

BLACKROCK COLLEGE

SUBSTANCE USE POLICY

**(INCLUDING ALCOHOL, DRUGS
AND TOBACCO)**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
1. INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY	1
2. POLICY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	2
3. SUBSTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME	3
4. PROVISION FOR TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT	3
5. MANAGING DRUG-RELATED INCIDENTS (INCLUDING ALCOHOL)	3-4
6. POSSESSION, CONSUMPTION AND/OR SALE OF TOBACCO.....	5
7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	5-6
8. MONITORING OF THE POLICY	6
9. APPENDIX 1	7
10. APPENDIX 2	8
11. APPENDIX 3	9
12. APPENDIX 4	10-11

BLACKROCK COLLEGE

POLICY ON DRUG USE

(Including Alcohol and Tobacco)

(1)

INTRODUCTION

The central objective of Blackrock College's Policy on Substance Use is the welfare, health, care and protection of every young person in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

"A drug is any substance which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves, thinks or feels".

Blackrock College is committed to addressing the needs of the whole school community in relation to drugs. The policy applies to Teachers, Pupils, Parents, users of the school building and all other College Staff.

Blackrock College acknowledges that it has a key role to play in substance use education, both in terms of prevention and lending support to those who use drugs.

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### **1. Ethos And Mission Statement**

Blackrock College is a Catholic school. We aim to support Parents in their responsibility for the spiritual, religious, moral, academic and physical needs of their children.

The rules and policies of the College aim at creating a community environment in which each student can develop his full human and spiritual potential. They are intended to ensure a high standard of behaviour in the community and to encourage courtesy and consideration in the conduct of all.

Blackrock College pupils' conduct should always be governed by consideration for others.

Education flourishes in an environment where good relationships are encouraged, where people feel valued and respected and where there is a genuine tolerance, fairness and support for all.

# BLACKROCK COLLEGE

## POLICY ON DRUG USE

(Including Alcohol and Tobacco)

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(2)

### 2. Policy Aims and Objectives

*The overall aims of the Policy are:*

- To **provide a safe and secure environment** within which the development of each person in the school community can take place
- To **protect each student and staff member** in the school from the potentially harmful effects of substance use
- To **provide clear guidelines on the respective roles and responsibilities** of students, staff, management and parents in relation to substance use

*The specific objectives of the Policy are:*

1. To educate our pupils to make informed, healthy, moral and responsible choices.
2. To provide accurate information on substances and related social and health issues
3. To increase understanding about the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse
4. To enable young people to identify sources of appropriate personal support
5. To promote the application of this policy through effective monitoring, disciplinary and enforcement procedures

### **Blackrock College shall meet these aims by:**

- A Post of Responsibility for co-ordinating the Substance education programme
- A Substance awareness team in the College involving all partners within our Educational Project
- Providing teachers with Substance Information and Substance Awareness Training
- An SPHE programme within the College
- Liaising with the local Health Authority, Gardai and other agencies which may contribute to the Pastoral dimension of the Substance programme
- Encouraging a cross-disciplinary approach to Substance education

# BLACKROCK COLLEGE

## POLICY ON DRUG USE

(Including Alcohol and Tobacco)

---

(3)

### 3. **Substance Education Programme**

Blackrock College is committed to providing and developing a comprehensive Substance education programme which shall be a key focus in our Social Personal and Health Education Programme (SPHE). Substance education is also part of both the Religious Education and Science programmes.

Parents will be informed on the Substance education programme through the Year Deans and Parents' Association.

The Parents' Association, with its unique Parent Committee structure within each year group, shall be encouraged to provide substance education information for its members.

### 4. **Provision for Training and Staff Development**

- The College will provide ongoing drug information and awareness training
- Deans and relevant Post of Responsibility holders who are involved in managing drug related incidents shall be given specific training in this area
- The Parents' Association will be encouraged to provide information, training, seminars, workshops on issues relating to substance abuse on an ongoing basis
- The College shall continue to provide and strive to ensure that drug related programmes are developed within SPHE, Transition Year, and through the Religious Education and Science Departments

### 5. **Managing Drug Related Incidents (including Alcohol)**

Schools have a responsibility to consider their response to Substance misuse, working in partnership with health and social services, the Gardai and other agencies. However, it is the Principal who has the overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation. The Deans and Deputy Principal will have the general responsibility for handling the daily implementation of the policy.

The College deems it a serious breach of the Disciplinary Code (*Appendix 3*) if drugs or alcohol are used, sold or held in possession whilst on the school campus or involved in a school-related activity or recognisable as a member of the school community. Failure to observe this regulation may result in the resignation of the charge of the pupil by the Board of Management.

# BLACKROCK COLLEGE

## POLICY ON DRUG USE

(Including Alcohol and Tobacco)

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(4)

### 5. (Continued)

- i. In instances involving substance misuse or supply on the premises, and following discussion between the Deans and Year Counsellor, the parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity by the Principal.
- ii. The school will consider each substance incident individually and recognises that a variety of responses will be necessary to deal with incidents. The school will consider very carefully the implications of any action it may take. It seeks to balance the interests of the pupil involved, the other school members and the local community.
- iii. Pupils telling teachers of substance problems cannot be guaranteed confidentiality under the law.
- iv. There is no legal obligation to inform the Gardai, though they may be able to give relevant support and advice. However, a school cannot knowingly allow its premises to be used for the production or supply of any controlled substance, or the preparation or smoking of cannabis or opium.
- v. Where a young pupil discloses substance misuse by others on the premises, staff will inform the Deputy Principal and where appropriate, participate in the planning of subsequent action as described above. Where a pupil discloses substance misuse by others off the premises, the staff member will use his or her discretion to decide on appropriate action, but will normally inform the Deputy Principal or Principal.
- vi. The Board of Management has, within its brief, the right to resign the charge of a student. The decision of the Board may be appealed to the school trustees, the Des Places Educational Association and/or to the Department of Education and Science.
- vii. In the event that permanent exclusion is deemed necessary, the College authorities will assist in trying to place the student elsewhere.
- viii. In the event of the appeal being upheld, the pupil may return to school without prejudice
- ix. The reporting, investigation, recording and disciplinary action in all cases will be dealt with sensitively and confidentially.

# BLACKROCK COLLEGE

## POLICY ON DRUG USE

(Including Alcohol and Tobacco)

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(5)

### 6. **Possession, Consumption and/or Sale of Tobacco**

The consumption of tobacco is seriously injurious to the health of both the consumer and also those who may be in his company. Smoking is not permitted. The sanction for the possession, consumption and/or sale of tobacco is external suspension.

### 7. **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### ***The Principal***

~ has overall responsibility for the implementation of this Policy.

#### ***The Deputy-Principal***

~ shall liaise with the Post of Responsibility Holder in the co-ordination of the Substance Use Education Programme

#### ***Post of Responsibility Holder***

- ~ will establish a Substance Use Awareness Team involving pupils, teachers and parents
- ~ will ensure that teachers and other College staff have access to relevant information and training to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities under this Policy
- ~ will liaise with Subject Department Heads in the development of a cross-curricular approach to Substance Use Education
- ~ will liaise with Local Health Authority, Gardai and other agencies who are involved in or contribute to Substance Use initiatives

#### ***College Staff (Teachers, Counsellors, Deans)***

- ~ will be vigilant for warning signs of Substance Use within the work, behaviour or appearance of pupils, within their care (*Appendix 1*)
- ~ will report any suspected or actual incidents involving Substance Use to the Principal/Deputy Principal (*Appendix 2*)
- ~ will support Substance Use education as part of the College's SPHE, C.S.P.E., R.E. Science programmes and other educational initiatives

#### ***Pupils***

- ~ will familiarise themselves with this Policy and co-operate in its implementation
- ~ are expected to report suspected and/or actual Substance Use to a member of staff

# BLACKROCK COLLEGE

## POLICY ON DRUG USE

(Including Alcohol and Tobacco)

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(6)

### *Parents' Association*

- ~ should ensure that parents are informed on issues of Substance Use
- ~ support the College in the implementation of this Policy

### *Parents*

- ~ should take all reasonable measures to support the College in the implementation of this Policy

## 8. **Monitoring of the Policy**

- Blackrock College shall establish a Post of Responsibility to co-ordinate our Substance Use Policy and to monitor, review and evaluate this and the associated programmes.

POLICY REVIEW SHOULD TAKE PLACE PERIODICALLY.

(7)

**GUIDELINES FOR DEALING WITH SUSPECTED SUBSTANCE ABUSE****Signs and Symptoms**

| <b>Warning signs in an Individual</b>                 | <b>Warning signs in Groups</b>                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Changes in attendance                                 | Regular absences on certain days                   |
| Being unwilling to take part in College Activities    | Keeping away from other pupils                     |
| Unusual outbreaks of temper                           | Rumours of drug taking                             |
| Marked mood swings                                    | Talking to strangers near College                  |
| Restlessness, irritability                            | Stealing in teams                                  |
| Reports from parents - more time spent away from home | Using drug takers' slang                           |
| Excessive tiredness                                   | Exchanging money or goods in unusual circumstances |
| Sores or rashes around the mouth                      | Associating with much older people                 |
| Loss of appetite                                      |                                                    |
| Heavy use of scents                                   |                                                    |
| Using sun glasses at inappropriate times              |                                                    |

**Objects associated with substance abuse**

Foil containers or cup shapes made from foil - possibly discoloured by heat

Spoons discoloured by heat

Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrapper

Small plastic/glass bottles

Straw

Syringe

Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse)

Cardboard or other tubes (heroin)

Stamps, stickers or other similar items

Paper about 2 inches square folded to form an envelope

Pill boxes

Spent matches

Twist of paper

Sugar lumps

Cigarette papers and lighter

**(8)**

**ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF DISCOVERING  
SUSPECTED HARMFUL SUBSTANCES**

1. The substance should be removed from the place where it is found in the presence of a witness
2. If the substance is found on a person it must only be removed in the presence of a witness
3. In either case record the time, the place, the circumstances, approximate amount or size and the appearance of the substance
4. Take the suspect substance to the Principal who should put the item in a container, seal the container and sign and date the package in your and witness's presence
5. The Principal should then call the Gardai or dispose of the item in an appropriate way
6. Students finding equipment or substances should not touch them but should inform a member of staff
7. A student telling a teacher of a substance problem **CANNOT** be guaranteed confidentiality under the law

**(9)****COLLEGE DISCIPLINARY CODE****Blackrock College General Regulations**

- Good conduct is expected at all times not only in school but also whilst representing the school or clearly identifiable as a member of the school community.
- A boy's conduct should always be courteous and governed by consideration for others.
- A pupil, or a pupil party to a group, who brings the College Community into disrepute whilst under the jurisdiction of the College, is subject to sanction. Sanctions such as detention or suspension will be imposed for serious offences – proportionate to the offence committed.
- Further, the College authorities reserve the right to resign the charge of a pupil for persistent idleness, violation of College rules or for any other reason judged by them to be in the interest of the common good.

**Blackrock College Specific Regulations**

- Possession of alcohol or illegal substances is prohibited while engaged in any school or school related activity. Failure to observe this regulation may lead to the College resigning the charge of a pupil.
- Smoking is seriously injurious to health and is forbidden within the College buildings and precincts. **Breach of this regulation will incur external suspension.**

**Blackrock College Protocol for Dealing with Serious Misconduct, Inside and Outside School Hours (Appendix 4)**

This is an important protocol which supports and clearly defines the relevant sanctions in place for serious misconduct including:

- (i) possession, consumption or sale of illegal substances
- (ii) possession, consumption or sale of alcohol
- (iii) possession, consumption or sale of tobacco

**BLACKROCK COLLEGE PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH SERIOUS MISCONDUCT, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS**

In the event of serious misconduct by a pupil, inside or outside of school, which may warrant external suspension or expulsion, the following protocol will be followed.

1. A person making a complaint regarding a pupil should do so in writing, where practicable, to the Dean of the Year, Deputy Principal or Principal.
2. Reports made by staff members and parents should be in writing. Reports from members of the public and pupils may be taken orally and transcribed.
3. The Dean/Deputy Principal/Principal should meet with the pupil to discuss the complaint and with any witness to the incident reported. This could proceed whilst the written account is pending.
4. If the Dean/Deputy Principal decide that the complaint involves serious misconduct the pupil may be internally suspended pending a meeting with the Principal. The pupil will be asked to write out his account of the incident.
5. The pupil, at the discretion of the Principal, may return to class until the complaint is further investigated. If the complaint has been made by a teacher, the pupil may not return to his/her class until the matter has been resolved. The pupil should be assigned work and sent to the study hall at this period.
6. It is the responsibility of the Principal to establish whether the pupil has a case to answer.
7. The Principal should then invite the pupil concerned to a meeting, attended by the Dean and/or the Deputy Principal at which the pupil shall be entitled to present his own view. If he considers it desirable the Principal may, with the consent of all parties, convene a meeting between the complainant and the parents/guardians of the pupil concerned.
8. Having considered the facts, the Principal shall decide whether the complaint is upheld or not. If the complaint is upheld, the Principal shall decide on the relevant sanction.

## **BLACKROCK COLLEGE PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH SERIOUS MISCONDUCT, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS**

9. The Principal may suspend a pupil from school for a period of not more than two weeks. If a longer suspension or expulsion is deemed appropriate, the Principal should make such a recommendation to the Board of Management. In the event of a suspension which accumulates in excess of 20 days in the one academic year, the Education Welfare Board will be informed.
10. Having decided on a sanction, the Principal shall communicate the intended sanction to the parents in writing and inform them of the time from which the sanction shall take effect. The Dean should orally inform the parents of the sanction. The Principal or Deputy Principal shall inform the complainant of the decision.
11. If the parents/guardians are unhappy with the sanction, a meeting should be arranged for them with the Principal and/or Deputy Principal.
12. After this meeting, if the parents are still unhappy with the sanction they are entitled to make an appeal to the College Board of Management as to why the sanction should not be imposed or, alternatively, should not be of the duration indicated.
13. While the Appeal is pending, the suspension should commence. Successful appeal will result in the suspension being expunged from the pupil's record.
14. Having listened to such representations and to the views of the Principal of the College, the Board of Management shall either uphold or quash the original decision. In this case the Chairman shall inform the Principal of the reasons for quashing the original decision and discuss an alternative sanction, if appropriate.
15. If a pupil, facing a suspension has been previously suspended twice from the College, the Board of Management reserves the right to initiate procedures that may lead to the resign of the charge of the pupil. Should the Board of Management not exercise this right an appropriate sanction should then be imposed.
16. If the Principal intends to recommend the expulsion of a pupil to the Board, s/he should first meet with the parents/guardians and inform them of his/her intention.
17. The College Board of Management may initiate procedures to resign the charge of a pupil on the recommendation of the Principal. In the event that the Board of Management initiates such action the Parents/Guardians will be invited to meet with the Board of Management in the presence of the Principal to hear the reasons for the Principal's recommendation and make representations on behalf of the pupil. The parents will be informed in writing of the concerns. A summary of the evidence will also be provided.

## **BLACKROCK COLLEGE PROTOCOL FOR DEALING WITH SERIOUS MISCONDUCT, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS**

18. After hearing such representations the Board of Management shall consider the matter and reach a decision in a timely manner. This decision will be communicated both orally and in writing to the Parents/Guardians.
19. The names of suspended or expelled pupils shall not be displayed in public areas including pupil and staff notice boards. The Principal must ensure that the teachers of the pupil are informed.

### **Serious misconduct includes:**

- (a) threatening or intimidating or harassing staff, pupils or other persons
- (b) malicious damage to the property of the school, staff, pupils or other persons
- (c) theft of property belonging to the school, staff, pupils or other persons
- (d) assault of staff, pupils or other persons
- (e) possession, consumption or sale of illegal or dangerous substances
- (f) possession, consumption or sale of alcohol
- (g) conduct which deliberately compromises the health or safety of staff, pupils or other persons
- (h) riotous assembly intended to disrupt school activity
- (i) repeated refusal, by word or deed, to co-operate with the school's code of conduct
- (j) any conduct which damages the reputation of the College

**THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE.**