

SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

Last reviewed:	April 2025
Next review due:	April 2026
Reviewed by:	School Nurse Pastoral Director

1. Purpose

This policy aims to

- set out the school's policy on the use of drugs;
- define the purpose and scope of the school's drugs education programme;
- clarify the school's responses to situations where the use of illegal drugs by a student is either proven or reasonably suspected.

2. Definitions

Drugs are taken to mean alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, performance enhancing drugs and solvents and controlled drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines, heroin, crack/cocaine, LSD, ketamine, khat, etc, as well as synthetic cannabinoids in any form, so called 'legal highs' and any other 'mind altering' substances.

Drug use is drug-taking, for example, consuming alcohol, taking medication or using illegal drugs. Any drug use can potentially lead to harm, whether through intoxication, breach of the law or school rules or the possibility of future health problems, although such harm may not be immediately apparent. Drug use may require interventions such as management, education, advice and information and prevention work to reduce the potential for harm.

Drug misuse / abuse is drug-taking which leads a person to experience social, psychological, physical or legal problems related to intoxication or regular excessive consumption and/or dependence. It may be part of a wider spectrum of problematic or harmful behaviour and require specific interventions, including treatment.

3. Principles

The fundamental principle that underpins this policy is that the possession, use or supply of illegal and other unauthorised drugs within the school is unacceptable. Any of the above activities would constitute a very serious breach of the school rules and code of conduct at d'Overbroeck's.

Misuse of drugs by members of a school community can, and often does, have profoundly damaging effects not only on the users themselves but also on other members of that community.

As a school, we are committed to promoting a healthy, safe environment in which a positive outlook, good citizenship and respect for the law are key principles. We believe that it is important to deliver a clear, consistent framework which promotes the integrity of our community and which seeks to give all our students the understanding and self-confidence to keep away from all illegal drugs and substances.

4. Context

- 4.1 We believe that the use of illegal and unauthorised drugs is a serious issue that must be purposefully addressed both at home and at school. In addition to being against the law, drug use can have a profoundly detrimental effect on the development and achievement of young people, potentially causing serious long-term damage to their health and safety, and to their ability to achieve academically and to pursue a worthwhile path in life.
- 4.2 Within a school community, drug use does harm not only to those who are directly involved but also to others around them by conveying messages and creating pressures that some may not find easy to deal with.
- 4.3 Drugs are a part of the panorama of youth culture in our society. In one form or another, their use is widespread among young people in this country; and they are widely available and relatively easy to obtain by those who wish to find them. Experimentation and recreational use are common – and drugs are much less of a taboo subject than once they were in the mass media and in general conversation.
- 4.4 Young people are likely to receive mixed messages about drugs. It is not difficult to see that, for at least some adolescents, smoking cannabis may appear no different in essence from their parents or other adults around them drinking alcohol or smoking cigarettes.
- 4.5 Young people are likely to be sceptical of approaches to drugs education that they would see as patronising or unduly alarmist. It is fair to assume that most young people, including those who have no interest in taking drugs themselves, will, at some time or another in the course of social interaction with their peers, come across drugs and others who take them. Their perceptions of the effects of drugs will inevitably be shaped by such experiences: their own if they have had any, and/or those of their peers.
- 4.6 A drugs education programme aimed at adolescents must therefore be pitched so that it will engage their attention and avoid a weary 'heard it all before' type of response.

5. Drugs Education

The aim of our drugs education programme is to give students the information, guidance and support they need to help them steer their own course and exercise their own judgement as far as drug use is concerned – both during their time at school and when they go on to the next stage in their lives.

Our drugs education programme aims to:

- increase students' understanding of the health and social risks, both in the short and in the long term, of drug and substance abuse;
- stress the importance of young people making healthy, informed choices;
- promote a positive attitude towards a healthy lifestyle;
- instill an understanding of the importance of complying with the criminal law;
- inform students about courses of action open to them if they or people they know become, or might become, involved in drugs activity; and
- inform students about support and resources available in school and outside school.

Along with education on the use of alcohol and tobacco, our drugs education programme extends across the curriculum, and forms a prominent part of the Personal Development curriculum.

6. Support

Students can discuss any individual worries they may have about drugs or substances (relating to themselves or their peers) with members of staff. They may choose to do so with their Director of Studies/ Form Teacher, boarding Heads of House, or with other senior pastoral staff. They may also refer themselves to the School Counsellor for individual guidance.

We are also very conscious of the importance of working together with parents and guardians in order to promote the health and well-being of our students.

7. What happens if misuse of drugs is suspected?

Without wishing to be complacent, it is our hope and belief that, in most instances, the strong pastoral structures and the nature of the rapport that exists between students and staff at d'Overbroeck's, which is rooted in mutual respect, trust and relatively open communication, will alert us to any instances of drug misuse among our students.

Where a member of staff has reason to suspect such misuse, s/he will report this in the first instance to the student's Director of Studies or Form Teacher. If the Director of Studies/ Form Teacher considers that there are justified grounds for concern, they will report their findings to senior colleagues, who will decide what further investigation and/or action is appropriate in the circumstances.

8. Signs of misuse

Suspicion of misuse may arise:

- From behavioural signs which give rise to a noticeable deterioration in a student's welfare and/or performance and might include a sharp decline in the standard of work and or personal / academic organisation, a decline in the ability to concentrate, persistent difficulty in getting up in the morning, erratic attendance especially at early morning classes, pronounced mood changes, excessive tiredness, unexplained sores and rashes especially on the mouth and nose, a lack of interest in physical appearance, a general lethargy and lack of willingness to take part in what is going on around one.

Change is the critical factor here, since some common patterns of adolescent behaviour can manifest themselves in ways that are similar to those often associated with the misuse of drugs.

or

- From other evidence such as the finding of drug-associated paraphernalia, observed behaviour on one or more occasions, circumstantial evidence of various kinds or other information that has been gathered.

9. Investigating suspicions of misuse

We will always investigate rumours or concerns about involvement in illegal drugs and substances.

Doing so will usually involve talking directly to the student concerned and very probably also to their parents. It may also involve a search of the student's room or personal possessions. Where such a search is deemed necessary, it will be conducted following the principles and procedures set out in the school's policy on Conducting a Search.

Care will be taken to ensure that such investigations are conducted fairly and with openness towards the student in question.

10. Sanctions

We will consider, in each situation, the most appropriate response, bearing in mind the circumstances of the case and the need to balance the interests of the student concerned, of other members of the school community – and, where relevant, those of the wider community. In all instances involving substance misuse or supply on the school's premises parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity and their co-operation sought.

More specifically, we will follow the guidelines below when dealing with misuse of illegal drugs:

10.1 Within school premises

- A student who is known to supply or to have supplied alcohol or illegal drugs to others (regardless of the seriousness of the use) on school premises will normally be expelled with immediate effect even where there is reason to believe that this is a first offence.

'Supply' includes retailing drugs on the premises, communicating with a drug dealer on behalf of another student, introducing fellow students to a drug dealer, and any other instance of procuring drugs for him/herself or other students. 'Supply' includes supplying for money or free-of-charge.

Before making a decision on exclusion the Principal will engage in comprehensive consultation with all the relevant parties.

- A student who is found to have any alcohol or illegal drugs in his/her possession may be expelled from the school forthwith. Exceptionally, in the case of a first offence and if the school considers that there are significant extenuating circumstances, the student may be suspended for a fixed period and/or given a formal written warning. In all cases, decisions will be guided by a desire to ensure that, as far as possible, the school's response is appropriate and proportionate given the circumstances.
- The Principal, in consultation with the relevant senior colleagues, will determine what counselling needs to be provided and/or other action needs to be taken during or after the period of suspension.

10.2 Outside school premises

- If a student is involved in an alcohol or drug-related incident outside the school, the Principal, in consultation with the relevant senior colleagues, will assess the implications for the student and for the school and determine the best course of action taking into account the interests of the student, of the school and of the wider community.
- Where drug dealing is believed to be involved, it is highly likely that the student will be expelled with immediate effect.

11. Basis of evidence

Where a student is found on school premises taking, or clearly under the influence of, an illegal or unauthorised drug, then the evidence base is clear. Such instances are, however, relatively rare.

It is more probable that the evidence linking a student to the misuse of drugs will be circumstantial. Where a body of circumstantial evidence builds up over a period of time and the Principal and other senior colleagues have sufficient reason to believe that it is reliable, then this will be taken as a sufficient basis for action as outlined above.

12. Drug testing

The school may, at the discretion of the Principal, undertake drugs testing of a student or a group of students. Such testing will usually be conducted:

- where the school has reason to suspect that a student or group of students may be, or may have been, involved in drug or substance abuse;
- as part of an agreed response to a student or a group of students having been found to have been involved in drug or substance abuse and allowed to remain at school subject to certain conditions which include drug-testing at intervals.

If a student fails his or her first drug test (so confirming usage of a banned drug or substance), and provided it is decided that expulsion is not the appropriate course of action at that point, then the student will be allowed to remain at d'Overbroeck's only on condition that he or she submits to regular drug testing throughout his or her remaining time at the school, and on the clear understanding that s/he will be expelled immediately on failure of a subsequent drug test, or if there is evidence that a sample has been tampered with in any way.

13. Informing the Police

In each case, and in the light of the circumstances of the case and of any support and advice that may be relevant, the Principal will determine whether to inform the Police of any incidents involving drug misuse in or outside of school.

In doing so, the Principal must always be mindful that he and the school cannot knowingly allow the premises to be used for the production or supply of any controlled drug, or for the preparation or consumption of such drugs. If and when it should ever be suspected that drugs are being sold on the premises then all relevant information and grounds for suspicion will be communicated to the police.

To be read in conjunction with the following school policies, available from the [website](#):

- Behaviour, rules, rewards and sanctions
- Conducting a search – policy and procedure
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children