



# **Thornleigh Educate Together National School**

## **Substance Abuse Policy** *February 2026*

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## Introduction

The central objective of this Substance Abuse Policy is the welfare, care and protection of every student, in line with the Education Act 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Thornleigh Educate Together National School acknowledges that the school has an important role in terms of the education of children in relation to alcohol, tobacco, solvents and drugs.

This policy reflects our school ethos and seeks to promote self-reliance, knowledge and skills to enable individuals within our school community to make healthy and safe choices. The school will endeavour to work closely with parents and guardians in the implementation of this policy to ensure the health and safety of each child.

We recognise the serious danger that drug misuse can have on the individual and on the school community. The main objectives of this policy are to inform the school community on substance misuse and the strategies in place to empower the staff, parents and children.

This policy was developed in 2013 in consultation with the staff and Board of Management of Thornleigh Educate Together National School, and the most recent review of the policy took place in the 2025/2026 school year. This policy should be read in conjunction with other school policies and procedures, including:

- Code of Behaviour
- Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- Administration of Medication Policy
- SPHE Policy

This policy is applicable to all students, staff, parents, guardians and users of the school building – during and outside of school time – and during all school related activities.

## Rationale

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

The Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum, of which substance misuse prevention education is an integral part, is a mandatory subject on the primary curriculum and must be taught to all primary pupils from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

## Definitions

A drug can be defined as a chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels.

‘Drugs’ mentioned in this policy refer to any one or all of the following:

- Over the counter (OTC) medicines
- Prescription medicines
- Tobacco/Nicotine/Vaping products
- Alcohol
- Solvents
- Illegal Drugs

## School Position on Substance Use

### ***Smoking and Vaping***

Thornleigh Educate Together National School is a no smoking or vaping area. Staff, parents, guardians and students are not permitted to smoke cigarettes or vape on school premises, during school activities or on school tours. All persons on school premises must comply with the no smoking/vaping policy.

### ***Alcohol***

Thornleigh Educate Together National School is an alcohol-free area. Staff, parents, guardians and students are not permitted to possess or consume alcohol on the premises, during school activities or on school tours. In the event of an adult function where there is a request to serve alcohol at the event, permission must be sought in advance from the Board of Management and relevant insurers.

### ***Solvents***

Thornleigh Educate Together National School prohibits the misuse of solvents by staff, parents, guardians or students on the premises, during school activities or on school tours. All solvents must be kept in a safe, secure place. Any use of solvents by students is forbidden unless under the direct supervision of a teacher and in line with the school's Health and Safety Statement.

### ***Medication***

Any administration or use of medication on school premises, during school activities or on school tours must comply with the school's policy on Administration of Medication. Parents, guardians, staff and students are not permitted to share their medication under any circumstances.

### ***Drugs***

Staff, parents, guardians and students are prohibited from possession, use or supply of illicit drugs on school premises during school activities or on school tours.

## Confidentiality

When addressing any issue involving substance abuse which comes about as a result of an incident in school or as a disclosure, it is vital that it is dealt with in a confidential manner. Staff will only be involved on a 'need to know' basis and the good name of all involved must be preserved.

## Preventative Measures

Incidents involving the alcohol, tobacco, vape and drug use might be:

- Use or suspected use of alcohol, tobacco, vape and/or drugs on the school premises or during a school-related activity
- Intoxication
- Disclosure about use
- Possession of these substances
- Training and Education

The Board of Management intend to provide a safe and secure learning environment for our students. We believe that education is power and therefore education concerning substance abuse will be taught to pupils through the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum.

## Procedures for Managing an Incident

### ***Incidents involving pupils:***

- The class teacher will speak to the student about the incident and record details of the conversation and inform the principal.
- The principal will meet with the student and discuss the incident further.
- The student's parents/guardians will be notified and asked to attend a meeting with the principal and the student.
- Due care will be important in deciding on a balance between a pastoral and a disciplinary response. In keeping with our Code of Behaviour, the above incidences would be considered serious offences and would be dealt with in an appropriate manner.
- Depending on the severity of the incident, the Gardaí and/or Tusla may have to be notified.

*Note:* Where a pupil makes a disclosure about potential substance abuse at home or outside of school, this should be investigated as a potential child protection concern, following established procedures.

### ***Incidents involving staff members and others on the premises in their professional capacity:***

- Every school employee shall, while at work, ensure that he or she is not under the influence of an intoxicant as required by Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.
- Should the principal have reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for work, the principal shall ask that person to remove him/herself from the workplace. Indicators of being unfit for work may include a change in a person's speech, balance, coordination or behaviour.
- Following the staff member's absence, their reason for absence will be addressed using Medmark and chapter one of Department of Education and Youth circular 54/2019 (*Leave Schemes for Registered Teacher Employed in Recognised Primary and Post-Primary Schools*), using Department of Education and Youth circular 49/2018 (*Revised Procedures for Suspension and Dismissal of Teachers and Principals*), or both.
- The principal will speak with the staff member about the incident and record details of the conversation, referring to the Teaching Council Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers in the case of the staff member being a teacher.
- Depending on the severity of the incident, the Gardaí may have to be notified and/or disciplinary proceedings may be initiated.
- Where a member of staff requires support, they will be referred to the Employee Assistance Service.
- Where the incident involves a person on the premises in their professional capacity who is not employed directly by the school or the Department of Education, their employer shall be notified of the incident.

### ***Incidents involving parents/guardians:***

- The parent/guardian may be asked to leave the premises if he/she presents school under the influence of a substance.
- Pupils will not be released to parents/guardians who are under the influence, and advice will be sought from Tusla and/or Gardaí.
- The principal will speak with the parent/guardian about the incident and record details of the conversation. Such matters may be dealt with as Child Protection concerns.

Communication of Policy

A copy of this policy is available on the school website and is accessible to staff through the school's shared drive.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed in the 2029/2030 school year, or sooner if deemed necessary.

Ratification and Implementation

The review of this policy was ratified by the Board of Management in February 2026 and will be implemented with immediate effect.

Signed: _____	Date: _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)	
Signed: _____	Date: _____
(Principal)	