, informed about what is happening and why. It is important to clarify that such actions will be undertaken without prejudice to the school's separate and independent obligation to investigate and manage any substance abuse incident.

The school recognises the importance in limiting, as far as is practicable, the number of people involved in investigating and managing a substance abuse incident and that it is the aim of the school only to involve those properly concerned with an incident. However, it should ensure that students and their parents accept the following:

- The duty of teachers and staff to the school community preclude them from offering total confidentiality to any students when they come in contact with a substance abuse incident or suspected substance abuse incident.
- The school may be required in a given situation to contact, as appropriate, such authorities as the Gardai, Health Board, Probation Service, or Officers of the Courts.
- 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 and/or the outcome of an incident investigation under statute, regulations, or DES guidelines.

The College will handle media inquiries involving a substance abuse incident in the following way:

- The Principal, or their representative will be the point of contact in relation to all media inquiries.
- The College will not comment on any individual matter when an investigation is in progress other than to outline its policy and procedures for managing incidents.
- In the interests of the school's reputation, the Board of Management may clarify the school's position regarding an incident after the investigation has been completely concluded.

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## Training & Development

The College will provide training for Staff, Board of Management, Parents, and Students.

In relation to staff, the College will:

- deliver training in delivering education programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and drugs
- deliver specific training on the role of staff in relation to the management and investigation of a substance abuse incident.

In relation to Parents & the Board of Management the school will:

- provide opportunities to attend information sessions and workshops in relation to drugs and the Policy
- provide appropriate information, guidance, and support to the board regarding issues relating to investigation of and adjudication on incident investigations.

In relation to the students the school will

- offer all students programmes relating to alcohol, tobacco and vaping
- offer drug education within the context of the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes.

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## Monitoring, Reviewing & Evaluating

The College 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.

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## Appendix

### The National Drugs Strategy 2017-2025

#### Objective 1.1: Promote healthier lifestyles within society

Substance misuse prevention strategies targeting families, schools and communities are an effective way of promoting health and wellbeing among the general population and result in wider benefits for society in terms of savings in future health, social and crime costs. Prevention strategies include measures to prevent early use of alcohol and other drugs among young people, reduce the misuse of alcohol and other drugs, and minimise harm, where drug use has already started.

Raising awareness of the risks of substance use and increasing understanding of the harmful effects of substance misuse on the health of the user and other people in the person's life is an important part of the work of prevention. DATFs have made a significant contribution in this area through organising local and regional awareness initiatives and promoting evidence-based approaches to community action on alcohol that raise awareness of alcohol-related harm. Support for these initiatives will continue under the new strategy.

Evidence suggests that education and awareness programmes that are delivered alongside other measures, and build the Lifeskills and confidence necessary to support positive behaviours and choices, are more likely to be effective in encouraging protective and healthy behaviour than stand-alone measures. On the other hand, initiatives that use scare tactics or testimonials from ex-drug users to discourage drug use can be counterproductive and may have little impact on changing behaviour<sup>12</sup>.

Effective drug prevention involves integrated holistic policies and actions, which take account of the different risk factors for substance use, such as parental substance misuse, family circumstances, peer pressure, school or work life, lifestyle reasons and socio-economic factors. Promoting a joined up approach between different government policies and strategies that may have a bearing on the risk factors for substance misuse is important in this context.

Prevention is a collaborative effort, which involves a range of stakeholders, including parents and families, those working in education, DATFs, family support networks, youth services, student unions, sporting organisations and networks of people who use drugs. Prevention programmes should be evidence-based, adhere to quality standards and involve participants in programme design and implementation.

Using manual-based programmes, which set out the practical aspects of the intervention and ensuring programmes are implemented and regularly evaluated, all increase the likelihood of success and better outcomes. A coordinated and consistent approach to prevention and education interventions will be achieved by supporting specific capacity building initiatives aimed at the relevant sectors and interest groups involved in drug and alcohol education.

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## Objective 1.2: Prevent use of drugs and alcohol at a young age

*Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* 16, the national policy framework for children and young people, 2014-2020, provides an additional context for this strategy to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of children and young people. In particular, *Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures* commits to a whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach to supporting children and young people achieve good physical, mental, social and emotional health and wellbeing to make positive choices to be safe and protected from harm and realise their potential.

Preventing or delaying substance use aims to reduce the negative health and social consequences of drug and alcohol use in society and is therefore an important element in promoting healthier lifestyles and a healthy society generally. Using substances at a young age increases the likelihood of developing problems with alcohol and other drugs later in life. There are physical health risks associated with drug and alcohol use, and adolescents who use substances expose themselves to those risks over a longer period of time. Family circumstances, socio-economic status and a lack of educational attainment can be underlying reasons for early substance use, and drug use in adolescents frequently overlaps with other mental health problems.

Surveys from the past ten years show that the greatest increases in drug use are amongst younger people 6. Figure 4 illustrates that the proportion of young people consuming illegal drugs in the last year has risen since 2002/03. Last year use of ecstasy among 15-34 year olds rose sharply from 0.9% in 2010/11 to 4.4% in 2014/15.

## School-based Interventions & The Well Being Programme

Most universal prevention programmes take place in an educational setting. In Ireland, substance use education in primary and post-primary schools has been developed through Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). The 2015 Life Skills Survey (forthcoming) indicates that more than 90% of schools provide their students with information on alcohol and drug misuse through SPHE and other means and that 95% of post-primary schools have, or are progressing, a substance abuse policy. DATFs can play a valuable role in supplementing, complementing and supporting a planned, comprehensive and established SPHE programme.

Building the capacity of young people to take charge of their own physical and mental health and wellbeing is at the heart of a whole-school health promotion approach to substance misuse. The Action Plan for Education 17 aims to ensure resilience and personal wellbeing are integral parts of the education and training system.

Evidence suggests that comprehensive school-based programmes that combine social and personal development and provide information about substance use are more likely to be effective in preventing early substance use. This is the approach recommended in the Action Plan for Education 17 and will be a key component of a new wellbeing area of learning to be introduced at Junior Cycle level from 2017 onwards.

Schools will have flexibility in designing their Wellbeing Programme to ensure that it suits their students and their local context. They will be encouraged to work towards a shared vision and set of indicators which describe what is important. Activity,

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responsibility, connectedness, resilience, respect, and awareness are the six indicators which have been identified as central to wellbeing.

It will also be important to ensure that SPHE teachers, guidance counsellors and Home School Liaison co-ordinators are given the opportunity to avail of continuing professional development to build their capacity to deliver substance use education in line with the Action Plan.

In addition, Wellbeing Guidelines that provide a clear and rational structure to support the promotion of health and wellbeing in all schools, have been developed by the Department of Education and Skills, the Department of Health and the Health Service Executive and the Action Plan is committed to the roll out of a national programme to support the implementation of these guidelines in all primary and post-primary schools.

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## Definitions

The aim of the section is to provide definitions for specific and technical phrases that appear throughout the policy document so that these do not have to be defined within the body of the policy. This approach helps make the main document clearer to a reader and easier to formulate for the school. It also conforms to the guidelines for School Development Planning that a policy statement should be “clearly structured, concise and specific, and written in jargon-free language.

### The School/College

The “School” or “College” includes: school buildings, grounds, play areas, public areas where students congregate coming to and going from school, and any other specific area that might apply.

### Banned or Prohibited Substances

Banned or prohibitive substance includes all substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act, non-validated prescription medication, all alcohol, and tobaccos used contrary to the law of the land. It should also state that the School reserves the right to determine that a substance found at the school qualifies as a banned or prohibited substance this includes any substance that compromises the health and safety of a student(s).

### Drug Paraphernalia

Drug paraphernalia includes any banned or prohibited substance as defined above, any items that may be deemed to be used in the taking of illicit substances, and any written or printed material promoting the use of illicit substances.

### A Substance Abuse Incident

A substance abuse incident is defined as any incident relating to banned or prohibited substances that occur in the School or during school functions or outings or any such incident that may be deemed damaging to the health or welfare of the student concerned, to other students, or to the Policy or reputation of the School. The College reserves the right to determine whether a specific incident constitutes a substance abuse incident to be addressed under the terms of the Policy.

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## Parents

Parents is defined to include natural parents, foster parents, step parents, or guardians of the student concerned as applicable, or any person acting in loco parentis, either on a temporary or permanent basis, on the date of a substance abuse incident.

## Principal

In this policy, reference to the Principal should be taken to mean the Principal for the time being as appointed by the school and defined in the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 or the Deputy Principal where the Principal is either unavailable or has delegated to the Deputy Principal.

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## Relevant Resources, Documents & Legislation

- **NACDA** – (National Advisory Committee on Drugs and Alcohol)  
Website – [www.nacda.ie](http://www.nacda.ie)  
Contact – 01 6354271  
Email – [nacda@nacda.ie](mailto:nacda@nacda.ie)
  
- **HRB National Drugs Library**  
Website – [www.drugsandalcohol.ie](http://www.drugsandalcohol.ie)  
Contact – 01 2345175  
Email – [drugslibrary@hrb.ie](mailto:drugslibrary@hrb.ie)
  
- **Blanchardstown Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force** – Responsible for implementing the National Drug Strategy in the context of the needs as identified at the regional/local level.  
Website – [www.bltf.ie](http://www.bltf.ie)  
Contact – 01 8249590  
Email – [Ciara@blddf.ie](mailto:Ciara@blddf.ie)
  
- **Family Support Network** – Supporting family members living with substance misuse.  
Website – [www.fsn.ie](http://www.fsn.ie)  
Tel – 01 8980148  
Email – [info@fsn.ie](mailto:info@fsn.ie)
  
- **Fofoige** – Leading Youth Organisation  
Website – [www.fofoige.ie](http://www.fofoige.ie) (follow the link to - Drug Education Programme)  
Tel – 01 6301560  
Email – [info@fofoige.ie](mailto:info@fofoige.ie)
  
- **Jigsaw** – The National Centre for Youth Mental Health.  
Website - [Jigsaw.ie](http://Jigsaw.ie)  
Contact – 01 8905810  
Email – [dublin15@jigsaw.ie](mailto:dublin15@jigsaw.ie)

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## ■ Websites only –

- [www.drugs.ie](http://www.drugs.ie) – providing information and support for both parents and teachers.
- [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie) – youth powered national charity working to empower young people to create social and personal change.
- [www.Hse.ie/eng/health/az/D/Drug-misuse/facts-about-drug-misuse.html](http://www.Hse.ie/eng/health/az/D/Drug-misuse/facts-about-drug-misuse.html)
- [www.drugwise.org.uk](http://www.drugwise.org.uk) – Promoting evidence-based information on drugs, alcohol and tobacco, contains information on 150 drugs and drug related terms.
- [www.garda.ie/controller](http://www.garda.ie/controller).
- [www.irishhealth.com](http://www.irishhealth.com)
- [www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

## ■ Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Primary Schools – Department of Education & Science (2001)

## ■ Walk Tall Programme – a Social, Personal & Health Education programme for the prevention of Substance Misuse- Department of education and Science

## ■ Substance Misuse Prevention Information booklet outlining an multistrand approach for Boards of Management, Teachers, Parents and other Educators - Department of Education 1997

## ■ On My Own Two Feet - Educational Resource Materials for Social Personal And Health Education - Department of Education & Skills.

## ■ Junior Cycle Post Primary Curriculum and Teacher Guidelines for Social Personal & Health Education - Department of education and Science/NCCA (2001).

## ■ Directory of Alcohol, Drugs and related services in the Republic of Ireland – Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children.

## ■ Facts about Drug Abuse in Ireland, compiled by Des Corrigan – Health Promotion Unit, Department of health and Children (revised edition 2002)



# Substance Abuse Report Form



Name of student: \_\_\_\_\_

Date on Incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Reporting Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Factual Account of Events:

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Who has been informed?

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\_\_\_\_\_

What action has been taken?

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**Signed**

**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_