

Substance Use & Misuse Policy

Date of policy update: November 2025 **Planned Review:** November 2028

Staff responsible: Mrs. L. Cole – Assistant Headteacher
Mrs E. Foster- Learning for Life Co-ordinator
(Mrs. K. Pearce until March 2026 - Mat cover)
Mr. J. Crowther - Headteacher
Mrs. S. Mills - School Drugs Co-ordinator
Trustees Curriculum & Performance Committee

Written with guidance from the DfE and ACPO Drugs advice guidance for schools - 2012, and the Hertfordshire County Council Drug Education guidance document. The following were involved in consultation during the process of writing this policy: The Headteacher, the School Drugs Co-ordinator, representatives of both teaching and non-teaching staff, parents, governors and students, the County Drug Education Consultant, the school nurse and the local Police Crime Reduction Officer.

What is a drug?

A drug is a substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave. This school defines the word drug as any substance which affects the way in which the body functions physically, emotionally or mentally. It includes all unauthorised substances, including over-the-counter and prescription medicines, all legal drugs (including alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances i.e. those giving off a gas or vapour which can be inhaled), over the counter and prescribed medicines as well as all illegal drugs (those controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971).

The policy will apply within the school premises and beyond, whenever students are in the care of school staff. This includes school trips and educational visits.

Values & Aims

The aim of all those responsible for the welfare of our students is to maintain Hitchin Girls' School as a school free from drug abuse. If students or any member of our school community have any suspicion that someone is in possession of drugs or that they are present on, or in the vicinity of the school site, they are strongly encouraged to give this information immediately, in total confidence, to a member of staff. The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team will be informed as soon as possible and the matter will then be investigated promptly. In all proven instances parents will be contacted.

Fundamental to our school's values and practice is the principle of sharing the responsibility for drugs education with parents and carers.

Set in the broader context of the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum, Learning for Life, Citizenship and Science our Drugs Education reflects whole school aims to provide a caring community in which young people can learn to respect themselves and others and take responsibility for their own actions, emphasising that being healthy is essential if young people are to get the best out of life and fulfil their potential.

- We are committed to the health and safety of all school members and will take action to safeguard their well-being.
- We acknowledge the importance of our pastoral role in the welfare of young people, and, through the general ethos of the school, we will seek to persuade students in need of support to come forward.
- The school believes that health education is a vital part of the personal and social education of

every student. In response to our shared concerns at a local and national level, the school believes that as part of its care for the welfare of its students, it has a duty to inform and educate young people on the risks and consequences of drug use and misuse.

- Our emphasis is on educating young people to grow up safely in a society where drugs are available.
- We aim to help to empower young people to take responsibility when making informed choices.
- Whilst we acknowledge that a number of young people may choose to use or misuse substances, it is important to recognise that the majority of young people are choosing not to do so. We will support their differing needs ensuring that they know where to seek help if they are concerned about themselves, a peer or relation.

Fundamental to our school values and practice is the principle of sharing the responsibility for the education of young people by keeping them informed and involved at all times. Effective communication and co-operation is essential to the successful implementation of this policy.

Our Drugs Education aims

To ensure that we provide our students with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle and to relate these to their own actions now and in the future. Therefore, we aim to:

- Enable young people to make healthy, informed choices through helping them to increase their knowledge, challenging and exploring attitudes and developing and practising skills.
- Enable young people to recognise personal responsibility for decisions about substance use and to develop an awareness of responsibilities to others.
- To help young people to further a sense of self-worth and self-esteem.
- To increase young people's knowledge about drugs including their effects and relevant health, social and legal issues.
- To increase understanding about the implications and possible consequences of drug use and misuse.
- To help young people to distinguish between different substances, consider their use, misuse, benefit and harm.
- To counter any inaccurate messages and myths which young people may receive about drugs, with accurate information
- To provide students with appropriate techniques from which they can draw on for coping with situations where substance use occurs or is offered.
- To promote a non-smoking lifestyle among young people.
- To enable students to identify where help and support can be found.

These aims are met through the students' experiences across the whole curriculum, both formal and informal, and through extra-curricular opportunities and activities. Other agencies such as the Community Police, Children's Services, and outside health, and drug agencies support the delivery of our drugs education programme.

We intend to achieve our aims through:

- A co-ordinated, integrated and consistent approach to the curriculum and drug related incidents
- Planned elements of the National Curriculum subjects including Science.
- Learning for Life, RSHE and Citizenship lessons which respond to government requirements and guidelines.
- Content and teaching approaches, which match the needs and maturities of all students, including those with special educational needs and English as an Additional Language,
- Reinforcement of key messages at different ages and stages and in different situations.
- Training and support for staff in the planning and implementation of drug education.
- Regular monitoring, assessment and review of the drug education provision.
- Through informal and formal curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Pastoral time and support

A wide range of teaching approaches are used and we particularly encourage active learning methods which involve students' full participation. Ground rules will be negotiated when appropriate and the sensitivity of the work will be recognised safeguarding the interests of all.

The roles of the Headteacher and Governing Body

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for this policy. The Headteacher is responsible for its implementation and for liaising with the governing body and parents. The Headteacher has ultimate responsibility for the response to drug related incidents and staff training needs,

The Headteacher will take responsibility for liaison with the media. As the issue of substance misuse is an emotive one and is likely to generate interest from the local and national media, the school will take appropriate advice and guidance from the Hertfordshire County Council Children's Services press office.

If drug related incidents occur there is no legal requirement to inform the police and the Headteacher will consult DfE guidance (Police involvement section 4.6) and make the final decision.

Confidentiality

Staff will be supportive whilst following our child protection guidelines and clearly state that they will not be able to guarantee confidentiality.

Response to possible drug related incidents

Our definition of a drug includes medicines, both prescription and over the counter, alcohol, tobacco, vapes and solvents, and it is therefore important that all aspects of an incident are considered. The needs and circumstances of the student are paramount.

Each situation will be considered individually and we recognise that a variety of actions in response may be necessary to drug related incidents as recommended by the DfE. We seek to balance the interests of the student involved, the other school members and the local community

Responses will be cross referenced with related school policies such as:

- Behaviour for Learning
- Health and Safety
- Child Protection
- School Visits
- Inclusion/Exclusion

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, we will inform parents/carers or guardians at the earliest opportunity so that we can work together to support the student and resolve any difficulties.

Guidance for staff

The school's Administration of Medicines policy sets out the basis on which the school may agree to administer medicines to students. Where a student discloses drug misuse on or off the premises, staff will inform the Drug Co-ordinator immediately and the behaviour and DSL teams will coordinate the planning of subsequent follow up actions. Where staff discover substances which are suspected to be harmful, illegal or deserving of investigation they should remove the substance from where it was discovered, if possible in the presence of a witness, and record the time, place and circumstances when the substance came into their possession.

Searching - Senior staff can search a student if there is the suspicion that they might be in possession of a banned item.

Headteachers and staff authorised by them have a statutory power to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may have a prohibited item. Prohibited items are:

- knives or weapons
- alcohol
- illegal drugs
- stolen items
- tobacco and cigarette papers
- fireworks
- pornographic images
- any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used:
 - i. to commit an offence
 - ii. to cause personal injury to, or damage to the property of, any person (including the pupil)

Do not investigate the nature of the substance, but do record its approximate size and appearance. When possible, have the recordings countersigned by a witness. Take the substance immediately to the Drug Co-ordinator or Headteacher. Do not keep the substance on your person or in a place of safe keeping: to do so may place you at risk. In the presence of the Drug Co-ordinator or the Headteacher the substance will be placed in a suitable sealed container. The Headteacher, Drug Co-ordinator, yourself and when possible, the witness should sign and date the package. An official report should be completed detailing the time, date and circumstances of the findings. The Headteacher decides whether to arrange for the police to remove the substance from the premises or whether to dispose of it in an appropriate way. In the event of a discovery of any equipment associated with drug use, especially needles and syringes students should not handle such items. Staff should not handle such items. The Drugs Co-ordinator or Headteacher should be informed immediately and the DFE guidelines 4.9 will be followed.

Guidelines on suspected drug problems among students

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

- Observe the student's behaviour
- Share your concerns with the Headteacher, Drugs Co-ordinator and Head of House/Year
- Record your concerns and observations in writing via CPOMS ~~on the school's incident report form:~~
 - Conversations with the student
 - Changes in behaviour
 - Decline in academic achievement
 - Any physical and emotional signs of possible drug use
 - Friendship issues
 - Comments from other students or adults

Individuals or agencies who may provide help, support & information, e.g.

- Adolescent and Families Drug & Alcohol Service for Herts (AF-DASH)
- Grow, Change. Live - an alcohol and substance misuse charity working in Hertfordshire
- Local Drug and Alcohol agencies and youth counselling services
- Connexions Personal Advisor - School Nursing service
- FRANK campaign at 0800 77 66 00 or talktofrank.com
- Local Authority (Drug Education Consultant, PSHEC Advisor, Behaviour Advisor etc)
- Local police including Police Community Support Team (PCSO)
- Local Youth Offending Team (YOT)