



Errigal College Letterkenny

Substance Use Policy *December 2025*

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1. Mission Statement

Our Mission Statement:

To enable each student to achieve their educational potential, in partnership with parents, based on the principles of caring, dignity, mutual respect and equality.

We are an ETB school, state, co-educational and multi-denominational, underpinned by the core values of:

- Excellence in Education
- Care
- Equality
- Community
- Respect



2. Introduction

For the purpose of this policy “substance” refers to any substance, legal or illegal, which acts on the central nervous system to give effect to intoxication, stimulation, sedation, change of mood, perception or behaviour. The term substance in the context of this policy includes alcohol, tobacco, tobacco related products, and nicotine inhaling products, all illegal drugs and the illicit use of prescribed and over the counter medicines.

This policy is set out to create and maintain a safe and healthy school environment for all those involved in school life at Errigal College. It advocates for students a healthy lifestyle and recognises the schools duty to inform parents of all relevant matters. It is important for young people to receive adequate support and education and, in this way, avoid risk taking behaviour, which may have detrimental effects on a healthy lifestyle.

Errigal College sets out to achieve the following:

- To advocate through education and awareness a healthy lifestyle for all.
- To enable students to make informed choices and to develop their ability to reject pressures to use harmful materials.
- To provide students with accurate information about substances and the consequences of their use and misuse.
- To ensure that the school is free of such substances at all times and that the school environment inhibits their use.
- To offer education and support to all students ensuring a lifestyle free from dependence.

This policy outlines the shared expectations of the school community. Students, teachers, parents/guardians, the Board of Management and all staff each have a role in supporting, implementing and upholding the policy.

For the purpose of this policy “school” applies to all school-related activities both on and outside the school grounds. This includes all events which occur during school time whether on the school premises or situated elsewhere. It also includes all events which happen outside of school time but which have been organised by the school as school events, e.g. school tours, sport competitions and school shows.

The policy will detail:

- Education concerning substance use.
- Management of Incidents relating to Substance Use.
- Provision for training and Staff Development.

3. Education Concerning Substance Use

Education concerning the dangers of the misuse of any of the substances as defined in the policy is provided within the context of SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education). This is facilitated through existing modules within the SPHE course curriculum and other existing units within CSPE (Civic, Social and Political Education), Science, Home Economics and Religious Education/ Identity, Multi-belief and Values Education (IMBV).

Additionally, the school also has a Wellbeing Class scheduled for all Junior Cycle students each week. On occasion the school may schedule topics of relevance to Substance Use during these classes. This will support students in acquiring key skills such as Staying Well and Managing Myself as well as achieving the indicators for Wellbeing including being Responsible, Resilient, Respected and Aware.

Specific Projects within the school and outside the school curriculum are also provided to promote a healthy lifestyle and help build self-esteem. Selected groups are offered specific programmes at different times to provide detailed information for their personal benefit. These programmes will be offered at various times when it is deemed necessary or beneficial. Examples of these programmes are “Smoking Cessation Support” or personal development programmes offered by Junior Achievement Ireland or Pieta House or equivalent. The parents/ guardians will always be advised of the type of courses provided and from time to time, talks or specific programmes will be scheduled for parent/guardian awareness in the school.

These programmes involve staff members from Errigal College and other agencies including but not limited to National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), OIDE, Health Service Executive, Donegal ETB, Pieta House, Junior Achievement Ireland, Young Enterprise Northern Ireland, Gardai and the Irish Cancer Society.

Outside speakers are also enlisted to enhance the work completed in class, particularly in the context of the full SPHE Programme and such sessions are always undertaken in the presence of a teacher. The local Juvenile Liaison Officer will complete a workshop on substance use/misuse with third year students on an annual basis.

4. Management of Incidents relating to Substance Use

Incidents involving substances as defined in the policy include:

1. Possession or suspected possession of a “substance” (as defined in the policy) in “school” (as defined in the policy).
2. Use or suspected use of a “substance” (as defined in the policy) in “school” (as defined in the policy).
3. Intoxication or altered behaviour or mood arising from the use or suspected use of a substance (as defined in the policy).
4. Possession or suspected possession of equipment relating to the use, storage or production of a “substance” (as defined in the policy).
5. Supply or suspected supply of a “substance” (as defined in the policy) in “school” (as defined in the policy) whether in exchange for money, services or free.
6. Disclosure in relation to any substance in any of the circumstances referenced in 1-5 above.

Where incidents relating to “substance” misuse/abuse occur, the procedures within the Code of Positive Behaviour will be adopted. Section 4.9, titled “Substance Abuse,” in the Code of Positive Behaviour states that “Parents/guardians, students and staff of Errigal College are entitled to have a school which is free of all forms of substance abuse. Consequently, smoking, vaping, consumption of alcohol and substance abuse are prohibited. Students engaging in incidents of sale, supply or consumption of illegal substances within the school community or campus will face mandatory expulsion”. (Code of Positive Behavior, Errigal College, p.8).

These procedures consider the care and safety of the student to be paramount at all times and staff will firstly ensure that the care and safety of the student is prioritised.

Once the safety of the student has been ensured, the policy procedures are as follows:

- Incidents involving substance use or suspected substance use will be reported to the Year Head and Senior School Leadership immediately, and supported by a written report.
- Senior School Leadership will enforce disciplinary action in cases relating to substance use.
- A pastoral care response to all incidents will be provided ensuring at all times that the care of the student is prioritised.

- Where an incident involving a medical emergency occurs a member of staff with First Aid will remain with the student and management will contact medical services as well as parents/guardians.
- The Year Head, and/or Senior School Leadership and the teacher reporting the incident will investigate the case. This group will decide follow-up action and the Year Head or Senior School Leadership will inform parents/guardians.
- Where appropriate the Senior School Leadership will seek advice from external agencies to help secure the care and safety of the student and provide appropriate training for all staff members. The school has to date maintained a good rapport with Oide, NEPS, local Gardai, the Health Service Executive, Addiction Counsellors, Educational Psychologists and other local agencies.
- Where an illegal substance or paraphernalia has been found and reported the school will, in turn, report this to the Gardai.
- Donegal ETB will be responsible for queries from the Media.
- In cases relating to use/misuse of illegal drugs the staff will be informed of any action taken as a consequence. The student's name will remain confidential. Staff will be advised to be especially alert as the problem may be wider than has been detected at that moment.
- Where students are taking prescribed medication, written documentation from a GP or consultant should be submitted. In each case Senior School Leadership will decide on how and where medication is to be administered.
- Senior School Leadership will keep all records of incidents relating to suspensions in a secure location with restricted access.

5. Provision of Training to Staff

Errigal College has a nominated Health and Safety Officer, who is also a member of the Student Support Team in the school.

An up to date list of staff members with First Aid is also available from the main office.

A copy of this policy will be printed in the Staff handbook along with other school policies.

The SPHE Coordinator will facilitate a meeting with all SPHE teachers in September each year discussing existing programmes to be completed in the school in "Substance" misuse. Where necessary support for the facilitation of these programmes will be sourced by the SPHE Coordinator and supported by the SPHE Support Service.

The policy will be supported by an ongoing commitment from the Board of Management, Parents Association, the Student Council and all staff members of Errigal College and other outside agencies.

6. Legislative and Regulatory Context

This policy has been developed in the context of the relevant legislation including:

- Education Act
- Education Welfare Act
- Children First Act
- Misuse of Drugs Acts (1974, 1981 & 2015)
- Criminal Justice Acts (1999, 2006 & 2007)
- Intoxicating Liquor Act
- Guidelines for Developing a School Substance Use Policy, Department of Education
- Public Health (Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products) Act 2023

7. Links to other School Policies

This policy should not be read in isolation. Rather it should be read in conjunction with other relevant policies which seek to safeguard the students in our care. These policies include:

- The Code of Positive Behaviour
- The Child Safeguarding Statement
- Health and Safety Statement
- Critical Incident Policy
- School Trips Policy

8. Policy Monitoring, Review and Evaluation

The Substance Use Policy will be reviewed regularly by the school's Board of Management. Prior to this review the policy will be provided to staff, students and parents/guardians to ensure all stakeholders' views are captured.

Ongoing review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information, legislation, developments in the school - based programme, feedback from students, parents and teachers, and other school policies.

9. Assigned Posts

Errigal College Principal	Mr. Danny McFadden, DLP
Errigal College Deputy Principal	Ms. Deirdre Markham, DDLP
SPHE Coordinator	Ms. Marisa Roarty
Health & Safety Officer	Mr. Michael McMenamin
First Aid	Mr. Sean Molloy
Student Support Team	Ms. Donna McGowan Brennan
SEN Nominee	Ms Vicki Raine
Year Head Nominee	Ms Margaret Russell-Kelly
Guidance & Counselling	Ms. Donna McGowan Brennan, Ms. Tara McLaughlin
National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)	Mr. Martin Gallen, Psychologist

10. Useful Addresses and Contacts

A complete range of emergency numbers are available at the main office.

Signed: Donal Coyle

Donal Coyle

(Chairperson of the Board of Management)

Date: 05/07/2026

Signed: Danny McFadden

Danny McFadden

(Principal)

Date: 5/7/2026