



Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping Policy (including nicotine and snus)

Document control

Item	Detail
Policy title	Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping Policy (including nicotine and snus)
Supersedes	Substance Misuse Policy (and the Substance Misuse Policy – Revised DRAFT (V4), August 2026)
Policy category	Pupil welfare, behaviour, health and safety, and safeguarding
Applies to	Whole School, including the Prep School and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
Policy owner	Head
Senior leader responsible	Deputy Head- Pastoral and Wellbeing
Effective date	1 September 2026
Next review date	September 2027
Review cycle	Annual
Version	September 2026 v1
Status	PUBLISHED

Policy summary

We want every pupil at Cokethorpe to be healthy, safe and confident in the choices they make. This policy brings together in one place our approach to drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping, nicotine products and snus: what we teach, what we expect, how we respond when a pupil is affected by or involved with a substance, and the help that is available. It covers education and prevention, asking for help, safeguarding, responding to an incident, searching and confiscation, drug testing, detection dogs, support and sanctions, and work with parents, the police and external agencies. It applies to the whole School, on site, on School transport, on trips and at School events.

Contents

1. Why this matters	3
2. What we are seeking to achieve.....	3
3. Scope and application.....	3
4. Definitions and the products covered	4
5. Roles and responsibilities	5
6. The law and the School Rules	6

7. Education and prevention at Cokethorpe.....	6
8. Asking for help.....	7
9. Substance misuse as a safeguarding matter	8
10. Responding to a substance-related incident.....	8
11. Substances found: handling, storage and disposal	9
12. Searching, screening and confiscation.....	10
13. Drug testing.....	10
14. Alcohol	12
15. Smoking, vaping, nicotine and snus	12
16. Medicines and prescribed drugs	13
17. Conduct outside the School context	13
18. Working with the police and external agencies.....	14
20. Records, personal data and confidentiality.....	14
21. Training and communication	14
22. Monitoring, review and publication	15
23. Related School policies and procedures.....	15
24. Legislation, regulation and guidance.....	15
Appendix: Sources of help and support	17
National organisations.....	17
Local support.....	17

1. Why this matters

Cokethorpe is a community built on respect and integrity. We want every pupil to be safe, well and able to thrive – to enjoy their studies, their sport, music and drama, and the friendships they make here. Anything that puts a young person's health, safety or future at risk matters to all of us.

Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, vapes, nicotine products and snus all have the potential to harm young people. They can harm them directly, through their effects on a developing body and brain, and indirectly, through the behaviour they can lead to and the company they can lead a young person to keep. For a small number of people they lead to serious and far-reaching consequences, not only for themselves but for their families and their communities. For young people in particular, these substances can affect mental health, education, relationships with family and friends, and future opportunities.

Every young person needs to be able to make safe, healthy and responsible decisions about substances, whether legal or illegal, and the School has a central part to play in helping them do so. We are also realistic: some pupils will face pressure to try something, and we aim to do everything we can to reduce that pressure and to give pupils the confidence and the words to resist it. We do not want to control our pupils' lives. We want them to be well informed, to make good decisions, and to know that if something goes wrong they can come to us and be helped.

2. What we are seeking to achieve

- a School community in which pupils are safe, healthy and free from the harm caused by substances;
- a clear programme of education that gives pupils accurate information, helps them understand how young people are drawn into substance use, and builds the confidence to make their own decisions;
- a culture in which a pupil who is worried about their own use, or about a friend, feels able to speak to an adult and expects to be helped;
- strong pastoral care, so that pupils and parents have ready access to support both in and out of School;
- a consistent, proportionate and lawful response when substances are found or misuse is suspected;
- early identification of pupils who may be being exploited by others through drugs; and
- a strong partnership with parents in keeping pupils safe and well.

3. Scope and application

This policy applies to all pupils. It also applies, in the respects set out below, to staff, Governors, parents, visitors, contractors and hirers of School facilities.

The policy applies:

- on School premises;
- on School transport;
- on School trips, visits, expeditions and other School activities, including evening activities and Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions;
- at School events, including those held off site;
- whenever a pupil is in School uniform or is otherwise identifiable as a member of the School, including when travelling to and from School; and
- to conduct off site or online that affects the safety or wellbeing of members of the School community, or the good order and reputation of the School.

Section 18 explains how the School responds to conduct outside the School context.

The expectations placed on staff in relation to alcohol, drugs, medicines and smoking are set out in the Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct) and in the Employee Handbook, and are not repeated here. A member of staff whose conduct raises a concern of this kind is dealt with under their terms and conditions of employment.

4. Definitions and the products covered

This policy uses the NHS definition of drugs, which includes:

- illegal substances such as, but not limited to, heroin, cocaine and cannabis;
- misused household products, such as gases, glues and aerosols;
- medicinal drugs; and
- alcohol and tobacco.

In this policy:

- **Drug** means any substance which, when taken, affects the way the body works or how a person feels, thinks or behaves. It includes controlled drugs, medicines, alcohol, tobacco, nicotine products, vapes, snus, volatile substances and new psychoactive substances.
- **Controlled drug** means a substance controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.
- **New psychoactive substance** means a substance capable of producing a psychoactive effect, regulated under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016. Such substances are sometimes wrongly described as “legal highs”. They are not safe, and their production, supply and importation are criminal offences.
- **Volatile substance** means solvents, gases, glues, aerosols and similar products that are misused by inhalation.
- **Substance misuse** means the use of any substance in a way that is unlawful, harmful, or contrary to the School Rules. It includes the misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medicines, performance-enhancing drugs and anabolic steroids, and substances intended to resemble drugs.
- **Paraphernalia** means any item associated with the use, preparation, storage or supply of a substance covered by this policy, including cigarette papers, lighters, grinders, pipes, e-liquids, coils, chargers, tins and pouches.
- **Drug-related incident** means any incident involving one or more of the substances described in this section.

Smoking, vaping, nicotine and snus: the products covered

So that there is no room for doubt, this policy covers:

- all cigarettes and tobacco products of any kind, including menthol cigarettes, cigars, hand-rolling tobacco, waterpipe (shisha) tobacco, heated tobacco and herbal smoking products, together with cigarette papers;
- all e-cigarettes, vapes, vape pens and any other device that enables the use of e-liquids, together with e-liquids, refills, pods and coils;
- all nicotine products, including nicotine pouches; and
- all pouches commonly called “snus”, whether or not they contain tobacco or nicotine.

Throughout this policy, smoking includes the use of e-cigarettes and vapes.

This policy applies to products of these kinds even where they contain no nicotine at all. A vape e-liquid or a snus pouch may contain no nicotine and is still covered.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Board of Governors	Approve this policy and satisfy themselves that the School's arrangements for pupil welfare, health and safety and safeguarding are effective.
The Head	Responsible for the operation of this policy; for decisions on sanctions, including suspension, permanent exclusion and required removal; for authorising drug testing, supportive agreements and detection dog visits; and for reporting to the Governors.
Deputy Head- Pastoral and Wellbeing	Responsible for the day-to-day pastoral response, for the pastoral programme and the LIF-Ed curriculum (also see below), for the assembly programme and for liaison with parents.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Mr Joe Hughes. Responsible for the safeguarding response to any substance-related concern, for liaison with children's social care and the police where a child may be at risk of harm or exploitation, and for safeguarding records.
Head of LIF-Ed (Senior School) and Assistant Head- Pastoral (Prep School)	Responsible for the design, sequencing and quality of teaching about drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping, nicotine and snus, and for the training and support of those who deliver it within the LIF-Ed programme.
Heads of Year, Head of Sixth Form and Tutors	Responsible for knowing their pupils well, for tutor-time discussion, for noticing change and for the first line of pastoral support.
School Nurse and the Medical Centre	Responsible for the immediate medical response to a pupil who is unwell or intoxicated, for the safe handling and recording of medicines, for supervising any sample taken under this policy, and for health advice and support to a pupil who wants to stop smoking or vaping. The Medical Centre can be contacted on extension 2335.
All staff	Expected to be alert to the indicators of substance misuse and exploitation, to respond calmly and promptly, to report concerns to the DSL without delay, and never to promise confidentiality to a pupil where a safeguarding concern arises. Staff are also reminded that their own attitude and behaviour towards these substances, where it is seen or known by pupils, matters a great deal to the School.
Pupils	Expected to look after their own health and safety, to keep the law and the School Rules, to speak to a trusted adult if they are worried about themselves or a friend, and to co-operate with the arrangements in this policy.
Parents	Asked to support the School's approach, to talk with their children about substances, to come to School information sessions where they can, and to contact the School promptly if they have a concern.

6. The law and the School Rules

Every member of our community is also a citizen, and is expected to keep the law, as well as to look after their own health, safety and wellbeing and think of others in the context of our School community. This policy explains what that means in practice.

The legislation and guidance relevant to this policy are listed at section 25. In summary:

- The possession, use, production and supply of controlled drugs are criminal offences under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. Supply includes giving or sharing a drug with a friend, whether or not money changes hands.
- The production, supply, offer to supply, possession with intent to supply and importation of new psychoactive substances are offences under the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.
- School premises are smoke-free under smoke-free legislation. The School also prohibits vaping and the use of nicotine products and snus anywhere on site.
- The law on tobacco, vapes and nicotine is changing. The Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 became law on 29 April 2026. From 29 October 2026 the age-of-sale restriction for nicotine and vaping products, fixed penalty notices and a ban on vape and nicotine product vending machines take effect. From 1 January 2027 it will be illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009, which will include most of our pupils.
- The law restricts the sale and consumption of alcohol by children and young people.
- The School has statutory powers to search a pupil and their possessions for prohibited items, including alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco and cigarette papers, and to seize, retain and dispose of items found. Those powers, and the safeguards that apply to them, are set out in the Behaviour Policy and summarised at section 12.

The School may determine whether a pupil's conduct has breached this policy on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the information known to the School, whether or not that information would be admissible as evidence or would result in a conviction in a court of law. Each case is considered reasonably and with procedural fairness, and any mitigating circumstances are carefully considered.

7. Education and prevention at Cokethorpe

We believe that good education is our strongest protection. Our aim is that pupils leave Cokethorpe with accurate information, a clear understanding of risk, and the skills and confidence to make sensible choices about their own health — and to resist pressure from others. Teaching is age-appropriate and factual, and is designed to build good decision-making rather than to frighten.

LIF-Ed in the Senior School

LIF-Ed is our personal development programme. LIF-Ed lessons are timetabled for every year group in the Senior School, one lesson each week, and are taught by pastoral staff (usually tutors) in liaison with the Head of Year. The programme covers Physical and Mental Wellbeing, Relationships and Sex Education, and Living in the Wider World.

Teaching about drugs, alcohol, smoking, vaping, nicotine and snus sits within the Health and Wellbeing strand, which includes sessions on “Vaping: a generational unknown” and on risk management — how to make sound decisions whatever the situation — alongside work on sleep, social media, stress and first aid. Content is taught through a spiral curriculum, so that pupils return to the same themes with increasing

maturity, and is categorised against a programme of study developed by the PSHE Association and the Life Lessons platform.

Visiting speakers, tutor time and assemblies

- Each year group hears talks from visiting speakers with direct experience in the relevant field, and external specialists also run workshops through the year.
- Issues arising from LIF-Ed are discussed regularly in tutor groups, including through the Votes for Schools platform.
- Assemblies are an important part of our shared life. The Head's Assembly is held on Fridays, and year group and House assemblies run on a rota organised by the Heads of Year, the Head of Sixth Form and the Head of the House Programme. Health and wellbeing themes, including substance use, feature in this programme.
- The Prep School holds a weekly assembly with visiting speakers, and Chapel is part of the life of all Prep School pupils.

The Prep School

Prep School pupils have a weekly wellbeing lesson taught by a Prep School teacher, covering seven areas across the year under three topics, and supported by the Yale RULER programme. Teaching about substances at this stage focuses on medicines, keeping safe, looking after your body and knowing which adults to tell.

Working with parents

Parents play a vital role in their child's personal development and we know that it can also be helpful for parents to have opportunity to meet each other and discuss some of the issues that arise as their children grow up. As such, we run workshops and information sessions for parents so that families are well informed and can talk with their children with confidence, and we share information when it is relevant and useful. Parents who would like advice, or who are worried about their own child, are always welcome to contact their child's Tutor, Head of Year or the Deputy Head- Pastoral and Wellbeing.

Keeping our teaching current

Pupil feedback informs future lesson content, and we keep the programme under review so that it reflects the risks pupils actually face — including vaping, nicotine pouches and snus, new psychoactive substances, the misuse of prescription medicines, and supply arranged online or through social media. Professional development for those teaching LIF-Ed is provided through the year, with updates to the Common Room through year group meetings and INSET.

8. Asking for help

A pupil who is worried about their own use of a substance, about a habit that may be developing, or about something they have already tried, is encouraged to speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, their Tutor, their Head of Year, the School Nurse or any member of staff they trust. Where a pupil comes forward in this way, our first response will be to help.

A pupil who is concerned about a friend should tell a member of staff. Passing that concern on is an act of friendship, not disloyalty, and it may prevent serious harm. Pupils may also send a message anonymously through Blue Light, and information about where to find help is published on Teams.

Staff cannot promise a pupil unconditional confidentiality, and pupils should understand that information about illegal activity will be passed to the Head and, where relevant, to the DSL. Information will be shared only with those who need it in order to keep the pupil or others safe, and the pupil will normally be told what is being shared and why.

9. Substance misuse as a safeguarding matter

Substance misuse is often a sign that a young person needs help. It can also be a sign of emotional or sexual abuse, or of child sexual or criminal exploitation. All staff must consider whether a pupil involved with substances is being harmed or exploited, and must report any concern to the DSL without delay, in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Staff should be particularly alert to:

- child criminal exploitation, including county lines, where children are coerced or manipulated into storing, carrying or supplying drugs or money;
- drug debt used to trap and control a young person;
- concealment of drugs internally;
- unexplained absence, going missing, or being found in an area or property with no obvious connection;
- unexplained money, phones, clothing or gifts;
- injuries, withdrawal, or sudden changes in behaviour, friendship group or presentation;
- signs that a pupil may be particularly vulnerable to substance misuse; and
- substance misuse by a member of a pupil's family and its effect on the pupil.

Where a pupil may be a victim of exploitation, trafficking or modern slavery, the DSL will consider a referral to children's social care and to the National Referral Mechanism. A pupil who has been exploited is a victim first, and the School's response will reflect that.

Where staff are unsure whether or how to share information, they should seek guidance from the DSL, who may in turn consult the local authority designated officer and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Partnership.

10. Responding to a substance-related incident

Where a member of staff suspects that a pupil is under the influence of a substance, or finds a substance, the following order of priority applies.

Step 1 – Health and safety first

The immediate priority is the pupil's health. Staff must summon medical help at once. In an emergency an ambulance must be called on 999. The Medical Centre must be contacted on extension 2335, and the pupil must not be left alone. Any substance or paraphernalia that may have been taken should be kept safely and made available to medical staff or paramedics, as it may assist treatment.

Step 2 – Make the situation safe

Staff should move other pupils away from any risk, secure the area and ask another member of staff to assist. Staff should stay calm and avoid confrontation.

Step 3 – Report

The member of staff must inform the DSL and the Head, or in their absence the most senior member of staff available, as soon as possible, and must make a written record the same day. All incidents involving the actual or suspected use or possession of an illegal substance are reported to the Head.

Step 4 – Safeguarding assessment

The DSL considers whether the pupil is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, whether exploitation may be a factor, and whether a referral to children's social care or the police is required.

Step 5 – Inform parents

Parents will normally be informed promptly. Where informing a parent might place the pupil at risk, the DSL will decide the appropriate course and record the reason.

Step 6 – Investigate and decide

The School will establish the facts so far as it reasonably can, taking account of the pupil's account, before deciding on support and any sanction. Every complaint or report of involvement with substances is followed up and investigated. Where the police are investigating, the School will co-operate and will consider the effect of its own enquiries on that investigation.

11. Substances found: handling, storage and disposal

Where a substance or item is found, whether during a search, following a disclosure, or because it has been handed in or found on site:

- a second adult witness should be present throughout wherever possible;
- the item will be sealed in a bag or container immediately, with the date and time of the find and the name of the witness recorded, and stored in a secure lockable place with access limited to senior members of staff;
- a written record will be made of what was found, where, when, by whom, who was present and what was done with it, including any police incident reference number;
- the police will be notified without delay where a suspected controlled drug is found, and will collect it and store or dispose of it in line with locally agreed protocols. A substance may be disposed of by the School where there is good reason to do so, and the reason will be recorded. The law does not require the School to give the police the name of the pupil from whom a drug was taken, but it is our practice to do so;
- where the legal status of a substance is uncertain, it will be treated as if it were a controlled drug;
- alcohol, tobacco, cigarette papers, vapes, e-liquids, nicotine products, snus and related paraphernalia will be retained or disposed of as appropriate and will not be returned to the pupil;
- parents will be informed unless there is a safeguarding reason why that would not be in the pupil's best interests; and
- paraphernalia including needles and sharps will be handled only with appropriate protection and disposed of safely. Staff must not attempt to handle sharps without the correct equipment and should seek assistance from the Medical Centre or the Estates team.

Any safeguarding concern arising from the find will be identified and a support team of staff put in place around the pupil alongside any disciplinary measures. Staff who take temporary possession of a

suspected controlled drug in these circumstances, and who act in accordance with this policy, are acting lawfully.

12. Searching, screening and confiscation

Searching is a protective measure. Used properly, it helps keep the School a safe place in which pupils can learn and thrive.

The Head, and staff specially authorised by the Head, may search a pupil and their possessions where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil has a prohibited item, or an item banned by the School Rules. Searches are carried out in accordance with the current Department for Education guidance on searching, screening and confiscation in schools. The full procedure — including who is authorised to search, the requirement for a witness, the position on clothing and electronic devices, the use of reasonable force, and recording — is set out in the Behaviour Policy and is not repeated here.

For the purposes of this policy:

- **Prohibited items** include alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco and cigarette papers, together with knives and weapons, stolen items, fireworks, pornographic images and any article that a member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence or to cause personal injury or damage to property.
- **Items banned by the School**, for which a search may also be made, include vapes, e-cigarettes, e-liquids and associated devices, nicotine products, snus and related paraphernalia.

Searches may be carried out on School premises, and off site wherever a member of staff has lawful control or charge of the pupil, for example on a School trip. A pupil's clothing and possessions may be searched, including pockets, bags, desks and lockers.

The School is not required to inform parents before a search or to seek their consent. As a matter of good practice, parents will be informed of any search for a prohibited item and of its outcome as soon as is practicable, including what has been confiscated and what action the School has taken, unless there is a safeguarding reason why that would not be in the pupil's best interests. After any search, and whether or not anything was found, staff should consider whether the circumstances give cause to suspect that the pupil is suffering or is likely to suffer harm, and speak to the DSL where they do.

13. Drug testing

The School uses drug testing as a protective measure, not as a statement of distrust. Testing serves three purposes: it deters the use of drugs and substances; it helps us identify a pupil who needs support; and it allows a pupil who has been wrongly suspected to be cleared. It also gives a pupil who is under pressure a reason to say no. Testing is one part of a wider approach in which education, pastoral care and support come first.

13.1 When a test may be required

Where there is reason to suspect that a pupil has been involved with drugs or substances, the pupil may be asked to provide a urine sample under medical supervision. Reason to suspect may arise from information or a complaint received, or from a pupil's behaviour. Where a pupil has admitted, or has been found, to have used drugs, the School may make regular testing a condition of the pupil's continued place at the School, as a support and a deterrent for that pupil and to help prevent a pattern of use developing.

13.2 Authorisation

A test is authorised by the Head or, in the Head's absence, by the Deputy Head- Pastoral and Wellbeing.

13.3 Informed consent

The relevant consent to a test is that of the pupil rather than the parents, even where the pupil is under 16, provided the pupil is of sufficient maturity and understanding and gives informed consent. Before consent is sought, the pupil is told what is being tested for, how the sample is taken, who will see the result, how long the result is kept and what happens if the test is positive.

13.4 Notifying parents

Reasonable endeavours will be made, before a sample is taken, to notify a parent of the requirement for a sample and the reasons for it.

13.5 Supervision and dignity

A sample is taken under medical supervision, normally by the School Nurse, with another member of staff present. All due care is taken to respect the pupil's privacy and dignity, and appropriate adjustments are made for age, SEND, health conditions and any relevant vulnerability.

13.6 Testing procedure

Testing is carried out in School and in accordance with good practice. Care is taken to make as certain as possible that the sample provided is genuine and uncontaminated. The sample is tested in School using a chemical strip test. Samples are not sent elsewhere for analysis.

13.7 If a pupil declines

A pupil may decline to provide a sample and will be asked to explain why. Declining is not treated as an admission. The School is, however, entitled to draw inferences from the pupil's response and general demeanour, which may strengthen the case for exclusion. The School will also consider the wider circumstances, talk with the pupil and parents, and decide what support or further action is appropriate, including possible contact with the police and external agencies.

13.8 Results

The result is shared with the pupil and parents and with those members of staff who need to know. The outcome of a test, whether positive or negative, does not form part of the pupil's permanent medical record.

13.9 Procedure following a positive test

A meeting will be arranged between the pupil, the Head (or in the Head's absence the Deputy Head- Pastoral and Wellbeing) and another member of staff. Parents are invited to attend or to be kept informed throughout. The test result and all other relevant information will be put to the pupil, who is invited to respond. The pupil's response will be heard and considered, and further enquiries made if necessary, before the Head makes decisions about next steps.

13.10 Sanction and review

The possession, use or supply of drugs in schools or in school-related contexts will be treated as a very serious disciplinary offence. It will usually result in the offending pupil's permanent exclusion from the school. For clarity, 'school-related contexts' includes any time that the pupil is in school uniform, work

experience, day and residential trips and other activities outside of school, organised by or representing Cokethorpe. The police may also need to be involved.

In the very rare event that exclusion is not permanent, the Head may agree with a pupil and their family that a supportive agreement is entered into which sets out the requirements governing the pupil's continued attendance at the School. Those requirements may include drug testing at any time and without warning, and the searching of the pupil's bag, belongings or locker.

Where a pupil is excluded, the pupil and their parents have a right to seek a review by the Governors, which will normally take place under the separate procedure set out in the Behaviour Policy and the Complaints Procedure Policy, normally within ten School days. The exclusion may continue in the interim.

Consideration will also be given as to what support, referral or needs assessment is appropriate in the circumstances, to safeguard the well-being of the pupil and of any other pupils who may have been affected.

13.11 Personal data

A drug test result is special category personal data concerning health. It is processed in accordance with the UK GDPR, the Data Protection Act 2018 and the School's Privacy Notice, stored securely, made accessible only to those who need it, and retained for no longer than is necessary. The School's designated data protection contact is the Bursar.

14. Alcohol

Pupils may not bring alcohol on to School premises, consume alcohol at School, on School transport, on School trips or at School events, or be under the influence of alcohol at School or in the vicinity of the School.

The only exception to this is at the Peacock Ball. On this occasion, those Upper Six pupils who have turned 18y (consistent with the law) are permitted to drink a small quantity of alcohol, under the supervision of staff and parents. This event is risk assessed and signed off by the Head or Bursar.

The possession, use or supply of alcohol in a School context is treated as a serious disciplinary matter and will most likely result in suspension (temporary exclusion) or, in a serious or repeated case, permanent exclusion.

All incidents involving the actual or suspected consumption of alcohol at School, close to School, in School uniform or during a School activity are reported to the Head. Pastoral support for a pupil who may have an unhealthy relationship with alcohol may include counselling support, referral to a support organisation, a structured regime in School, a supportive agreement, or any other strategy that would help that pupil.

15. Smoking, vaping, nicotine and snus

We strongly discourage the use of tobacco and nicotine products. They are highly addictive, they damage health, and tobacco kills. Vaping is not a safe alternative: vaping products are variable in strength and content, nicotine is addictive, the long-term effects on young people are not yet understood, and vaping can act as a route into other substance use. Snus and nicotine pouches carry the same risk of addiction. Pupils learn about all of this through LIF-Ed.

The School (including buildings, grounds and school transport) is a designated no-smoking and no-vaping site, and this applies equally to adults, including staff, parents, visitors and contractors.

Smoking, vaping and the use of nicotine products and snus pouches, whether or not they contain tobacco or nicotine, are not permitted at any time when a pupil is subject to School discipline, whatever the pupil's age. That includes while travelling to and from School, while in School uniform, while on School premises, and while taking part in any School activity or trip.

Being in possession of paraphernalia associated with smoking, vaping, nicotine or snus is treated in the same way as being caught using those products. Possession includes having such items stored somewhere associated with the pupil — for example, but not only, in a bag or a locker.

Our response

A pupil who is caught smoking, vaping or using snus or nicotine pouches, who has clearly been using any of these products, or who is found in possession of related paraphernalia while travelling to and from School, while in School uniform, while on School premises, and while taking part in any School activity or trip can expect a serious sanction, most likely suspension (temporary exclusion).

Items and paraphernalia found will be confiscated and will not be returned to the pupil.

Our approach is educational as well as disciplinary. A pupil who is using tobacco, vapes, nicotine products or snus and who wants to stop will be offered help through the School Nurse and the pastoral team, and we will work with parents to support them.

16. Medicines and prescribed drugs

Some pupils need to take medication during the School day, and we want that to be straightforward and safe. Parents should contact the Medical Centre so that the necessary arrangements can be made, and must inform the School in writing of any medication a pupil is taking. Medicines are managed through the School Nurse and the Medical Centre in accordance with the School's first aid and medical arrangements, and administration is recorded on iSAMS.

Pupils should not bring medicines on to the School site unless this has been agreed with the Medical Centre. A pupil who needs a painkiller during the School day should go to the Medical Centre rather than bring their own supply.

Prescribed and over-the-counter medicines are for the person to whom they are prescribed or supplied. Pupils must not share, sell, supply or take another person's medication. The misuse of prescribed or over-the-counter medicines is treated as substance misuse under this policy.

17. Conduct outside the School context

Where the School receives well-supported information that a pupil has been involved with drugs or substances outside School, the Head will inform the pupil's parents.

Such conduct is treated primarily as a pastoral matter. It may nevertheless be treated as falling within the School context where the Head considers that it has brought the School into disrepute, or that it involves a number of Cokethorpe pupils — for example where drugs feature at a party hosted by a pupil and attended by other pupils of the School.

Support for a pupil known to have used substances outside School may include counselling support, referral to a support organisation, a structured regime in School, a supportive agreement, or any other strategy that would help that pupil. Where a supportive agreement is used, it may include unannounced searches of bags and belongings or drug testing, so that substances are not brought into the School context and so that no pupil is in School while under the influence.

18. Working with the police and external agencies

It is a criminal offence to possess, consume or supply certain drugs. In such cases pupils and parents can expect that the police will be informed. The School will normally inform the police where it believes a criminal offence involving drugs has been committed on School premises or in connection with the School, and will always do so where there is evidence of supply.

The police are informed not out of any wish to punish the pupils involved, but to give the police information that may help protect other young people and the wider community. The School seeks to uphold the rule of law and to support the work of the police locally.

The DSL leads on liaison with the police and with children's social care. Involving the police does not remove the School's own responsibility to safeguard the pupil and to decide on its own response. The School will co-operate fully with any police investigation and will take advice on the timing of its own enquiries.

The School may also inform trading standards or the police where tobacco, alcohol, vapes, nicotine products, snus or psychoactive substances appear to be being sold or supplied inappropriately to young people in the local area.

19. Records, personal data and confidentiality

Records are kept of every substance-related incident, search, item found, disposal, drug test and supportive agreement. Records are factual, made promptly, and stored securely with access restricted to those who need them. Safeguarding records are held in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures.

Information about a pupil's substance use, and any drug test result, is special category personal data concerning health. It is processed lawfully, fairly and securely in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and with the School's Privacy Notice, and is retained in accordance with the School's retention arrangements. The School's designated data protection contact is the Bursar.

20. Training and communication

Staff receive training and briefing appropriate to their role, covering the indicators of substance misuse, the risks of child criminal exploitation and county lines, what to do in a medical emergency involving a substance, how to handle and record a substance found, and how and when to report a concern to the DSL. Substance misuse is included in safeguarding induction and in regular safeguarding updates from the DSL. Staff who are authorised to search receive additional training.

This policy is published on the School website and is available to parents on request. It is drawn to the attention of pupils through LIF-Ed, tutor time and assemblies. Pupil-facing guidance is shared with pupils around school and published on Teams.

21. Monitoring, review and publication

The Head reports on the operation of this policy to the Governors, including any trends or patterns identified, so that our education and prevention work can be adapted. This policy is reviewed at least annually by the Governors, and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance or School practice changes.

22. Related School policies and procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following School policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures
- Behaviour Policy (including searching, screening and confiscation, and the suspension, exclusion and required removal framework)
- Prevention of Bullying Policy
- LIF-Ed Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy for Pupils
- Health and Safety Policy
- First Aid Policy (incorporating Medical Assistance Procedures)
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Social Media Policy for Pupils
- Access, Security and Visitors Policy
- Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct) and the Employee Handbook
- Complaints Procedure Policy
- Privacy Notice for Pupils and Parents
- Guidelines on the Storage and Retention of Records

23. Legislation, regulation and guidance

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance, and should be read as referring to the current version of each.

Legislation

- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Education Act 1996 (as amended), including the power to search without consent for prohibited items
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
- Equality Act 2010
- Licensing Act 2003
- Health Act 2006 and smoke-free legislation
- Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991
- Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 — law on 29 April 2026; vaping and nicotine measures from 29 October 2026; tobacco age of sale from 1 January 2027
- UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018

Statutory and other guidance

- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education — the 2026 version comes into force on 1 September 2026 and is the framework for this policy
- Department for Education, Working together to safeguard children
- Department for Education and ACPO, Drugs: advice for schools (published 10 September 2012)
- Department for Education, Searching, screening and confiscation in schools
- Department for Education, Behaviour in schools
- Department for Education, School suspensions and permanent exclusions
- Department for Education, Use of reasonable force in schools
- Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance
- Home Office and The Children's Society, County Lines Toolkit for Professionals
- Information Commissioner's Office, Data sharing: a code of practice

Useful links

- Drugs: advice for schools — <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-advice-for-schools>
- Teacher training: drugs, alcohol and tobacco — <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teacher-training-drugs-alcohol-and-tobacco>
- Improving behaviour in schools, including searching, screening and confiscation — <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/improving-behaviour-in-schools>
- Smoking and vaping: guidance, policy and regulation — <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/smoking-and-vaping-guidance-policy-and-regulation>
- Alcohol and drug misuse prevention and treatment guidance — <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/alcohol-and-drug-misuse-prevention-and-treatment-guidance>
- Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners — <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-practitioners-information-sharing-advice>

Appendix: Sources of help and support

The School's own first line of support is always available: a pupil's Tutor, their Head of Year, the School Nurse, the Deputy Head- Pastoral and Wellbeing, and the Designated Safeguarding Lead. In addition, pupils, parents and staff who would like information or support may find the following useful.

National organisations

Organisation	What they do	Contact
FRANK	Confidential information, support and advice about drugs, for young people and for parents.	www.talktofrank.com
We Are With You	Free, confidential support with alcohol, drugs or mental health, through local services and online. Services for young people as well as adults.	www.wearewithyou.org.uk
Adfam	Information and support for families affected by someone else's drug or alcohol use, with a directory of local family support services.	www.adfam.org.uk
Drinkaware	Independent alcohol education charity helping people make better choices about drinking.	www.drinkaware.co.uk
Drinkline	National free alcohol helpline for anyone concerned about their own drinking or someone else's.	0300 123 1110
ASH (Action on Smoking and Health)	Public health charity working to reduce the harm caused by tobacco.	www.ash.org.uk
NHS Better Health – Quit Smoking	NHS advice and practical support for anyone who wants to stop smoking or vaping.	www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking
Re-Solv	Support and information on solvent and volatile substance abuse.	www.re-solv.org
Family Lives	Support and advice for parents on any aspect of family life, including substance use.	www.familylives.org.uk
Childline	Free, confidential support for any child or young person.	0800 1111 – www.childline.org.uk

Local support

Service	What they do	Contact
Oxfordshire young people's drug and alcohol service	Specialist advice, assessment and treatment for young people in Oxfordshire.	Tel: 01865 590825 Email: here4youthox@cranstoun.org.uk Oxfordshire Here4YOUTH
Local Thames Valley Police neighbourhood and schools officer (Witney)	Local police liaison, advice and community safety.	Thames Valley Police – Witney Neighbourhood Policing Team Local police liaison, advice and community safety. Tel: 101 (non-emergency)

		Witney Neighbourhood Team page General information at www.police.uk
The pupil's GP or the local NHS service in Witney	Confidential medical advice and referral to specialist support.	Contact the pupil's registered GP practice or NHS 111 for non-emergency medical advice.
Oxfordshire County Council – children and young people's services	Early help, family support and safeguarding referrals.	Oxfordshire MASH (Children's Social Care): 0345 050 7666 / 01865 519800 . Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team: 0800 833 408