Woodlands

respect resilience responsibility

Substance Use and Misuse Policy

Date: May 2026

Review Date: May 2027

Contents

1. The aims of the Policy

2. General principles

3. Rules and Sanctions

4. Guidelines for managing drug-related incidents

5. Appendix 1 – Drug Related Incident Form

6. Appendix 2 – Recognising the Signs

7. Appendix 3 – Drug Handling Guide

Woodlands Statement of Policy on Substance Use and Misuse

Woodlands disapproves strongly of the misuse of any substance by members of the school, and of the illegal supply of these substances.

We are committed to the health and safety of our 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 will seek to persuade pupils in need of support to come forward so that they may be helped and supported.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the DfE's policy on substance use and misuse.

The Aims of the policy:

- To provide a clear and consistent whole school approach to substance education and the management of substance-related incidents.
- To provide accurate information about substances.
- To enable pupils and parents to identify and access appropriate sources of support.

These Aims will be fulfilled through:

- The taught curriculum, particularly through the PSHE lessons and Science.
- Assemblies and (Period R) tutor periods.
- The general ethos of the school.
- The Behaviour Management system
- The work of our Year Leaders and tutors
- The partnership between the pupils, teaching and partnership staff, the governors, parents and outside agencies.

Managing drug related incidents in school

General principles

At Woodlands we recognise the importance of having a pro-active approach to managing incidents so that they are dealt with consistently, sensibly and sensitively. We have established realistic measures and sanctions in order to safeguard the well-being of our school community but enable us to deal effectively with incidents if they do occur.

The following extracts are from the DFE
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62d1643e8fa8f50bfbefa55c/Searching__Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf

What can be searched for?

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco, cigarette papers, nicotine pouches and vapes
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to, or damage to property;

Searches can be conducted by the headteacher or a member of school staff authorised by the headteacher: including all members of the Leadership Team and Year Leaders. A search may include the use of a metal detecting wand.

Under what circumstances?

- The member of staff must be the same sex as the pupil being searched; and there must be a witness (also a staff member) and, if at all possible, they should be the same sex as the pupil being searched.

- There is a limited exception to this rule. We can carry out a search of a pupil of the opposite sex and without a witness present, but only where there is reasonable belief that there is a risk that serious harm will be caused to a person if a search is not conducted immediately and where it is not reasonably practicable to summon another member of staff. CCTV cameras should be used to support any search of this nature if possible.

- If we have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a pupil is in possession of a prohibited item.

- A person carrying out a search can seize anything they have reasonable grounds for suspecting is a prohibited item or is evidence in relation to an offence.

- Where a person conducting a search finds alcohol, they may retain or dispose of it. This means that we can dispose of **alcohol** as we think appropriate but this should not include returning it to the pupil.

- Where we find **controlled drugs**, these must be delivered to the police as soon as possible but may be disposed of if the person thinks there is a good reason to do so.

- Where we find **other substances** which are not believed to be controlled drugs these can be confiscated where a teacher believes them to be harmful or detrimental to good order and discipline. This would include, for example, so called 'legal highs'. Where staff suspect a substance may be controlled they should treat them as controlled drugs as outlined above.

- Where we find **tobacco, cigarette papers, nicotine pouches or vapes** they may retain or dispose of them. As with alcohol, this means that we can dispose of tobacco, cigarette papers, nicotine pouches or vapes as they think appropriate but this should not include returning them to the pupil.

- Where a student has previously been found in possession of prohibited items, they may be subject to random or planned searches to ensure that this is not repeated.

- To ensure that students are not entering public examinations with any materials or items that are not permitted.

I**nforming parents about searches:**

We are not legally required to inform parents before a search takes place or to seek their consent to search their child, and we are unlikely to do so.

Although there is no legal requirement to make or keep a record of a search, we would record this on CPOMS.

We will inform the individual pupil's parents or guardians where alcohol, illegal drugs or potentially harmful substances are found, though there is no legal requirement to do so.

Complaints about screening or searching should be dealt with through the normal school complaints procedure which can be found on the school's website under polices.

Working with parents

At Woodlands we promote an ethos of working in partnership with parents, understanding that the type and degree of support required will vary depending on family and parenting capacity. Options would include:

- National and local telephone and online support services for information and 121 support, including Parentline Plus and Parent Support Link.
- Referral to DASH and/or No Limits

- Children Resource Centre referral
- Organising a workshop for parents in response to patterns of behaviour or issues that the school identifies.

Parents/Carers engaged in substance misuse activity

If a parent or carer is under the influence of alcohol or drugs then they will be asked to leave the premises with a witness present. If this is difficult to manage then the police will be called. There is a duty to protect the children and young people, staff and parents.

If it becomes known to school staff that a parent/carer has a substance misuse problem, then the member of staff should encourage a dialogue with the parent/carer and encourage them to access appropriate support services who provide advice and support through drop ins and telephone counselling services.

Young people whose parents/carers misuse drugs may be at greater risk of emotional and/or physical harm, but this is not always the case. A parent/carer with a drug problem does not necessarily neglect their child or put them at risk. We will be alert to behaviour which might indicate that the child is experiencing difficult home circumstances.

Schooling is also likely to be disrupted if a family member is dependent on a child acting as a carer. Because of the stigma surrounding drug misuse, many children will go to great lengths to hide their problems at home. If staff are concerned that the parent/carer's substance misuse is impacting upon the young person, or if they are colluding in or encouraging the young person's substance misuse then this should be referred through CPOMS.

At this point, we may decide to make a children's services referral if the child is felt to be at risk.

Involving the police

There is no legal obligation for teachers to inform the police if we have evidence of substance misuse. However, as stated earlier we are committed to not allowing the use of, possession of, supply or of production of any illegal substances on our premises and in these cases the police will normally be informed.

Dealing with the Media

The Head Teacher is responsible for liaising with the media. As the issue of substance misuse is an emotive one, and is likely to generate interest from local and national media, we will seek appropriate advice and guidance from the LA Press Office and Legal Department to ensure that any reporting of incidents remains in the best interests of pupils, their families and the school.

(B) Rules and Sanctions

However clear and precise our definition of rules and sanctions it must be remembered that all cases will be treated individually. Young people do make mistakes and we must consider each incident in relation to previous behaviour, current problems (eg. bullying/home problems) and the support available. The following notes provide further guidelines:

1. Although the involvement in an illegal drug related incident might first appear a 'worse case scenario' the DFE recommends that such an incident should not necessarily lead to an automatic suspension – especially in the first instance. We support the view that schools need to consider what their reaction would be to other illegal acts, eg. theft, and ensure that our response is balanced accordingly.

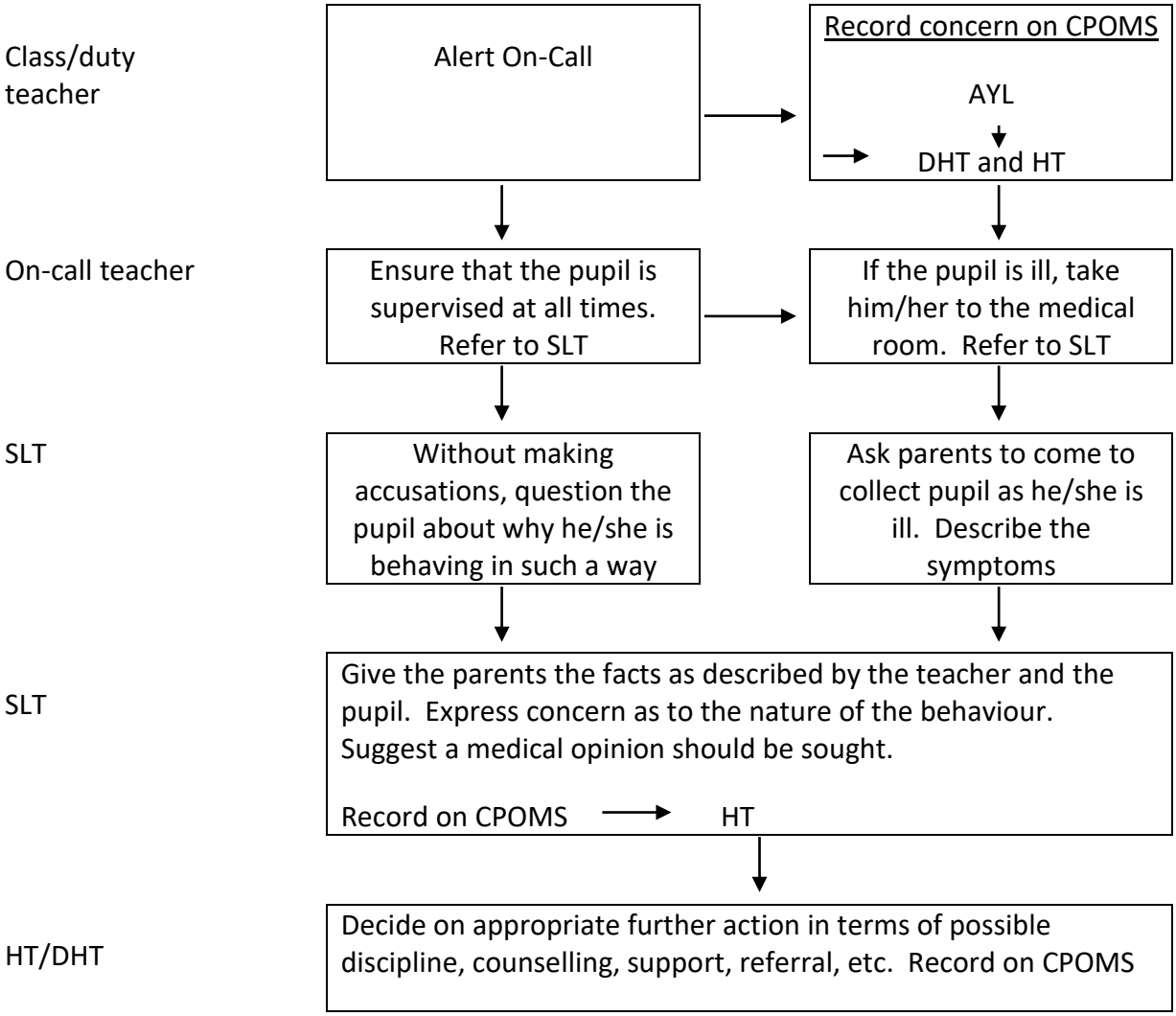
2. Following a period of suspension due to a substance use or misuse related incident a contract will be drawn up through consultation between the pupil, parent(s) and the school. The contract will aim to address the need for the pupil's continued education and support for their well being. The pupil will be offered appropriate counselling and support through the school's pastoral system and local support agencies. When all other reasonable steps have been taken it may prove necessary to use a permanent exclusion as a final sanction. In some circumstances, an immediate permanent exclusion will be the appropriate sanction.

3. The behaviour for learning policy is to be read in conjunction with this policy regarding sanctions.

(C) Guidelines for Managing Drug Related Incidents

In the case of:

- a pupil's behaviour indicating he/she might have used drugs
- a pupil's disclosure about a drugs related incident in school
- finding a pupil in possession of a suspicious substance



Appendix 1

Recognising the Signs

Warning Signs

The signs listed in Tables 1 and 2 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. Table 3 lists equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

Table 1 – Warning signs in individuals

- Changes in attendance, and being unwilling to take part in school or youth club group activities.
- Truancy from school or lessons
- Decline in performance in school work or youth club activities.
- 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.
- Being 'out of bounds'
- 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)
- Increased or excessive visits to the toilets

Table 2 – Warning signs in groups

- Regular absence on certain days (eg. the day young people receive state benefits)
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, students or youth club members, away from supervision points (eg. 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 (eg. perhaps to shoplift solvents)
- Use of drugtaker's 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

Table 3 – 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)
- Paper (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (heroin)

(Tables 1, 2 and 3 are adapted from Liverpool Education Authority and TACADE materials)

Appendix 2

Drug Handling Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide advice for all staff on the handling of substances or paraphernalia, either seized or found abandoned within schools that are suspected of being connected with illegal drugs. The guide is intended to ensure both the safety of the handler and the preservation of the item as possible evidence.

Substances, powders, tablets, etc.

Such things may be found in wrappings or packaging that are either commercially produced or home made from folded paper, cooking foil, and so on. The wrapping should be preserved along with the substance as this could be of help in its identification.

When opening any suspect wrapper the finder should take care not to spill any of the contents. If any is spilled it should be carefully gathered up and placed in an envelope, not back in the original wrapping as this could contaminate the remains of the sample.

Great care should be taken to avoid spilling any of the contents onto the skin. Rubber gloves such as the disposable type used in school science rooms will provide adequate protection. The finder should avoid inhaling any of the contents

No attempt should be made to identify the substance by sniffing or tasting it

The suspect substances, together with their wrappers, should be stored in sealed envelopes to await collection by the Police. If articles are seized or found in different places then they should be stored in separate envelopes.

Needles, Syringes, etc.

These articles can present possible health risks to any handler. If they have been used then the finder runs the risk of infection should he or she allow the article to puncture the skin. They should be handled with great care and placed in a 'sharps' container to await collection. If a suitable sharps container is not available then a plastic or metal box will suffice.

Paraphernalia, bongs, pipes, tin foil, burn spoons, etc.

There are very few health risks if these articles are handled with care. They should be wrapped in several layers of clean paper and placed in a large envelope to await collection.

Anyone who has handled, in any way, an item that is suspected of being connected with illegal drugs should thoroughly wash their hands as soon as possible.

All items should then be kept in a secure place – usually the school safe - until collected by the Police.

DO		DON'T
• preserve wrappings • protect skin from substances • avoid puncturing skin • store substances safely and securely • wrap substances in clean paper and an envelope • wash hands thoroughly		• spill substances • mix substances that have been spilled • mix substances found separately • inhale • sniff • taste