



Substance Misuse Policy

Approved by:	Pupil Outcomes and Wellbeing Committee	Date: 25/2/26
---------------------	--	----------------------

Last reviewed by:	Mrs K Turner, Assistant Headteacher
on:	February 2026

Next review due by:	February 2027
----------------------------	---------------

This Policy should be read in conjunction with 'Discipline & Student Behaviour Policy'; 'Managing Medication in School Policy' and 'Exclusion Policy'

Definition of Drugs

The definition of a drug given by the United Nations office on Drugs and Crime is: “A substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave”. Here, “drugs” and “drug education” is used to refer to:

- all illegal drugs (those controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971)
- all legal drugs, including alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances (those giving off a gas or vapour which can be inhaled), ketamine, khat, alkyl nitrites (known as poppers) and new psychoactive drugs (‘legal highs’)
- all over-the-counter and prescription medicines

The school’s stance towards drugs

The possession, use or supply of illegal and other unauthorised drugs is not acceptable. The school is committed to safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community. In providing drugs education and responding to incidents involving drugs, our first concern is the pastoral care and health and safety of students.

This policy is concerned with the use of illegal drugs and the misuse of legal drugs and applies during the normal school day and also extends to cover travel to and from school, whilst wearing school uniform, any school trip (residential or day) and any situation where the school’s reputation or the welfare of any pupils is compromised.

Drug Education

Aims:

The overall aims of drug education in the school are to:

- Provide pupils with the necessary knowledge and understanding;
- Develop the pupils’ skills, attitudes and values;
- Enable the pupils to make lifelong, informed and responsible choices for a healthier and safer lifestyle.

Objectives:

- To consider attitudes and values about drug use
- To raise a young person’s self-esteem
- To create a climate where a young person feels comfortable to discuss drug issues
- To enhance young people’s decision making skills
- To help young people distinguish between different drug substances and consider their use, misuse, medical benefits and ways to minimise harm
- To provide staff with regular in service training
- To increase the wider community’s awareness of drug use, signs and symptoms to be aware of and possible strategies for dealing with drugs.
- To work with specialist services in West Sussex to support our young people.

Practice:

In order to achieve these objectives the following programme is in place.

Organisation of drug education. In Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 pupils receive discrete lessons in CDC when drugs education is delivered as part of the health strand.

Year 7

Healthy lifestyles, including the risks of smoking and drinking.

Year 8

Addictive substances including; caffeine, drugs, tobacco, vaping and drinking.

Year 9

The “decision making” module covers issues relating to drugs and sexual activities.

Year 10

A module “Risky Business” looks at drugs as risk taking behaviour including legal highs. It includes alcohol, the dangers of binge drinking and smoking.

Outside speakers, including the Police Liaison Officer, hold assemblies for different year groups.

Teaching and learning methods

A wide variety of participative methods are employed in drug education. These include question and answer sessions, watching videos, role play, paired work, group work, mind mapping, posters, decision making exercises, debates, games and presentations to the class.

Staff Development

Appropriate training courses will be attended by relevant staff to enable participants to be updated on local and national events.

Responding to Drug Related Incidents

Downlands Community School is committed to protecting the health, safety and well-being of all members of the school community. We will not tolerate any misuse of drugs (including tobacco, to include e-cigarettes (vaping) and alcohol) by members of the school, nor the illegal possession or supply/distribution of these substances. Any instances of unauthorised possession, misuse or supply of illegal drugs, alcohol, tobacco, smoking materials or other substances on school premises will result in a search, confiscation of the substance and will be regarded with the utmost seriousness. Any members of the school community involved in a drug-related incident would be dealt with by the school using appropriate sanctions. The normal response to the supply of illegal drugs is permanent exclusion.

Pupils using drugs for medical purposes should follow the policy on supporting pupils with medical needs.

Designated Staff

All incidents should be reported to the Assistant Headteacher with designated responsibility (Mrs K Turner) in the first instance. In their absence incidents should be reported to another member of the Senior Leadership Team. Pupils with any concerns relating to drugs should speak to their Pastoral Support Officer. It is the responsibility of all staff employed at Downlands Community School to inform the Senior Leadership Team of any drug related incident in school or in the near vicinity of school. They will initiate or coordinate action, including consultation with the head teacher, governors and outside agencies where relevant.

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Abuse

Some signs of drug use are also signs of other problems and sometimes of quite innocent behaviour. It is, therefore, important that we do not jump to conclusions or apply labels if they are not appropriate.

Identifying and dealing with Drugs Incidents

The immediate concern in any suspected drug incident is the safety and welfare of the pupils and staff. An initial assessment is needed to determine whether the incident constitutes a medical emergency or not.

Assessing individual cases – factors that may influence the school's response

There are many factors to consider which may be of equal or greater importance when making a decision on the course of action to be taken. The list below shows the extremes of ten areas of possible concern. Each factor should be considered carefully, in order to build up a whole picture. Other factors may also come into account, such as the pupil's general behaviour or school record. When all of the circumstances and factors have been thoroughly explored, then the possible responses can be considered and discussed.

- Rumour/suspicion
- Definite evidence

- Not intoxicated
- Intoxicated

- Pleasure seeking
- In personal turmoil

- In no immediate danger
- Medical emergency

- Careful low-risk use
- Reckless as to safety

- Ignorant of rules
- Understood rules

- Uncontrolled drug
- Class A illegal drug

- Possession quantity
- Persistent supply

- Admission
- Denial

- First offence
- Persistent offender

Contacting parents/police

In instances of drug possession, misuse or supply on the school premises the parents/carers will be notified. The school is committed to working with parents to support the young person involved. The decision may also be taken to contact the police and children's services. The police liaison officers are contacted for advice, they provide specialist support to the drug education curriculum and they may be asked to investigate a particular incident where the possibility of charges could arise. It is the policy of Downlands Community School to co-operate fully with the police over such matters.

Confidentiality

The same rules apply as to all other areas;

- Pupils should be made aware that any information divulged must be passed on to the appropriate agency if it relates to the breaking of the law.
- Teachers who are informed of drug or substance misuse should not keep that information to themselves, but should pass it onto the DSL.
- In all but exceptional circumstances, parents should be informed about the use of illegal drugs/substances and legal drugs/substances.
- All information should be recorded on myconcern.

Searches

Please refer to the Behaviour Policy for the updated protocol.

Possible Responses

Any one or a combination of these may be used;

- **Support**
Wherever possible the school will offer support to the pupils and parents. This support could include behaviour contracts, pastoral support programmes, in-school counselling, referral to outside agencies. It is possible to identify particular groups that are more at risk of drug misuse and target these groups to receive preventative support.
- **Education**
As part of the PDC programme and elements of the curriculum in other subjects (e.g. science) or on an individual/small group basis. For example, intensive in-school programmes or inter-agency education programmes.
- **Sanctions**
These will be issued following the school's behaviour policy. They could include detentions, suspensions, permanent exclusions and the criminal justice system. The action will be dependent on a number of factors, such as; the nature of the item, the circumstances surrounding the taking of the substance, age/s of the pupils concerned, the law and whether the school rules have been broken. Please refer to the school's behaviour policy.
For further information, refer to "Drugs-Guidance for Schools."
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/270169/drug_advice_for_schools.pdf

Statutory Requirements

The following guidance should be adhered to;

- There is no statutory requirement to hand drugs over to the police.
- If a decision is taken that it should be handed over, it should be bagged, labelled, dated and held securely. Any transfer should be witnessed by another adult.
- If the drug is given to the police, the teacher is not obliged in law to give the name or other identifying characteristics of the young person involved.

Media Contact

The school is fully prepared to co-operate with the media as long as it is in the school's and pupil's best interests. All contact with the media should be through the Headteacher, or Deputy Headteacher in their absence. In case of a disaster, reference should be made to the Critical Incidents Policy located in the office and the action plan should be followed.

Evaluation

Recording, monitoring and reviewing

The success of this drugs policy relies upon the careful recording of drug related incidents and the actions taken. These incidents can then be monitored and the effectiveness of the policy with regard to individual incidents can then be reviewed.

All incidents should be referred to the member of SLT responsible for the substance misuse policy and a report form should be completed for each incident. These reports will be kept in a central location. Criteria by which the effectiveness of the policy will be assessed include the level of knowledge of the pupils, the number of repeated offences following different kinds of support and sanctions and the number of suspensions and permanent exclusions.

Pupils will be involved in evaluating the drug education programme and thus informing the content of the programme.