

WHITGIFT SCHOOL

Substance Use and Misuse (Education) Policy

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Policy reviewed: July 2026

Next review: July 2027

Policy statement

Whitgift School is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and supportive learning environment for all students. We recognise that substance use and misuse, whether involving legal or illegal substances, can pose serious risks to young people's health, wellbeing, and their future opportunities. As such, we understand the importance of equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to make informed, lawful, and responsible choices regarding substances use and misuse, mindful of the potential risks they may pose.

The purpose of this policy is to support effective education around substance use and misuse, including the use and misuse of legal and illegal drugs. Our educational approach aims to promote wellbeing, prevent harm, and uphold the values of our school community.

Aims

This policy aims to outline a framework for our educational approach to substance-related issues. This approach also supports the general wellbeing of all Whitgift School students and the wider School community by:

- Maintaining a school culture where substance use and misuse is clearly understood and considered to be unacceptable.
- Empowering students to make healthy, informed, and lawful decisions by increasing knowledge, challenging misconceptions, and developing personal and social skills, including resilience, to deal with peer pressure and stress;
- Raising awareness and understanding of the possible physical, emotional, legal, and social consequences of substance use and misuse.
- Widening understanding about related health and social issues e.g. crime, addiction, mental health, welfare, and community impact.
- Seeking to minimise the risks faced by potential users, particularly those who may be considered as vulnerable.
- Enabling students to identify, and know how to access, sources of appropriate support, including the relevant counselling and help services.
- Striving constantly to promote a safe and healthy learning environment for all members of the Whitgift community.

Policy availability

This policy is available upon request to staff, students, and parents/carers and should be read in conjunction with other school policies.

Policy efficacy

The effectiveness of the School's approach to substance-related issues relies on the fair enforcement of its policies. The position of any student who fails to respect the policies will be considered under the School's Substance Use and Misuse (Discipline) Policy, which should be read in conjunction with this Substance Use and Misuse (Education) Policy, as well as the Behaviour, Discipline, and Exclusions Policy and School Rules and Regulations.

Terminology

The term "**substance**" refers to any chemical, product, or compound that, when taken into the body, can potentially alter a person's physical or mental state. While some substances may be used for a legitimate medical purpose, the misuse of any substance can pose a serious risk to an individual's health, behaviour, academic performance, and personal safety. A substance may more commonly be referred to as a "drug", but the term encompasses a much broader range of items. This includes both legal and illegal substances and those that might be misused despite being readily available or socially accepted. Substances may be ingested, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin to name but some methods.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- All controlled Class A, B and C drugs as defined by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- New psychoactive substances (often referred to as 'Legal Highs')
- Prescription medications
- Over-the-counter medications (OTC)
- Alcohol
- Tobacco and vaping products
- Nicotine and other chemicals
- Tobacco and nicotine pouches
- Solvents and inhalants including Nitrous Oxide and 'Poppers'
- Performance-enhancing or mood-altering supplements or medications
- Any other substance which might lead to harmful consequences, addiction or similar effect

The term “**paraphernalia**” refers to any equipment, tools, or accessories associated with the use, preparation, or concealment of substances. While these items may not be harmful in themselves, their presence can indicate substance use/misuse or intent to use/misuse. Examples include, but are not limited to, lighters and matches, roaches and clips, grinders, sharps, pouches, and vape devices and cartridges.

The term “**sharps**” refers to any objects with a pointed or cutting edge that can puncture or otherwise wound the skin. These include, but are not limited to any needles and syringes, scalpels or blades, broken glass or metal fragments, or any other articles capable of causing injury through handling.

These items are considered high-risk. As such, if anyone finds a sharp or other paraphernalia on site, they must immediately report it to the Senior Deputy, or in their absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The following guidance should be followed:

- Do not touch or move the item.
- Secure the immediate area to assure the safety of others and to prevent them from coming into contact with the item.
- If necessary, ask appropriate individuals that are nearby to assist in keeping the area safe.

The School's Medical Team will safely recover and secure the item in the designated sharps' container located in the Medical Centre. Where appropriate, the incident will be reported to the police.

UK Laws

The following UK laws are particularly relevant to substance related issues.

Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 - it is illegal to possess, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, cultivate, produce (or be 'concerned' in any of these activities) any drug covered by the Act unless authorised (e.g. when prescribed for personal medical use). A person also commits an offence by allowing premises they occupy to

be used for the production or supply or any controlled drug or the consumption of certain controlled drugs.

Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985 - it is illegal for anyone to supply or offer to supply a substance if they know or believe that the substance being supplied will be inhaled by a person under 18 for the purpose of intoxication

The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 - it is an offence to produce, supply, offer to supply, possess with intent to supply, import or export psychoactive substances.

Other relevant offences include the buying of alcohol, or attempting to, when under the age of 18 – **Children and Young Persons Act 1933**

1. Education and instruction

At Whitgift School, we believe that effective education is key to preventing substance misuse and promoting student wellbeing.

Our approach is proactive, age-appropriate, and embedded within the broader framework of pastoral care. The education of students about substance use and misuse forms part of the School's Ideatum (PSHE) programme. The School is guided by the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education guidance (2019, as amended 2020; updated 2025) as well other relevant guidance.

Through Ideatum, students are given structured opportunities to:

- Consider the harmful effects - physical, emotional, and social - of substances such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs on themselves and others.
- Understand the legal implications of substance misuse.
- Develop the skills and confidence to make informed, responsible, and lawful decisions about substance use and misuse.
- Reflect on the possible influencing factors - including peer-pressure, stress, and social isolation etc. - that may contribute to risk-taking behaviours.

Substance education is delivered through classroom teaching (including discussion-based learning, and scenario and case-study analysis), assemblies, and workshops led by experts from outside the School.

Relevant members of staff also receive training about substance use and misuse so that they are alert to the warning signs of misuse and can respond appropriately, in keeping with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, when students seek advice or assistance.

Below is more detailed information on specific areas:

1.1 Tobacco and vaping

Smoking remains the single most preventable cause of premature death and ill-health in our society. The School is committed to promoting a smoke-free environment where students are not exposed to smoking of any kind. The School's policy on smoking aims to educate students about:

- The risks and dangers associated with tobacco, nicotine, and vaping products/use.
- The health, social, and economic problems that the habit can inflict upon smokers and non-smokers alike.
- Maintaining a non-smoking environment as the norm in society.
- Access to appropriate support services where needed.

The School's approach aims to encourage students who smoke or vape to seek support to quit the habit, and equally discourage those who do not smoke or vape from experimenting with or exploring the habit.

With that in mind, smoking, or being in possession of cigarettes, tobacco, electronic cigarettes and any other 'smoking' devices (e.g. Shisha cigarettes and other flavoured chemical devices (vapes)) is strictly prohibited:

- In the School buildings and grounds.
- Anywhere whilst in School uniform.
- When representing the School in any capacity or on School outings and trips.
- At any time whilst under School supervision or discipline.
- Whenever prohibited by law.

This approach applies equally to the use of tobacco and nicotine pouches and other such items.

1.2 Alcohol

Alcohol is a depressant substance that can impair judgement, co-ordination, mood, and decision-making, amongst other effects, particularly when consumed in large quantities. If consumed in sensible amounts, alcohol may produce temporary feelings of relaxation, the health risks are considerably reduced only when individuals remain within the recommended guidelines. However, even at low levels, alcohol use increases the risk of serious accidents and can negatively impact both physical and mental health.

Therefore, the principal School aims in this context are to:

- Maintain an alcohol-free environment where students are not exposed to alcohol (except on formal occasions sanctioned by the School).
- Develop knowledge and understanding about alcohol as a drug and its effect on the mind and the body.
- Encourage sensible, appropriate and safe drinking behaviour.

- Provide opportunities for students to practise personal and social skills and the strategies needed to deal with situations where alcohol is present.
- Promote an individual student's self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth.
- Provide or signpost to external counselling for students and their families, where this is needed.
- Provide information about other helping agencies, regarding their presence, location and function.
- Educate students as to the place of alcohol in the political, social and economic environment.

Consuming, or being in possession of alcohol, is prohibited:

- On the School premises, including buildings and grounds (except for formal occasions sanctioned by the School).
- Anywhere whilst in school uniform.
- Whenever prohibited by law or contrary to the expectations of the School.
- While on School outings and trips or at any other time whilst under School supervision or discipline (except for formal occasions sanctioned by the School).

1.3 Drugs

Health harms arising from the use or misuse of legal and illegal substances are wide-ranging and represent a major public health concern. Research indicates that young adults aged 16 to 24 are more likely to be tempted towards and experiment with the use illegal drugs than older age groups. Serious risks to health can include, but are not limited to, blood-borne viral infections, increased risk of dependence and addiction, overdose and poisoning, impaired mental health and development, and disruption to education, relationships, and future opportunities.

Therefore, the principal School aims in this context are to:

- Develop students' knowledge and understanding of the differences between legal, controlled and illegal drugs;
- Educate students on the effects of drugs on the mind and body;
- Provide opportunities for students to practise the personal and social skills and the strategies needed to deal with situations involving drugs;
- Promote an individual student's self-confidence, self-esteem and self-worth;
- Explain the legal situation with regard to the use and misuse of drugs;
- Provide or signpost to external counselling for students and their families, where this is needed;
- Provide information about other helping agencies, regarding their presence, location and function; and
- Educate students on procedures for dealing with any discovery of sharps and paraphernalia.

Any direct or indirect involvement in substance use and misuse anywhere, and whether in the School buildings and grounds or elsewhere, is prohibited including:

- The possession, supply, cultivation or production of any drug covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 unless authorised (e.g. when prescribed for personal medical use);

- The supply or offer to supply of a substance where it is known or believed that the substances will be inhaled by a person under 18 for the purposes of intoxication; and
- The production, supply, offer to supply or possession of psychoactive substances.

2. Advice and assistance

2.1 Students are actively encouraged to discuss their anxieties about any aspect of substance use and misuse with a member of staff or another responsible adult. The School also provides information about access to external agencies that offer advice, support, and assistance (see Section 3 below).

2.2 Parents and carers are asked to inform the Headmaster or a member of the SLT if they have any reason to think that their child or ward may be or have been involved in the use or misuse of tobacco, alcohol, or other substances. This enables the School to offer appropriate support, which may include:

- Specific support by an identified member of staff
- Broader pastoral guidance, including health and wellbeing guidance
- Targeted education, or re-education, on substance use and misuse
- Access to internal counselling
- Referral to external agencies in pursuit of further support

In isolated cases, such a programme of advice and support may be consistent with the student's continued education at the School (perhaps accompanied by testing at intervals determined by the Headmaster). **However, informing the School in this way, or where a student volunteers information about their own substance use or misuse, does not preclude the possibility of disciplinary action (including suspension or exclusion) which the School may nevertheless decide to be appropriate after careful consideration of the individual circumstances. Responsibility for this decision rests with the Headmaster whose decision is final.**

2.3 Where the Headmaster considers the circumstances of the case to warrant it, the School will inform the police.

3. Helplines/Support

3.1 The following organisations offer confidential, age-appropriate advice and support for young people dealing with substance use/misuse, mental health, or related challenges. Contact details and information about national support services are displayed in appropriate locations around the School and are available to students upon request. These may include:

Childline
0800 1111
www.childline.org.uk

FRANK
0300 123 6600
Text to 82111
www.talktofrank.com
frank@talktofrank.com

Kooth
www.kooth.com

Samaritans
116 123
www.samaritans.org
jo@samaritans.org

SHOUT
Text to 85258
www.giveusashout.org

WithYou
www.wearewithyou.org.uk

YoungMinds
www.youngminds.org.uk

3.2 Accredited counselling services are recommended by the School to individual students in appropriate circumstances, after consultation with the parents or guardians. The services are also recommended upon request for situations which cause stress and difficulties for the individual.