



New Direction School



**Drugs & Substance**

**Misuse Policy**

| Reviewed Date: | Reviewed By: | List of changes  | Next Review   |
|----------------|--------------|--|---------------|
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## 1. Aims and policy statement

At New Direction School, we aim to equip pupils and staff with the knowledge, understanding, confidence and practical skills needed to make safe, healthy and informed choices. This policy supports our commitment to the health, safety, welfare and safeguarding of all members of the school community.

The school recognises that substance misuse can be a health, behaviour, welfare, safeguarding and contextual safeguarding issue. Our response will therefore be child-centred, proportionate, trauma-informed and consistent with our safeguarding, behaviour and restorative practice expectations.

This policy aims to:

- prevent and reduce harm linked to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping, medicines and other substances;
- ensure pupils receive age-appropriate, developmentally appropriate and SEND-adapted education about drugs and substance misuse;
- provide clear procedures for staff when responding to suspected or confirmed incidents;
- ensure searches, confiscations, recording and police involvement are lawful, proportionate and properly safeguarded;
- promote early help and support where substance misuse may indicate unmet needs, exploitation, coercion, mental health difficulties or risk of harm;
- meet relevant safeguarding, health and safety, curriculum and Independent School Standards expectations.

## 2. Scope of the policy

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, volunteers, visitors, contractors, parents/carers and any other adults on New Direction School premises or involved in school activities.

It applies:

- on the school site;
- at the equine provision;
- during school transport, trips, visits, off-site learning, alternative provision, work-related learning and enrichment activities;
- whenever pupils are under the lawful control or charge of school staff;
- to online or off-site concerns where these have a safeguarding, welfare, behaviour or school community impact.

For the purposes of this policy, “school” includes New Direction School and any provision operating under its management or supervision.

### 3. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has been written with regard to the following legislation and guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools, July 2022, last updated July 2023;
- DfE Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance, including the revised guidance due for implementation from 1 September 2026;
- Education Act 1996;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971;
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016;
- The Schools (Specification and Disposal of Articles) Regulations 2012;
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Equality Act 2010;
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018;
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and DfE Independent School Standards guidance, April 2026.

This policy supports the school's compliance with the Independent School Standards, particularly those relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils, health and safety, behaviour, risk assessment, leadership and management, and the suitability of arrangements for pupils' welfare.

### 4. Roles and responsibilities

The Proprietor, Yvonne Evans, has overall responsibility for ensuring that the school has effective policies and procedures to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils and to meet the Independent School Standards.

The Head of Education, Luke Collins, has day-to-day responsibility for the implementation of this policy, authorising staff to conduct searches where appropriate, ensuring staff understand procedures, and ensuring incidents are managed safely and proportionately.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) is Luke Collins. Deputy DSLs are Hannah Oliver, Emily Smith and Nikki Morris. Safeguarding concerns must be shared with the DSL or a Deputy DSL without delay and recorded on CPOMS.

The Head of Equine Provision, Hannah Oliver, is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently within the equine provision and that any site-specific risks are managed.

All staff are responsible for:

- being alert to signs of substance misuse, exploitation, coercion, peer pressure or harm;
- following this policy and linked safeguarding, behaviour, medication and health and safety procedures;
- seeking immediate medical assistance where there is any concern about a pupil's health;
- recording concerns and incidents accurately on CPOMS;
- not promising confidentiality to pupils;
- passing safeguarding information to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay;
- challenging and reporting unsafe behaviour by adults, visitors or contractors.

Parents/carers are expected to support the school's policy, inform the school of prescribed or authorised medication, and work with the school where concerns arise.

Pupils are expected, according to their age, understanding and individual needs, not to bring unauthorised substances onto school premises or activities, and to seek help from a trusted adult if they are worried about themselves or someone else.

## **5. Drug and substance education in context**

At New Direction School, drug and substance education is part of our wider curriculum, including PSHE, Relationships, Sex and Health Education, life skills, safeguarding, behaviour, emotional literacy and preparation for adulthood.

Our curriculum is designed to enable each pupil to develop the knowledge and skills needed to become a safe, healthy and increasingly independent individual. Learning is adapted to pupils' age, development, SEND profile, communication needs, vulnerability and lived experiences.

Pupils are taught, as appropriate, about:

- the physical, emotional, social and legal risks linked to drugs and substance misuse;
- alcohol, tobacco, vaping, nicotine products, medicines, solvents, psychoactive substances and illegal drugs;
- peer pressure, grooming, coercion, exploitation, county lines and unsafe online influences;
- how to assess risk, make safe choices and seek help;

- healthy lifestyles, emotional wellbeing, self-esteem, assertiveness and personal safety;
- how to use prescribed and over-the-counter medicines safely;
- where to find reliable advice and support.

Drug and substance education will be delivered in a non-judgemental, factual, age-appropriate and safeguarding-aware way. Where pupils disclose personal concerns, staff will follow safeguarding procedures.

## **6. Range of substances covered**

For the purposes of this policy, a drug or substance is any substance which, when taken or used, may alter the way a person behaves, feels, sees, thinks or functions, or which may create a health, safety, welfare or safeguarding risk.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- alcohol;
- tobacco, cigarettes, cigarette papers, lighters and matches;
- vapes, e-cigarettes, disposable vapes, vaping liquids and related paraphernalia;
- nicotine pouches and other nicotine products;
- energy drinks, where restricted under school rules;
- prescribed medication, where misused, shared or brought to school without authorisation;
- over-the-counter medicines, such as paracetamol or cold remedies, where unauthorised or misused;
- solvents and volatile substances, including glues, aerosols, gases and cleaning fluids;
- psychoactive substances, sometimes known as “legal highs”;
- controlled or illegal drugs, including cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy/MDMA, LSD, ketamine, heroin and any other controlled substance;
- drug-related paraphernalia, including grinders, pipes, needles, foil, baggies, scales or other items linked to use or supply;
- online or image-based material suggesting drug supply, coercion, exploitation or dealing, where this raises safeguarding or behaviour concerns.

The school rules prohibit pupils from bringing any unauthorised substance, controlled drug, alcohol, tobacco product, vape/e-cigarette, nicotine product, solvent, drug-related paraphernalia or unauthorised medication onto school premises or activities.

## **7. Prevention, support and early help**

The school will seek to prevent substance-related harm through education, positive relationships, early identification of concerns, clear boundaries, restorative conversations and targeted support.

Substance misuse may be an indicator of wider need or risk. The DSL will consider whether there are signs of:

- child criminal exploitation, including county lines;
- child sexual exploitation or coercion;
- peer pressure, bullying, threats or grooming;
- mental health or emotional wellbeing concerns;
- neglect, domestic abuse, family substance misuse or unsafe caring arrangements;
- self-harm, risk-taking or unmet health needs;
- SEND-related vulnerability or communication needs;
- online harms or unsafe associations.

Where appropriate, the school will consider early help, referral to children's social care, police advice, health services, school nursing, CAMHS, local substance misuse services, family support or other specialist agencies.

## **8. Confidentiality, disclosures and safeguarding**

If a pupil discloses that they are using, carrying, supplying, being pressured to use, or being affected by drugs or substances, staff must listen calmly, avoid judgement, and explain that they cannot promise confidentiality.

Staff must:

- reassure the pupil that they have done the right thing by speaking to an adult;
- avoid asking leading questions or investigating beyond what is needed to understand immediate risk;
- consider whether urgent medical assistance is needed;
- record the disclosure on CPOMS as soon as possible;
- inform the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay;
- follow safeguarding procedures where there is any risk of harm, exploitation, coercion or criminal involvement.

Parents/carers will usually be informed where a pupil is involved in a drug or substance-related concern. However, the DSL will consider whether contacting parents/carers could increase the risk to the pupil or prejudice a police or children's social care response. In such cases, advice will be sought from children's social care and/or police as appropriate.

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis, in line with safeguarding duties, UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Data protection will not prevent the sharing of information where this is necessary to safeguard a child.

## **9. Drugs, substances and medication at school**

Where pupils have medical needs, parents/carers must provide full details of the pupil's condition and medication. Medication must be brought to school by an adult wherever possible, in the original packaging, clearly labelled with the pupil's name, dosage and instructions. Medication will be stored and administered in line with the school's Medication Policy and Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions arrangements.

Pupils must not carry or self-administer medication unless this has been specifically agreed through the pupil's healthcare arrangements, risk assessment or medication plan.

Solvents, aerosols, glues other than PVA, cleaning fluids and other hazardous substances must be stored securely and used only by staff or under appropriate supervision. Staff must ensure that pupils cannot access hazardous substances unsupervised.

Smoking and vaping are not permitted anywhere on school premises, school grounds, school transport, equine provision or during school activities. Staff who smoke or vape must ensure that tobacco, vapes, lighters, matches and related items are stored securely and never accessible to pupils.

Energy drinks may be restricted or confiscated where they are not permitted under school rules, where they present a health or behaviour concern, or where they conflict with an individual pupil's health plan.

## **10. Responding to suspected or confirmed incidents**

A suspected or confirmed drug or substance-related incident may include:

- substances, medication, paraphernalia, vapes or alcohol found on school premises;
- a pupil suspected of possessing, using, sharing or supplying a substance;
- a pupil appearing to be under the influence of a substance;
- a disclosure by a pupil or third party;
- drug-related online activity, messages, images or coercion;
- concerns about a parent/carers, visitor, contractor or staff member being under the influence;
- concerns arising during transport, trips, equine provision or off-site learning.

The immediate priority is safety. Staff must:

1. Make the situation safe and remove other pupils from risk if necessary.
2. Send for support from a senior member of staff, first aider, DSL or Deputy DSL.
3. Assess whether urgent medical help is needed. If in doubt, call 999.

4. Keep the pupil calm, supervised and in a safe place.
5. Do not leave an unwell or distressed pupil alone.
6. Do not taste, smell, analyse or attempt to identify an unknown substance.
7. If a substance is found, secure it safely in line with this policy.
8. Record the incident on CPOMS and inform the Head of Education/DSL.

Where a pupil appears unwell, intoxicated, disorientated, unusually drowsy, agitated, has difficulty breathing, chest pain, seizures, has taken or may have taken an unknown substance, or there is any doubt about their condition, staff must seek first aid support immediately and call 999 where necessary.

If a pupil is suspected of inhaling a volatile substance, staff should keep the pupil calm and avoid chasing or sudden confrontation, as sudden exertion may increase medical risk. Emergency medical advice should be sought where there is any concern.

Any consequence or sanction will be considered alongside the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures. Responses will be proportionate, consistent, restorative where appropriate, and mindful of SEND, trauma, exploitation, coercion and vulnerability. A sanction must not replace safeguarding action where there is a concern about harm.

## **11. Searching, screening and confiscation**

The school will follow DfE Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance. Searches must be lawful, necessary, proportionate, respectful and properly recorded.

The Head of Education, and staff authorised by the Head of Education, may search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil has a prohibited item or an item banned under school rules.

Prohibited items include:

- knives and weapons;
- alcohol;
- illegal drugs or suspected illegal drugs;
- stolen items;
- tobacco and cigarette papers;
- fireworks;
- pornographic images;
- any article that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, cause personal injury or damage property.

The following are also banned under New Direction School rules and may be searched for where the search is lawful and proportionate:

- vapes, e-cigarettes, vaping liquids and related paraphernalia;
- nicotine pouches and other nicotine products;
- unauthorised medication;
- psychoactive substances;
- solvents or volatile substances;
- drug-related paraphernalia;
- energy drinks, where restricted under school rules;
- any item that presents a safeguarding, health, safety or welfare risk.

Before a search, staff should normally explain to the pupil why the search is taking place, how and where it will happen, what is being searched for, and give the pupil an opportunity to ask questions. Staff should seek the pupil's cooperation, unless doing so would increase risk or compromise safety.

Searches will normally be carried out by a member of staff of the same sex as the pupil, with another member of staff present as witness. A search may be carried out by a member of staff of a different sex, or without a witness, only where permitted by DfE guidance and where staff reasonably believe there is a risk of serious harm if the search is not carried out urgently.

Staff may search outer clothing, pockets, possessions, bags, desks and lockers. Staff must not require a pupil to remove clothing other than outer clothing. "Outer clothing" means clothing that is not worn wholly next to the skin or immediately over underwear.

Staff must not conduct a strip search. Strip searches on school premises may only be carried out by police officers under police powers. Where police involvement could lead to a strip search, the school will consider whether the matter is sufficiently serious, whether less invasive approaches have been exhausted, and how the pupil's welfare, dignity and safeguarding needs will be protected. The DSL or senior member of staff will advocate for the pupil's welfare and ensure appropriate adult support in line with statutory guidance.

Any search for a prohibited item, any search where an item is found, and any search conducted by police on school premises must be recorded on CPOMS. Parents/carers will normally be informed as soon as practicable that a search has taken place, the outcome, any items confiscated and any further action, unless doing so would increase safeguarding risk or conflict with police/children's social care advice.

## **12. Handling, storage and disposal of substances**

If staff take possession of a suspected drug or substance to protect a pupil from harm or prevent an offence, they must not taste, smell, analyse or attempt to identify it. Staff should avoid direct contact where possible and use gloves or another safe barrier where available.

Suspected controlled drugs must be secured safely and handed to police as soon as possible, unless there is a clear and lawful reason not to do so. If staff are unsure whether a substance is controlled, they should treat it as a suspected controlled drug and seek advice from police.

The following steps should be taken where safe to do so:

1. Place the substance or item in a suitable container or bag.
2. Label it with the date, time, location found and names of staff involved.
3. Store it securely, away from pupils and unauthorised adults.
4. Ensure the handling and storage are witnessed where possible.
5. Record the details on CPOMS.
6. Contact police for advice, collection or disposal where required.

Legal but unauthorised substances, including alcohol, tobacco, vapes, nicotine products, solvents and unauthorised medicines, may be confiscated. They may be returned to parents/carers, disposed of safely, or handed to police depending on the nature of the item, the pupil's age, safeguarding concerns and legal requirements.

Needles, sharps or unknown hazardous items must not be handled directly by untrained staff. The area should be secured and appropriate support sought for safe disposal.

## **13. Police, children's social care and external agencies**

The Head of Education/DSL will decide whether to contact police, children's social care or other agencies, taking into account the seriousness of the incident, the pupil's welfare, risk to others, legal duties, safeguarding concerns and any evidence of supply, exploitation or criminal behaviour.

Police will normally be contacted where:

- a controlled drug or suspected controlled drug is found;

- there is evidence or suspicion of supply, exploitation, coercion, county lines or organised criminal activity;
- there is a weapon or serious risk of harm;
- an offence may have been committed;
- staff need advice about safe disposal;
- the situation cannot be managed safely by school staff.

Children's social care will be contacted where the DSL believes the pupil may be a child in need, at risk of significant harm, experiencing exploitation, or where parental substance misuse or adult behaviour places the child at risk.

The school is based in Derbyshire local authority area and works with Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Rotherham and Sheffield local authorities as relevant to individual pupils. Referrals and information sharing will follow local safeguarding partnership procedures.

The school is not legally required in every case to share a pupil's name with police when handing over a suspected controlled drug. Decisions will be made case by case, with safeguarding and welfare as the central consideration.

## **14. Parents and carers**

The school recognises that parents/carers have an important role in helping children understand and manage risk relating to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vaping, medicines and other substances.

The school will seek to build a positive and supportive relationship with parents/carers through mutual understanding, trust and cooperation. Parents/carers will be informed about this policy and expected to support its implementation.

Where a pupil is involved in a substance-related incident, parents/carers will normally be informed and provided with an explanation of how the school intends to respond. This may include safeguarding support, education, restorative work, behaviour action, referral to external agencies or police involvement.

Parents/carers may not be informed immediately where the DSL considers that doing so could increase risk to the child or prejudice a police or children's social care response. In such circumstances, advice will be sought from the relevant agency.

Staff will be cautious about discharging a pupil to the care of a parent/carer who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or substances, particularly where they intend to drive. Staff will seek an alternative safe arrangement and escalate to the Head of Education/DSL.

Where the behaviour places a child at risk, child protection procedures may be followed and police or children's social care may be contacted.

## **15. Staff, visitors, contractors and adult conduct**

Staff, volunteers, visitors and contractors must not bring illegal drugs, unauthorised substances or drug-related paraphernalia onto school premises or activities. They must not be under the influence of alcohol, drugs or substances while working with or around pupils, or where this could affect their judgement, conduct, safety or professional responsibilities.

Any concern about an adult's use, possession or influence of drugs, alcohol or substances must be reported to the Head of Education, DSL, Proprietor or appropriate senior leader. Where the concern relates to the Head of Education/DSL, it should be reported to the Proprietor.

Concerns about staff conduct will be managed in line with the Staff Code of Conduct, safeguarding procedures, low-level concerns and allegations procedures, disciplinary procedures and safer working practice expectations.

Visitors and contractors who breach this policy may be asked to leave the premises and may be reported to police, social care, their employer or relevant professional body where appropriate.

## **16. Recording, monitoring and review**

All drug and substance-related concerns, incidents, searches, confiscations, disclosures, referrals and follow-up actions must be recorded on CPOMS. Arbor may be used where attendance, behaviour or pupil information records also need to be updated.

Records should include, where relevant:

- date, time and location;
- name of pupil and staff involved;
- what happened and who reported it;
- substance or item suspected/found;
- medical response or first aid action;
- search details and outcome;
- confiscation, storage and disposal details;
- parent/carer contact;
- police, social care or external agency advice;
- safeguarding assessment and follow-up support;
- behaviour response or restorative action;

- review by the DSL or senior leader.

The DSL and senior leadership team will monitor incidents to identify patterns, repeat concerns, contextual safeguarding risks, equality issues, disproportionality, staff training needs and policy improvements. Monitoring will include consideration of whether pupils with SEND, pupils with social care involvement, or other vulnerable groups are disproportionately affected.

The Proprietor will monitor the operation of this policy and its procedures. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Proprietor, Head of Education/DSL and key staff, or sooner if there are changes to statutory guidance, legislation, local safeguarding procedures or following a significant incident.

## Appendix 1: Immediate response checklist

When a drug or substance-related concern arises, staff should use the following checklist as a guide. Professional judgement and safeguarding procedures must always be applied.

| Action   | Completed / Notes |
|--|-------------------|
| Make the situation safe and remove immediate risk                  |                   |
| Send for senior/DSL/first aid support                              |                   |
| Call 999 if there is any medical concern or uncertainty            |                   |
| Keep the pupil calm, supervised and safe                           |                   |
| Do not taste, smell, analyse or identify unknown substances        |                   |
| Secure any suspected substance or item safely                      |                   |
| Inform Head of Education/DSL or Deputy DSL                         |                   |
| Record on CPOMS as soon as possible                                |                   |
| Consider parent/carer contact, unless unsafe to do so              |                   |
| Consider police, children's social care or external agency advice  |                   |
| Plan safeguarding, behaviour, restorative and curriculum follow-up |                   |

## Appendix 2: Search and confiscation record checklist

All searches for prohibited items, searches where items are found, and searches conducted by police on school premises must be recorded on CPOMS. The record should include:

- date, time and location of search;
- name of pupil;
- reason for search and item being searched for;
- reasonable grounds for suspicion;
- staff member conducting the search;
- witness present;
- whether the search was same-sex and, if not, the reason;
- what was searched, such as outer clothing, bag, desk or locker;
- whether anything was found;
- what was confiscated and where it was stored;
- whether police or another agency was contacted;
- whether parents/carers were informed and when;
- pupil's response and any welfare concerns;
- safeguarding assessment and follow-up action.

### **Appendix 3: Linked policies**

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation arrangements, if held separately;
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions / Medication Policy;
- First Aid Policy;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- PSHE, Relationships, Sex and Health Education and Life Skills curriculum documentation;
- SEND Policy and Accessibility arrangements;
- Staff Code of Conduct;
- Low-Level Concerns and Allegations Against Staff Policy;
- Trips, Visits and Off-site Activities Policy;
- Data Protection Policy and Records Retention arrangements;
- Complaints Policy.