



Drugs and Drug Testing Policy	
Version	2026.1
Effective from	August 2026
Extent of Policy	Sedbergh School
Policy Owner	Director of Safeguarding
Review by	August 2027
Governance	Regulatory Committee
Frequency of Audit	Annual
Circulation	Parents by request Teaching staff
Publication	Website The Hub

We are committed to promoting a healthy, safe environment at all settings in the Sedbergh Schools Group, in which good citizenship and respect for the law can flourish. We believe that it is important to deliver a clear, consistent moral framework that promotes the integrity of our community, and gives all of our pupils the understanding and self-confidence to avoid harm and reject illicit drugs and substances. The safety and wellbeing of pupils and the wider school community is our priority, and we will help pupils to find the right support if they or someone else is using drugs or other prohibited substances. A number of our staff are trained in recognising and responding to the symptoms of drug and substance abuse. This policy should be considered alongside the Group Safeguarding Policy.

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

Drugs and/or substances means illegal substances, controlled drugs and the paraphernalia of drugs or substances intended to resemble drugs, substances commonly referred to as "legal highs" or "legal" drugs which can be obtained from a chemist shop, performance-enhancing drugs, new psychoactive substances (NPS), anabolic steroids, glue and other substances held or supplied in each case for purposes of misuse.

"Illegal drugs" may also refer to controlled substances that it is a criminal offence to possess or supply, and prescription medicines which are used without or against clinical advice. This includes drugs which have not been prescribed to the user by a doctor or medical professional, and drugs that have been prescribed abroad but are illegal in the UK. Illegal drugs include nootropics, those that may be referred to as 'legal highs', 'study drugs', 'smart drugs' or 'recreational drugs', and substances other than alcohol that change the user's behaviour or their mental, physical, or emotional state. (See [Psychoactive Substances Act 2016](#).)

Young people are becoming increasingly aware of, and in some cases using, new psychoactive substances (NPS). These are designed to mimic the effect of illegal drugs but are structurally different enough to avoid being classified as illegal substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act. Despite being labelled as legal these substances are not always safe to use and often contain controlled drugs making them illegal to possess. If School staff are unable to identify the legal status of a drug, it should be treated as a controlled drug.

This policy covers the possession, use and supply of such substances and applies to all pupils when they are on School premises, or in the care of the School, or wearing School uniform, or otherwise representing or associated with the School. The policy should also be considered alongside the School Medical Policy.

EDUCATION PROGRAMME

We have extensive health education and Sedbergh Compass and PSHE programmes that focus upon the potential short-term and long-term risks to health from drug and substance abuse. As with our related programmes concerning alcohol, tobacco and other prohibited substances, these concentrate on teaching the importance of young people making healthy, informed choices. However, they also include an ethical dimension, designed to instil an understanding of the importance of complying with the law. Our programmes involve pupils of all ages and continue throughout a pupil's time at the School. They extend across the curriculum, involving PSHE, Science and Drama lessons. We also invite visiting lecturers to cover the serious risks from abuse of legal and illegal drugs or substances including alcohol, tobacco, vapes and nicotine pouches.

Our medical staff play an active role in promoting healthy lifestyles and ensuring greater awareness about the risks involved in the inappropriate use of drugs and/or substances. Pupils can discuss their individual worries about drugs or substances with their Housemaster/Housemistress, Tutor or AHSM. They can also refer themselves to the Medical Staff and to the Independent Listener for individual guidance. Anonymous reporting is available to pupils who wish to highlight a concern or seek help on behalf of another pupil. We welcome the opportunity to discuss matters with parents or guardians and are very conscious of the importance of working together in order to promote the wellbeing of our pupils.

SUPPORT

If a pupil comes forward and voluntarily identifies themselves as a drug user and asks for help, or if their parents or friends ask for help on their behalf, the School may, depending upon the circumstances, and at the discretion of the Headmaster offer them the opportunity to reform their habit with the support of a drug testing programme and counselling at the parents' expense. At all times, the law of the land in respect of drugs and other prohibited substances will apply.

PROCEDURES

Possession of drugs is a criminal offence. The School recognises that situations can be complex, for example, where addiction, medical or mental health issues may be involved, and therefore will examine each instance of possession or use of drugs, harmful or prohibited substances on a case-by-case basis, with the priority consideration being the protection of the individual pupil and wider School community. The police will always be informed where a pupil has been found to be selling or sharing an illegal drug, putting other people at risk.

Every complaint, report, or observation in relation to involvement with drugs or other prohibited substances will be followed up and assessed. The DSL/DDSL will be informed of all cases and concerns relating to drugs or substance misuse, and will decide whether a referral to Children's Services and/or the police is necessary in order to ensure the right help and advice is provided. Where significant harm (actual or likely) is a feature a referral to the relevant external agency will be made in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy. A pupil suspected of such involvement may be suspended pending the outcome of an assessment or investigation by external agencies.

The Headmaster and staff authorised by the Headmaster may search a pupil or a pupil's possessions without their consent where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that a pupil has drugs, harmful or prohibited substances in their possession.

If the School seizes a controlled drug, the drug may be destroyed if there is good reason to do so. Otherwise the School will deliver it to the police as soon as reasonably practicable. In all other cases, the School may decide to request the involvement of Children's Services and/or the police from the outset. If the police suspect that a pupil possesses or has stored drugs, prohibited substances or related paraphernalia, the police may elect to investigate using their own procedures or may pass the matter back to the Children's Services and/or the School for further assessment.

A pupil suspected of involvement with unauthorised substances, either in or out of term time, may be asked to give a biological sample. The reason for this policy is:

- to prevent harm;
- to deter breaches of School discipline;
- to identify users;
- to absolve those who have been wrongly suspected.

Reason to suspect use of drugs or substances may arise as a result of information or a complaint received or because of a pupil's behaviour or demeanour.

The relevant consent to a test is that of the pupil rather than the parents, even if the pupil is under 16 years of age, provided they are of sufficient maturity and understanding and gives their informed consent in writing. The member of staff leading the investigation will determine whether or not the pupil is able to provide this consent and may request the additional opinion of the School Doctor.

If a pupil refuses to provide a biological sample they will be asked to say why they have refused. The School will be entitled to draw inferences from their response and general demeanour. If a parent's consent is required and they refuse to consent to their child providing a biological sample, the School may draw inferences from this as well as the pupil's general demeanour. Reasonable endeavours will be made to inform parents or guardians of the outcome of any biological sample tests and the reasons for taking the sample.

Where there is a positive test, or where the pupil refuses to provide a sample to be tested, the School will follow a disciplinary procedure. The taking of the unauthorised substances outside of term time will be deemed irrelevant if the drugs test is positive during term time and normal sanctions will apply. In cases where a pupil may expect to be expelled, the School will follow the procedure set out in its Policy on Expulsion, Removal and Review.

SANCTIONS

The likely sanction for the possession or use of drugs or prohibited substances is expulsion. Alternative sanctions, when there are mitigating circumstances, are likely to involve suspension and a final warning. Any pupil found supplying or offering drugs to another person will be expelled and any criminal activity will be referred to the police. Please see School's Behaviour, Rewards & Sanctions Policy.

International pupils studying in the UK should note that where misconduct in relation to illegal drugs is found, it may affect their current or future visa status.

For further guidance see:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-advice-for-schools>

Dr J M Burns
Director of Safeguarding
Reviewed: August 2026

Drugs & Drug Testing Policy – Action Points

UNDERTAKING	BY WHOM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide extensive health education and PSHE programmes focusing upon the potential short-term and long-term risks to health from drug and substance abuse 	Head of PSHE, Heads of Year and medical staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and assess rumours about involvements in drugs and substances, including questioning a pupil, searching his/her room and personal possessions, informing parents and guardians as a matter of urgency and invite them into the School to discuss the matter. If an investigation is required a referral will be made to the police and/or Children's Services. 	Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Headmaster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange for a pupil to discretely provide a biological sample to be tested in the presence of two senior members of staff. All such tests to be recorded on CPOMS. 	Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impose an appropriate sanction on any pupil found in possession of or to have used drugs or substances. In some cases, expulsion may be deemed to be the appropriate sanction. 	Headmaster
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expel any pupil found supplying or offering drugs or prohibited substances to another person and, following consultation with the Governors, the matter may be referred to the police 	Headmaster