

Substance Use

Columba College is a health promoting institution and drug education and drugs policy are one aspect of this.

All aspects of health promotion are presented to students within the curriculum under the Social Personal and Health Education Programme.

For the purpose of school, drugs are defined as alcohol, tobacco, solvents, glues, prescribed drugs and illegal substances.

In the event of Students being found in possession of drugs/alcohol/solvents, etc.

Teachers, or support staff, are advised to inform the Principal or Deputy Principal to determine the plan of action.

Steps will then be taken to verify the exact nature of the substance.

The School will immediately inform the parents of incident.

The discovery that a pupil is using drugs/alcohol, solvents, brings in to focus the young person's life, not only within the School but outside, etc.

When parents are informed, the Principal/Deputy Principal may also wish to involve the Social Services or the Garda Authorities, if a child protection issue arises.

If the young person is found in possession of drugs, it is a fair assumption that he/she is experimenting.

The following questions will then be asked, to determine the action to be taken:

- Is this a once-off event which needs to be dealt with and monitored but requires no further action?
- Has the pupil got a problem with substance misuse?
- Is a much fuller individual assessment by an outside professional needed to ascertain this?
- Is the substance use part of a more complex problem in the young person's life which needs input from external support services?

If the answer is yes, then the Principal/Deputy Principal in consultation with the parents, will refer the student to the relevant professionals or organisation that can offer assistance. Principals/Deputy Principals may also need to impose sanctions according to that, applied under the Code of Behaviour.

Records of all incidents and action taken will be kept on the School file.

Legal Considerations

If a student is discovered in possession of a substance that appears illegal to possess or possession of which is contrary to School Rules, then the substances will be seized.

If the substance seized is one such as alcohol, solvent or tobacco, the School Rules have been breached and sanctions will be imposed.

If the drug/substance is one that is illegal, then the seized substance will be passed onto the Gardai for further examination.

In the event of a Teacher/Support Staff suspecting that a Student is under the influence of Drugs/Alcohol/Solvents

The Staff Member will immediately inform the Principal/Deputy Principal of his/her suspicion.

If it is considered that the student is in danger, then medical advice/assistance will be sought.

Parents are informed.

The incident is followed up by:

- Trying to ascertain what he/she has been taking
- Establishing if further assessment is necessary to ascertain whether or not he/she has a problem.
- In conjunction with the current School Behaviour Code, decisions will have to be made regarding the sanctions to be applied.

In order to keep incidents in relation to Drug/Substance misuse at a minimum, parents can give support to the School:

- By informing the School of any medication which a student needs to be taken in the course of a School day – i.e. type of medication, time to be taken and possible side effects of such medication.
- Ensuring that students abide by School Rules in relation to Tippex, Spray Deodorants, School Drinks and Permanent Markers.

Information nights on drugs for Parents/Guardians have been held in the School and we would very seriously encourage them to attend these.