



SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

Policy Custodian: Deputy Head (Pastoral)

Approving Body: MTS Senior Leadership Team

Approved: *September 2026*

Statement of Intent

Opinions differ widely about the extent and effects of substance misuse amongst young people. There is a developing acceptance of drugs within society, together with an increasing, if mistaken, belief that some drugs are not as harmful as once may have been thought. Young people face growing pressures to use or experiment with controlled drugs, alcohol, tobacco and other substances. At Merchant Taylors' we aim to do all we can to reduce these pressures, to educate our pupils about the risks of involvement with drugs and to maintain an environment free from illegal drugs and from the temptation to use illegal drugs and other harmful or potentially harmful substances. The responsibility for the education of our pupils is shared with parents and effective communication and co-operation is essential to the implementation of the School's policy. The School hopes that parents will share concerns with the School should they consider their son is involved in illegal drug usage.

Policy aims

- To ensure compliance with the criminal law under which it is an offence for any person to possess, use, supply or sell controlled drugs or for the School to allow its premises to be used for those purposes.
- To help develop in our pupils the moral courage to reject pressures to take part in activities this may be harmful to their health, integrity, independence and respect for the law.
- To maintain the integrity of the School community, to reflect the wishes of parents, and to provide support and confidential counselling for those who may otherwise be tempted to take risks or experiment with illegal drugs.
- To provide a firm disciplinary framework for dealing with pupils who bring illegal drugs into School and use or tempt others to use them at or away from School premises. Pupils involved with illegal drugs in this way are liable to permanent exclusion.
- To increase understanding of the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse, and the law.
- To provide pupils with accurate information about drugs and other harmful or potentially harmful substances and make them aware of consequences of substance misuse.
- To enable pupils to make healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge, challenging attitudes and developing coping strategies.
- To actively discourage the use of illegal drugs (and substances referred to as 'legal highs') and to treat cases of drug misuse by pupils as serious misconduct, which will be investigated and may lead to the imposition of sanctions against pupils.

This policy has been drawn up in accordance with the guidance contained in the following publications:

Drug advice for schools – Advice for local authorities, headteachers, school staff and governing bodies, DfE and ACPO, September 2012

Searching, screening and confiscation – Advice for headteachers, school staff and governing bodies, DfE, January 2018

This policy applies at all times when a pupil is in the care of the School. It will also apply to complaints or other incidents in or out of School where an individual pupil or the reputation of the School is affected, for example when one pupil is found to have offered illegal drugs or other substances to another.

Implementation

Implementation of this Policy will be based on an understanding between pupils, staff and parents and about what is in the best interests of all pupils at the School. It is also meant to act as a positive and effective deterrent. The Head Master has overall responsibility for the Policy and its implementation, and for liaison with the Governing Body, parents and appropriate outside agencies. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is responsible for the pastoral care implications of this Policy.

Education

A programme of education about drugs will be maintained throughout the School and will be delivered primarily through the School's Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education programme. All staff and especially those in the PE, Chemistry and Biology departments will have their own contributions to make as appropriate situations present themselves. Tutors will also remind their tutees of the school rules regarding drug misuse and the consequences of failure to adhere to the rules at the start of each year. Regular drug awareness training will be part of the teaching staff INSET programme.

Code of practice for suspected substance misuse

1. All teaching staff and especially tutors should see it as their responsibility to keep an eye open for possible substance misuse, to be sufficiently well-informed to recognise the usual symptoms and to be familiar with this Code of Practice.
2. When teachers suspect that a pupil is showing the behavioural or physical effects of continuing substance misuse, their suspicions should be reported immediately to both the pupil's tutor and the Deputy Head (Pastoral). They will then discuss with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) the most appropriate action to follow, this will invariably involve discussion with the Head Master.
3. If a pupil approaches a member of staff with information about drugs use, either involving himself or other boys, then the member of staff should be encouraging and reassuring, but must stop short of an absolute guarantee of confidentiality.
4. If the teacher has reason to believe that a pupil is under the influence of drugs while he is actually in School, this should be reported immediately to the Deputy Head (Pastoral), or if they are unavailable, to another senior member of staff. The teacher should not attempt to question the boy at this stage.
5. The School may search a pupil without consent if there is a suspicion that they are in possession of an item prohibited under the School rules, which includes items associated with substance misuse. This will be done in accordance with the School Rules, and the DfE Government Guidance, *Behaviour and discipline in schools*, 2016, and *Searching, screening and confiscation – Advice for headteachers, school staff and governing bodies*, 2018. Any materials found will be confiscated under the processes also laid down in those documents.
6. A pupil who is suspected of drug misuse will be interviewed by a senior member of staff. A pupil who is interviewed about substance misuse must be informed of the nature of the suspicion; he should be given the opportunity to reply honestly; and the pupil's parents should be contacted by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head Master at the conclusion of the interview,

or at a point during the interview if necessary, to hear an explanation of what has taken place, regardless of the outcome of the interview.

7. Any material evidence of substance misuse obtained at interview and any substances that are confiscated should be put in an envelope and sealed, dated and timed, in the presence of the boy concerned and kept in the safe until further action is required. Senior staff will decide whether or not the substances should be destroyed or given into police custody. School staff should not attempt to analyse or taste an unidentified substance.
8. All instances of suspicion of substance misuse must be brought immediately to the attention of the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head Master, who will decide whether or not to contact the pupil's parents and, if necessary, will also contact the relevant authorities. There is no legal obligation to inform the police, but it is possible that the police will be informed of any significant drugs misuse on the School premises, to avoid liability as a "manager or occupier" of premises under Section 8 of the 1971 Act.

It is essential to observe sensible precautions of confidentiality when following up suspected cases.

Discipline following misuse of drugs or substances

The School will consider each substance incident individually and recognises that a variety of responses will be necessary to deal with incidents.

Those who sell illegal drugs, possess them with intent to supply, distribute them, to encourage others to use them, whether on or off school premises while under school auspices will be permanently excluded

In every other case where the Head Master is satisfied that there has been involvement in illegal drugs on or off School premises while under School auspices, or where a pupil has tested positively to illegal drugs, the pupil will normally be permanently excluded, as the health and safety of other pupils is directly at risk. Alternative sanctions, depending on all the circumstances, including the pupil's degree of involvement and at the sole discretion of the Head Master after consultation with the Chairman of Governors may include a fixed-term exclusion.

As an alternative to expulsion in cases which do not involve supply or encouragement to others to use illegal drugs, the Head Master at his sole discretion (after consultation with the Chairman of Governors) may permit the pupil to remain at School subject to a regime of testing at intervals during the following two years. Drug testing will not take place during any period of external examinations. Both parents and pupils to whom the regime is offered would be required to sign consent forms describing the way in which the regime would operate. A pupil testing positive to illegal drugs while on this regime would be expelled immediately. All records of drug testing will not be used for any other purpose and will be destroyed when the pupil concerned leaves the School. This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner following any serious incident involving pupils and drugs. The issue of new guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) or changes to best practice will also initiate a review

Deputy Head (Pastoral)