

Alcohol and Drugs Policy (Staff)

Reviewed and updated by: Mrs C Wood

Approval: Full Governor Board

Last Review: Autumn 2024

Next Review: Autumn 2025



This policy will be amended before the review date if necessary.

Introduction

The inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs can damage the health and wellbeing of employees and have far-reaching effects on their personal and working lives.

At work, alcohol or drug misuse can result in reduced levels of attendance, substandard work performance, and increased health and safety risks, not only for the individual concerned, but also for others such as work colleagues, pupils, members of the public and contractors. Furthermore, the effects of alcohol or drug misuse are likely to be detrimental to the employee's ability to deliver high quality education to pupils.

This policy aims to:

- raise staff awareness of the risks and potential harm to health associated with the use of intoxicating substances
- set out the rules regarding the use of intoxicating substances, so that employees are aware of the likely consequences for their employment of misusing them
- create a climate that encourages employees who may be misusing drugs or alcohol to come forward and seek help
- provide a framework to enable instances of substance misuse by employees to be handled in an appropriate, fair and consistent manner
- achieve a balance between supporting employees who come forward with a problem and the overriding need to preserve the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact; the delivery of high quality education to students and the School's reputation.

This policy covers the use and misuse of intoxicating substances, which include alcohol, solvents, legal and illegal drugs, prescription and over-the-counter medicines, and other substances that could adversely affect work performance and/or health and safety.

This policy applies to all employees, including all agency and casual workers, contractors, volunteers and others working on the School's behalf.

The policy is not intended to apply to 'one-off' incidents or offences where there is no evidence of an ongoing problem, which are more appropriately dealt with under the disciplinary procedure, when applicable.

Depending on the seriousness of the offence, it may amount to gross misconduct and could result in the employee's summary dismissal.

Policy details

The Head is responsible for maintaining fair, consistent and objective procedures for matters relating to the inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs. Within the limits of what is practicable and within the law, strict confidentiality will be maintained when dealing with alcohol- and drug-related problems among employees.

The Senior Leadership Team are required to:

- be aware of the signs of alcohol and substance misuse and the effects on performance, attendance and health of employees, and take reasonable and appropriate steps
- ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees and others with whom they come into contact
- ensure that staff are aware of the policy and the rules and consequences regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and other intoxicating substances
- treat such matters confidentially as far as is legitimately and legally possible
- monitor the performance, behaviour and attendance of employees as part of the normal supervisory relationship
- intervene at an early stage, where changes in performance, behaviour, sickness levels or attendance patterns are identified, to establish whether alcohol or drug misuse is an underlying cause and such investigation should be supportive and non-judgemental
- provide support and assistance where appropriate and for a reasonable period, and ensure that staff are aware of the support that is available to them
- seek advice where they have concerns or is aware that an employee is adversely impacted due to drugs and/or alcohol.

Employees have the following responsibilities:

- to familiarise themselves with this policy and comply with its provisions
- to present a professional, courteous and efficient image to those with whom they come into contact at work. They therefore have a personal responsibility to adopt a responsible attitude towards drinking and taking prescribed and over-the-counter drugs
- not to possess, store, trade or sell controlled drugs on School premises or bring the School into disrepute by engaging in such activities outside of work
- to seek help if they have concerns regarding their alcohol or drug consumption. It is recommended that they approach their GP, and also their line manager, so that the School can assist in the provision of appropriate support to help speedy rehabilitation, for example referral to the occupational health service, medical professionals, professional drug/alcohol treatment agencies etc
- to co-operate with any support and assistance provided by the School to address an alcohol or drug misuse problem
- not, even with the best of motives, to 'cover up' for, or collude with, a colleague with an alcohol or drug-related problem but instead should encourage the individual to seek help
- where the individual concerned does not wish to come forward to seek help, and their colleague(s) genuinely suspects that the individual may be misusing drugs or alcohol, colleagues have a responsibility to raise their concerns with the Senior Leadership Team or Headmistress.

Employees must report for work, and remain throughout the working day, in a fit and safe condition to undertake their duties and not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Where the employee is required to drive for work purposes, they have a responsibility for ensuring they are not under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Employees must notify the School Nurse or School Medical Officer immediately should they be prescribed medication or plan to take over-the-counter medicines that may cause side effects that impair their ability to undertake their duties safely and effectively. This is particularly important if they occupy a post where it is not only their own personal safety but those of others that could be jeopardised. Similarly, employees who experience side effects as a result of taking prescribed or

over-the-counter medicines that impair their ability to perform their duties safely and satisfactorily must notify the School Nurse or School Medical Officer immediately.

Employees are not obliged to disclose the actual medical condition being treated nor the medication – simply the impact/side effects.

The employer will take all reasonable steps to prevent employees carrying out work-related activities if they are considered to be unfit/unsafe to undertake work as a result of alcohol or drugs.

If a member of the SLT reasonably believes that an employee has arrived at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, they shall immediately contact the Head and the employee may be sent home. Their absence will be treated as sick leave and any pay will be in accordance with the appropriate sick leave/pay policy. The Head will review whether the employee requires any support or if it is appropriate that the disciplinary investigation process should commence.

It is important to be aware that those suffering from diabetes, epilepsy and other conditions, including brain injuries/brain diseases, can at times appear drunk and thus due care should be taken to identify and respond to these individuals appropriately.

Employees must not consume intoxicating substances before coming on duty or when they may be required to attend work at short notice, for example, when they are on call.

Intoxicating substances, such as alcohol, may remain in the system for some time and even small amounts can impair performance and jeopardise safety. Employees are personally responsible for allowing sufficient time for the intoxicating substance to leave their system before reporting for work.

Consequently, no alcohol or drugs must be brought onto or consumed on School premises at any time or whilst attending any training courses, whether internal or external. Staff must never drink alcohol or take drugs if they are required to drive private or School vehicles on School business. Staff must also not drink alcohol or take drugs when they are on operational standby or on call.

However, the School will make an exception to this rule for specific events, which will be approved in advance by the Head. For such events, staff have a responsibility to ensure that any consumption of alcohol does not impair their ability to work safely and effectively or to deal with pupil, parents, colleagues and visitors to the required professional standard.

Employees representing the School at functions or conferences or attending School organised social events outside normal working hours are expected to be moderate if drinking alcohol and to take specific action to ensure they are well within the legal limits if they are driving. They are prohibited from taking drugs on these occasions.

Social drinking after normal working hours and away from the School's premises is, of course, generally a personal matter and does not directly concern the School. The School's concern only arises when, because of the pattern or amount of drink involved, the employee's attendance, work performance or conduct at work deteriorates.

On the grounds of protecting health and safety and only where necessary to achieve a legitimate business aim, the School reserves the right to carry out random alcohol and drug screening tests on those employees in the workplace whose activities and job duties have a significant impact on the health and safety of others. Unreasonable refusal to submit to an alcohol or drug-screening test will also be dealt with through the disciplinary procedure.

The School treats drug and alcohol dependency as a health problem that requires special treatment and help, and recognises that early identification is more likely to lead to successful treatment. Employees are strongly encouraged to discuss any problems they have at an early stage with their GP, the School Nurse or the School Medical Officer.

For employees undergoing treatment, this absence will be covered under the absence management policy.

The School will adopt a constructive and supportive approach when dealing with employees who may be experiencing drug or alcohol dependency/addiction. This means that employees seeking assistance for a substance misuse problem will not be subjected to disciplinary procedures simply because of their dependence/addiction.

Notwithstanding the above, there may be circumstances in which breaches of the policy, whether dependency-related or not, will be treated as a disciplinary matter.

Examples of issues that may be subject to disciplinary action are:

- deliberate disregard for personal safety and that of others associated with the use of intoxicating substances
- serious unacceptable behaviour in the workplace associated with the use of intoxicating substances
- being found incapable of performing normal duties satisfactorily and safely as a result of consuming alcohol or taking drugs, whether or not this is as a result of dependency
- possession, consumption, dealing/trafficking, selling, storage of illegal drugs either on work premises or engaging in such activities outside of work
- being disqualified from driving as a result of alcohol- or drug-related offences (if employees are required under their contract of employment to drive a vehicle)
- making malicious or vexatious allegations that a colleague is misusing intoxicating substances.

This list is illustrative only and should not be regarded as exclusive or exhaustive. Any disciplinary action will be in all cases proportionate to the circumstances of the breach of the policy.

Where evidence warrants, the School will inform the police of illegal drug use or any activity or behaviour over which there are concerns as to its legality. For example, it would be necessary to report criminal behaviour associated with alcohol abuse, such as having a drink-driving accident in a School vehicle.