



# Thomond Primary School

## Substance Use Policy

# Introduction

## The School Position

Thomond Primary School is committed to supporting the entire school community in matters related to the use of drugs, alcohol, vaping products, and tobacco. This policy has been developed and agreed upon by the Principal, teachers, parents/guardians, Board of Management, and students. Successful implementation requires the cooperation of all stakeholders, especially the active involvement of parents/guardians, to help safeguard the health and well-being of students.

For the purpose of this policy, the term "drug" refers to any substance that alters the functioning of the body—mentally, physically, or emotionally. The school acknowledges that substances such as tobacco, vaping products, alcohol, and both legal and illegal drugs are present in the wider community. As a member of that community, the school plays a critical role in education, prevention, support, and in appropriately managing any incidents involving these substances.

## The School Ethos

### Mission Statement of Thomond Primary School (TPS)

*‘Rooted in our Christian tradition, Thomond Primary School seeks to work in partnership with parents and the wider community to provide a holistic, high-quality education in a safe, caring, and nurturing environment. In this setting, every individual is respected, valued, and cherished, so that each child has the opportunity to realise their full potential’.*

As stated in the mission statement above, TPS is committed to enabling students to fulfil their academic, intellectual, moral, spiritual, social, cultural, and physical potential. The school is equally committed to nurturing a sense of personal responsibility. This ethos underpins and informs the School’s Substance Use Policy.

## Rationale

Under the *Education Act (1998)*, schools are responsible for promoting students’ social and personal development, which includes delivering appropriate health education.

The *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)* curriculum, which incorporates substance misuse prevention, is a compulsory subject in primary schools. According to *Department of Education and Skills Circular 022/2010*, SPHE must be taught to all pupils from Junior Infants through to Sixth Class.

The *National Drugs Strategy (Interim) 2009–2016* requires all schools to have a formal substance use policy in place as part of national efforts to address drug and alcohol misuse.

Action 21 of the same strategy tasks the *Department of Education and Skills* with overseeing the implementation of substance use policies through the Whole-School Evaluation process, as conducted by the Inspectorate. It also emphasizes the importance of sharing effective practices across schools.

Findings from the *2003 European School Survey Project on Alcohol and Other Drugs (ESPAD)* highlight the extent of substance use among Irish 16-year-olds. The survey found that alcohol misuse was particularly prevalent, with Irish girls reporting higher levels of regular alcohol use than boys. The report also noted an increase in lifetime use of illicit drugs from 32% in 1999 to 40% in 2003.

The Health Behaviour in School-aged Children ([HBSC](#), 2022) study revealed shifts in youth substance use. While traditional smoking among youth decreased from 12% in 2018 to 9% in 2022, the use of electronic cigarettes rose, with 18% having tried them and 13% using them in the last 30 days. Additionally, 69% of children reported never having drunk alcohol, an improvement from previous years, but 18% reported having been 'really drunk' in the last 30 days.

### **Thomond Primary School's Substance Use Policy focuses on four key areas:**

1. Education programmes on alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and drugs
2. Management of substance-related incidents should they arise
3. Staff Training and Professional Development
4. Ongoing Monitoring, Review, and Evaluation

### **1. Education Programmes on Alcohol, Tobacco, Vaping, and Drugs**

Thomond Primary School is committed to delivering a comprehensive education programme on alcohol, tobacco, vaping, and drugs for all students.

#### **Our educational objectives are to:**

- Enhance students' self-esteem and confidence.
- Equip students with essential personal and social skills.
- Empower students to make informed, healthy, and responsible choices.
- Provide accurate, age-appropriate information about tobacco, vaping, alcohol, and drugs.

#### **These objectives will be achieved through:**

1. Appointing an SPHE Co-ordinator to oversee the delivery of age-appropriate programmes such as *Walk Tall* and *Stay Safe*.
2. Offering relevant SPHE and substance awareness training to teaching staff.
3. Inviting external speakers and agencies—such as An Garda Síochána, Sláinte, and EduCare—to complement classroom instruction where appropriate.
4. Consulting with parents/guardians on substance use education and keeping them informed about school initiatives. Drug awareness sessions for parents are organised periodically.
5. Integrating drug education across multiple platforms, including:
  - The SPHE Programme
  - The Science Curriculum
  - Contributions from external speakers, where appropriate

### **2. Managing Alcohol, Tobacco, Vaping, and Drug-related incidents**

We acknowledge that in all situations involving tobacco, vaping, alcohol, or drugs, it is essential to balance the needs of the student, the wider school community, the perspectives of parents/guardians, the reputation of the school, and any relevant legal obligations.

#### **School Rules Regarding Substance Use**

- The consumption of alcohol on school premises or during any school-related activity off-campus is strictly prohibited.
- Smoking or use of tobacco products anywhere on school grounds is prohibited, in accordance with statutory law.
- The use of vaping products on school premises is also prohibited, in line with statutory law.
- The misuse of solvents is not permitted.

- The use or possession of illegal drugs on school property or during any school-related activity off-campus is strictly forbidden.

**Assessing and Responding to Incidents of Tobacco, Vaping, Alcohol or Drug Use:**

School personnel will:

- Act promptly, discreetly, and calmly
- Ensure appropriate medical attention is sought if required
- Take time to listen and investigate before responding
- Distinguish fact from rumour
- Immediately confiscate any related items or paraphernalia
- Complete an incident report
- Contact the student's parents/guardians
- Where illegal substances are involved, seek advice and/or action from the Gardaí
- Refer the student and/or family to a support agency where appropriate
- Inform the Board of Management, who may choose to seek legal advice or take further action

**School Employees and Substance Misuse**

In accordance with Section 13 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005, all school employees must ensure that they are not under the influence of any intoxicant while at work.

If the Principal or Deputy Principal has reasonable grounds to believe that a staff member is unfit for duty due to being under the influence of an intoxicant, they will request that the individual remove themselves from the workplace. Disciplinary procedures may follow.

Similarly, if the Principal or Deputy Principal has reason to believe that an employee of a contractor is under the influence of an intoxicant and unfit for work, they will request that the contractor remove the individual from the school premises. If any other school employee believes that a contractor's employee is unfit for work for the same reason, they should report their concerns to the Principal or Deputy Principal. If, following an investigation, the concerns are substantiated, the Principal will take appropriate action, including requesting that the individual or the contractor remove the person from the premises.

If a staff member has reasonable grounds to believe that a parent or other adult on school grounds—whether collecting a child or visiting for another reason—is unfit to be on the premises or to take care of a pupil due to suspected intoxication, they must report their concerns to the Principal or Deputy Principal. The primary duty of care is to the child, and any necessary actions to safeguard and protect the pupil will be taken.

If any person asked to leave the school premises refuses to do so, the Principal or Deputy Principal may contact the Gardaí for assistance.

The Board of Management recognises its responsibility to promote the welfare of all staff members. If substance misuse appears to be affecting an employee's performance or attendance, the Board may request that the individual seek counselling or other appropriate professional support.

All incidents involving individuals on school premises under the influence of intoxicants must be documented and reported to the Board of Management as soon as reasonably possible. The Board will review each case and determine the most appropriate course of action based on the circumstances.

Only a limited number of individuals will be involved in managing any suspected or confirmed incident, and information will be shared strictly on a need-to-know basis. All written records will be securely held by the Principal or Deputy Principal. Parents/guardians will be informed sensitively and offered support.

Confidentiality is a complex matter. The limits of confidentiality should be clearly explained to students before any disclosure is made. The wellbeing of both students and staff remains a primary concern.

All media enquiries will be handled by the Principal or Deputy Principal. They will not comment on individual cases but will refer to the school's established policies and procedures for managing such incidents.

### **Disciplinary Procedures**

Incidents involving breaches of school rules related to drugs, tobacco, vaping, or alcohol are often complex. Consequences will be applied in accordance with the nature and seriousness of the offence. These responses will be fair, humane, and aligned with the school's code of behaviour.

## **3. Training and Staff Development**

All school personnel will be offered relevant in-service training as it becomes available. Every staff member will have access to a copy of this policy document.

## **4. Monitoring, Review, and Evaluation of the Policy**

The SPHE Co-ordinator will monitor the policy every two years to ensure it remains practical and beneficial for the school. The findings will be documented and shared with the Principal.

### **Evaluation**

The policy will be evaluated and reviewed as necessary with input from teachers, parents/guardians, students, and the Board of Management.

### **Dissemination**

This policy will be made available to all members of the school community upon request and will also be published on the school website.

## **Ratification and Communication**

This plan was formally approved by the Board of Management of Thomond Primary School on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Signed: 

Date: 17/06/2025

Michael Condon  
Chairperson of the Board of Management