

Saffron Walden County High School



Drugs Policy

Date adopted or ratified;	July 2017
Amended;	15 th March 2019
Amended;	22 nd November 2021
Amended;	27 th February 2024

Amended & reviewed by governors: 5th September 2025

This policy is regularly reviewed following recommended guidelines

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Behaviour Policy & Exclusions Policy

Saffron Walden County High School is committed to the health and safety of its pupils and staff and will take action to safeguard their well-being.

This policy seeks to ensure that:

- Young people in our school receive common messages about the inappropriateness of drug misuse within the curriculum of the school.
- Drug related incidents are addressed throughout the school in a consistent manner.
- The pastoral system seeks to support pupils who come forward.
- School staff are equipped to recognise warning signs of substance misuse.

Definition

Drug misuse is defined in this school as the taking of a substance which harms or threatens to harm the physical or mental health or social well-being of an individual, or of other individuals or which is illegal. Within this definition we place:

- Alcohol
- Tobacco/ e-cigarettes/ Vapes/Snuff/Snus
- Solvents
- Illegal drugs including THC vapes or other vaping liquids containing illegal substances.
- Misuse of other drugs e.g., prescription medication

Pupil Welfare

In all cases, the welfare of young people is central to SWCHS' approach. We aim to enable pupils to:

- Stay safe from substance misuse.
- Have the high self-esteem and interpersonal skills that enable them to be safe and in control.
- Engage with a curriculum that prepares them, at an appropriate age, for a 'drug using' world.

Every effort should be made to help pupils requiring support. However, **no staff member can agree to offer complete confidentiality**. All staff are subject to child protection procedures and are directed to report any concerns they have in line with the SWCHS Child Protection Policy.

CURRICULUM DELIVERY OF DRUGS EDUCATION

The following extract is from the SWCHS PSHEE Policy and outlines the ways in which drugs are covered within our curriculum:

Appendix B: Year 7:

Wellbeing module: Drugs and alcohol, personal hygiene, etc. from existing programme. Healthy eating. Basic first aid.

Appendix A: Years 8 – 11:

Physical Health and Fitness module: The characteristics and evidence of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle, maintaining a healthy weight, including the links between an inactive lifestyle and ill health, including cancer and cardiovascular ill-health.

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco module (Part 1): The facts about legal and illegal drugs and their associated risks, including the link between drug use, and the associated risks, including the link to serious mental health conditions.

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco module (Part 2): The physical and psychological consequences of addiction, including alcohol dependency. Smoking and links to lung cancer. Awareness of the dangers of drugs which are prescribed but still present serious health risks.

Drugs, alcohol and tobacco (Part 3): The law relating to the supply and possession of illegal substances. How the use of alcohol and drugs can lead to risky sexual behaviour.

GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

Warning signs

1. Early detection of drugs misuse is extremely important. If a young person's drug misuse is identified at an early stage, it is easier for action to be taken to prevent his or her further misuse of drugs. Therefore, teachers need to be vigilant, particularly when they are in charge of activities which take groups of young people away from the school premises. Research has shown that first experiments with drugs by young people almost always involve a substance provided by a friend.
2. The signs listed below may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing drugs. **Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of drug or solvent misuse: many of them are a normal part of adolescence**, but the presence of several signs together may point to a need for greater vigilance. Also listed is equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

Warning signs in individuals

- Changes in attendance and being unwilling to take part in school activities.
- Decline in performance in school work.

- Unusual outbreaks of temper marked swings of mood, restlessness or irritability.
- Reports from parents that more time is being spent away from home, possibly with new friends, or with friends in older age groups.
- Excessive spending or borrowing of money.
- Stealing money or goods.
- Excessive tiredness without obvious cause.
- No interest in physical appearance.
- Sores or rashes especially on the mouth or nose.
- Lack of appetite.
- Heavy use of scents, colognes etc to disguise the smell of drugs.
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils).

Warning signs in groups

- Regular absence on certain days.
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground or sports field).
- Being the subject of rumours about drug taking.
- Talking to strangers on or near the premises.
- Stealing which appears to be the work of several individuals rather than one person (e.g. perhaps to shoplift solvents).
- Use of drug takers' slang.
- Exchanging money or other objects in unusual circumstances.
- Associating briefly with one person who is much older and not normally part of the peer group.
- Attending the toilets in large groups and loitering.

Objects that may indicate drug misuse

- Foil containers or cup shapes made from silver foil, perhaps discoloured by heat.
- Metal tins.
- Spoons discoloured by heat.

- Pill boxes.
- Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrappers.
- Small plastic or glass phials or bottles.
- Twists of paper.
- Straws.
- Sugar lumps.
- Syringes and needles.
- Cigarette papers and lighters.
- Spent matches.
- Plastic bags or butane gas containers (solvent abuse)
- Cardboard or other tubes (heroin).
- Stamps, stickers, transfers or similar items.
- Shredded cigarettes, home-rolled cigarettes and pipes (cannabis).
- Papers (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (heroin)
- E-cigarettes, Vapes, or bottles of vaping liquid.

If you are concerned that a pupil may be having problems due to drug use:

Observe the pupil's behaviour. Symptoms include:

- Solvent abuse:* Rash around nose and mouth; stomach cramps; uncoordinated movements and slurred speech; drunken behaviour; inflamed eyes.
- Cannabis:* Lack of co-ordination; red eyes, dilated pupils; increase in heart rate; irrelevant giggling; paranoia. Presentation is similar when a child has used THC or Cannabis vapes.
- Heroin:* Drowsiness; small pupils (eyes).
- Ecstasy:* Increased energy; thirst; sleeplessness; depression; paranoia.
- LSD:* Perceptual changes, especially to sight and sound; illusions and hallucinations; delusions of a paranoid nature; pupil dilatation.
- Tranquillisers:* Sedation; uncoordinated movements; sleepiness.

- Amphetamines:* (Speed): Alternating moods; aggressive behaviour; increased energy; dry mouth; no appetite; inability to sleep; exhaustion; toxic psychosis.
- Cocaine:* Similar presentation as Amphetamines. Increased alertness; excitation; increased pulse rate and blood pressure; dilated pupils and eyes light-sensitive; depression; sleeplessness.
- Crack:* Similar presentation as cocaine. More addictive when smoked. Agitation; aggressive behaviour; toxic psychosis; eyes light-sensitive.

Share your concerns with the Year Achievement Co-ordinator concerned or the Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Deputy Headteacher.

Record your concerns and observations on CPOMS and pass to the Year Achievement Co-ordinator or Designated Safeguarding Lead/ Deputy Headteacher.

Alcohol

If you are concerned that a pupil may have consumed or is under the influence of alcohol:

- Alert the School Nurse immediately. The pupil will be taken to the Medical Room and then parents informed.
- Record your concerns and observations on CPOMS allocating Sharon McCormick who will liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Symptoms may include:

Slurred speech
 Dilated pupils
 Erratic behaviour
 Inability to follow instructions
 Vomiting
 Strong smell of alcohol
 Unsteady gait
 Lack of consciousness

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH DRUG-RELATED INCIDENTS

First principles

- A young person thought to have misused any substance by intent or accident will be treated as a medical emergency and referred to the School Nurse and/or emergency services.
- The use of recreational drugs (including alcohol) or the bringing of such drugs onto school premises will not be tolerated. The same principle will apply to school trips.
- SWCHS is at all times a “No Smoking” establishment – this includes the use of E-cigarettes.

- If there is any doubt regarding the substance in question, the school will endeavour to conduct a test using testing kits held in the Deputy Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead's office.

Procedures

When dealing with any incident staff should

- a. consider medical support
- b. swiftly inform the Year Achievement Co-ordinator, Designated Safeguarding Lead or member of SLT on-call.

Any use of illegal drugs, actual supply or offer to supply on school premises or on school trips may be reported to the police by the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement)

Parents will always be notified of the school's concern over a drug-related incident. **(The only exception to this is when it is felt that the pupil would be placed in greater jeopardy by this action, in which case the Safeguarding Team will be consulted.)**

The school has a legal duty to ensure that illegal drug use or the making or supply of such drugs does not take place on school premises or school trips. School staff should immediately take possession of an unknown substance and pass it to the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) as soon as possible. The law provides that:

"If a person took possession of a drug to prevent another committing an offence or continuing to commit an offence and then took speedy action to destroy the drug or hand it to an authorised person, this shall be a defence to the charge."

Dealing with individual incidents

Drugs or equipment are discovered on school premises

Staff are required to:

- take possession and pass it to the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) as soon as possible;
- The Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) will seek police advice re identification of substance and safe disposal.
- The Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) may also test the substance using a Police approved drugs testing kit.

In the event of a syringe being found it will be placed in a safe container (screw top coffee jar) and placed in a safe location prior to safe disposal – under no circumstances will a used syringe be placed in a waste bin. The Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) or senior staff nominated by the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) will record the incident.

A pupil is found in possession of drugs

Staff are required to:

- take possession of the substance in the presence of another staff witness and store securely in a locked cupboard or room.

- isolate the pupil under the supervision of another member of staff.
- inform the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement), who will take responsibility for:
 - seeking advice from police re identification of substance and safe disposal/ other legal actions.
 - informing the parents or carers.

A pupil thought to be in possession of a drug

Staff are required to:

- isolate the pupil from peers and supervise at all times.
- inform the Deputy Head (Director of Student Achievement).
- The Deputy Head (Director of Student Achievement) to inform the police if deemed appropriate.
- The Deputy Head (Director of Student Achievement) to inform parents or carers.

The school reserves the right to search the person, bag and locker of any pupil suspected of being in possession of drugs, and to ask a young person to empty their pockets. This should be done in the presence of another staff witness. Provisions for this are outlined within *Searching, Screening, and Confiscation* (Department for Education, July 2022).

If the young person refuses, under no circumstances should any member of staff attempt to physically search a young person.

A member of staff suspects a pupil is under the influence of a drug

Staff will never treat intoxication lightly. The effect of any drug (including alcohol) on a young person can be highly unpredictable. Intoxication or a suspected overdose (even if the young person appears fit and well) will always be deemed a medical emergency.

Under no circumstances should an intoxicated young person be disciplined until medical advice has been sought. Intoxication from solvents can be lethal if the young person is suddenly shocked and the unpleasant (even horrific) effects of psychedelic drugs can be exacerbated by discipline with potentially catastrophic results.

Staff are required to:

- seek medical advice (999 – if urgent).
- perform appropriate first aid measures.
- keep the young person as calm as possible.
- inform the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement), who will:
 - ensure no other pupils are at risk (if appropriate call an emergency whole school registration).
 - inform parents and carers.
 - inform child protection/ social services if child is 'at risk'.
 - inform police, if appropriate.

A pupil discloses that they are using drugs

Staff are required to:

- inform the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) who will
 - inform parents/ carers (In exceptional cases, when it is felt that the pupil would be placed in greater jeopardy by this action, a programme of action involving appropriate support will be agreed with the student. This should be monitored by the Year Achievement Co-ordinator. Gillick Competency guidelines should be applied to each individual case where parents are not informed)
 - seek advice / support from external agencies and, if appropriate, Social Services

Pupil discloses parents or carers misuse/supply drugs

Staff are required to:

- inform the Deputy Headteacher (Director of Student Achievement) who will:
 - inform the Safeguarding Team if the child is 'at risk'.
 - retain the child if a parent is collecting a child from school (especially by car) **and appears intoxicated**, (if unable to retain the child – telephone 999 and inform police).

The school discovers that a pupil is 'dealing drugs' in the school

(see above on "a pupil thought to be in possession of drugs")

Staff are required to:

- inform the Deputy Head (Director of Student Achievement) who will:
 - inform police if appropriate.
 - secure as much evidence as possible.

Dealing with investigations of incidents by senior staff (Year Achievement Co-ordinator or SLT)

- If possible, the Headteacher should be informed before any such investigation takes place.
- Pupils should be interviewed separately.
- At least two members of staff should be present, one of whom should be the Deputy Head (Director of Student Achievement) or a senior member of staff nominated by the Deputy Head (Director of Student Achievement).
- As far as possible, the same persons should interview all pupils.
- Any search of a pupil's bag or locker or request to empty pockets should be done in the presence of a staff witness.

- If the pupil is suspected of concealing a substance on their person and is unwilling to turn out their pockets, they should be detained and supervised, and depending on the circumstances either the parents/ carers or the police informed and asked to attend.
- The results of all interviews should be recorded: this may involve the pupil writing their own statement and signing it or a member of staff recording the interview, reading it to the pupil and requesting the pupil to sign it as a true record.
- Any substance that is removed should be placed in an envelope which is signed, dated and stored securely in a locked cupboard or room until it can be handed to the police or destroyed as soon as possible thereafter.
- All interviews should be witnessed.
- Parents should be informed as soon as possible.

Sanctions

These sanctions apply both on the school premises and on school visits and residential trips.

Smoking of cigarettes and e-cigarettes

SWCHS is a no-smoking site for all staff, pupils and visitors. Smoking is expressly forbidden on the way to and from school. Smoking materials will be confiscated and only returned if parents collect the items from the school. Sanctions will be put in place for pupils caught smoking and those associating with smokers in line with the SWCHS Behaviour Approach and Policy. SWCHS classifies e-cigarettes, vape pens, and vaping paraphernalia in the same category as smoking materials.

Alcohol and solvents

Any pupil intoxicated or found to be using alcohol or legal solvents on school premises will normally be given a suspension, the length depending on individual circumstances.

Illegal substances (including illegal drugs, vapes, vape liquids, or other types of illegal substances)

Possession, intent to supply, or the actual supply of illegal substances, or use of illegal substances will normally result in permanent exclusion. This also applies to students on the way to and from school.

Paul Singh, Deputy Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead
5th September 2025