Head Teacher: Kirsten MacLeod

Newham Pupil Referral Units

Drugs Policy

Policy last reviewed by Deputy Headteacher SENCO & Safeguarding Autumn
Reviewed policy agreed by Head Teacher: **Autumn 2026**
Reviewed policy shared with staff: **Autumn 2026**
Policy to be reviewed again: **Autumn 2027**

Aim of this Policy

The primary aim of this policy is to clarify the school's role in drug abuse prevention, intervention, and education, ensuring all measures are appropriate to pupils' individual needs and fully aligned with statutory *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE) guidance. The policy provides guidance on drug education and sets clear, trauma-informed procedures for responding to drug-related incidents for pupils, teachers, support staff, and external agencies.

We adopt a whole-school approach that prioritises the health, safety, and emotional well-being of the entire school community. Teachers are supported to deliver high-quality, up-to-date drug education, while pupils receive accurate information, pastoral guidance, and targeted support.

Key Objectives and Framework

- **Statutory Safeguarding Compliance:** Responses to all drug-related incidents align with the school's Behaviour Policy while strictly complying with statutory duties under KCSIE and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. Where a child is at risk of significant harm, immediate referrals will be made to the Newham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), including Section 47 enquiries under the Children Act 1989 where required.
- **Child-Centred and Relational Approach:** Policy implementation is underpinned by a child-centred approach and trauma-informed relational principles (*"Connection Before Correction"* and *"See the Need Behind the Deed"*). We avoid stigmatising labels by focusing on protective interventions rather than purely punitive measures.
- **Early Help and Whole-Family Support:** Recognising that substance misuse often signals underlying extra-familial harm or emotional distress, we prioritize providing effective Family Help (including targeted Early Help under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989) as soon as problems emerge.
- **Contextual Safeguarding and Exploitation:** The school remains alert to drug-related incidents as potential indicators of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), County Lines, or extra-familial harm. Where exploitation is suspected, multi-agency referral pathways (including Pan-London Complex Safeguarding) will be activated.
- **Policy Scope:** This policy applies at all times to pupils on school premises, on school transport, during off-site educational visits, and on residential trips. It must be read in conjunction with our RSHE, Health and Safety, Behaviour, SEN, and Students with Medical Needs policies

Definition

"Drugs" are defined here as legal substances (including alcohol, tobacco, solvents, over-the-counter, and prescribed medicines) and illegal drugs (including cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines, heroin, crack/cocaine, LSD, Novel Psychoactive Substances (NPS), and any other substances covered by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, or subject to a Temporary Class Drug Order). The school prohibits all substances that produce psychoactive effects on the brain, including depressants, stimulants, cannabinoids, and hallucinogens.

The possession, use, purchase, sale, or exchange of these drugs and substances on school premises, during the school day, while traveling to or from school, or during school visits is strictly prohibited. Individual exceptions are made only for pupils requiring prescribed medicines, which are managed in accordance with our Students with Medical Needs Policy.

Drug Education

The school provides a planned drug education curriculum through the following:
The National Curriculum science order outlines the content of statutory drug education:

- In KS1, pupils are taught that some drugs are helpful and some are harmful. Pupils are encouraged to develop an awareness of why we take helpful drugs.
- In KS2, pupils learn the difference between legal and illegal drugs and their effects and risks.
- In Key Stage 3 (11–14 year olds), pupils are taught that abuse of alcohol, solvents, tobacco, and other drugs affects health; that the body's natural defences may be enhanced by immunisation and medicines; and how smoking affects lung structure and gas exchange.
- In Key Stage 4 (14–16 year olds), pupils are taught the effects of solvents, tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs on body functions. Some of our pupils may access science through their mainstream schools.

Other discretionary topics will be delivered through RSHE (utilising evidence-based frameworks such as the *Life Lessons* curriculum), morning meetings, whole-school assemblies, 1:1 pastoral support, reflective practice sessions, and outside agencies. These sessions reflect knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and social skills to:

- Enable pupils to make healthy, informed choices.
- Promote positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles.
- Provide accurate information about substances.
- Increase understanding about the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse.
- Widen understanding about related health and social issues.
- Enable young people to identify sources of appropriate advice and personal support.

Teaching is delivered predominantly by teachers and planned outside agencies whose contributions are formally evaluated. Teachers receive ongoing advice, support, and professional development training. The school actively co-operates with the Local Authority, police, health, and drug agencies.

All drug education and pastoral interventions operate under child-centred, trauma-informed relational principles—such as *"Connection Before Correction"*, *"Calm the State to Co-Regulate"*, and *"Validate to Navigate"*—ensuring support remains non-stigmatising and focused on the safety and needs of the reporting or reported child.

Statutory Duty of the School

The Head Teacher takes overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, as well as for liaison with the Management Committee, parents/carers, the Local Authority (LA), and appropriate outside agencies.

The Head Teacher delegates day-to-day operational responsibility for this policy to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL serves as the lead professional for safeguarding and child protection across the school, coordinating multi-agency arrangements and acting as the crucial link with LA Children's Social Care, the police, and other relevant agencies, in line with statutory requirements set out in *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

As a Relevant Agency, the Head Teacher ensures the school fully engages in all local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASAs), including complying with information requests, multi-agency quality and compliance audits, and statutory training requirements.

The Head Teacher will ensure all staff dealing with substance issues are adequately supported and trained. A school cannot knowingly allow its premises to be used for the production or supply of any controlled drug (e.g., the preparation or smoking of cannabis). Where it is suspected that substances are being sold on the premises, details regarding those involved and all available information will be passed immediately to the community police.

When sharing information with the police or Children's Social Care, the school acts in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, ensuring that fears about sharing information are never allowed to stand in the way of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Implementation of the Policy

In incidents involving substance misuse or supply on the premises or during the school day, and following discussion with the pupil and staff, action will proceed as follows:

The school follows the statutory duties and procedures set out in *Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026* and *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026*, and has reviewed its procedures against *Drugs: advice for schools* (DFE-00001-2012) to ensure complete alignment.

- **Medical Emergencies:** Any acute medical emergencies or immediate harm will be managed according to the emergency protocols detailed in Appendix A.
- **Incidents On Premises or During School Activities:** For cases involving substance use, misuse, or supply on school grounds, during the school day, or on school visits, the case will be discussed directly with the young person. A formal written record will be logged on both CPOMS and Risk Management Plans.
- **Parental Notification & Support:** Parents/carers will be informed by a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) as soon as possible. Support will be offered through reflective practice delivered by the pastoral team, utilizing trauma-informed relational principles. Where appropriate, external referrals will be made to specialist support services, such as the Newham Change Grow Live (CGL) drugs support service.
- **Off-Premises Disclosures:** If a young person discloses or admits to using or supplying substances off premises, staff will raise a safeguarding concern and notify the SLT, who will inform parents/carers. Support will be coordinated as Family Help (including targeted early help) through pastoral interventions and external agencies, constituting support under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 if statutory thresholds are met.
- **Police Involvement:** While there is no legal obligation to inform the police, law enforcement may be notified at the discretion of the Headteacher following consultation with the DSL/Deputy DSL and local authority Children's Social Care.
- **Individualised Response:** The school considers each incident individually, employing a range of tailored responses and safety planning tools (such as AIMs or Brook Traffic Light assessments where relevant).
- **Governance & Leadership:** The Management Committee will be informed of drug-related incidents at the Headteacher's discretion if an incident is deemed sufficiently serious or impacts wider school operations.
- **Media Management:** The Headteacher assumes sole responsibility for media liaison, supported by advice from the Local Authority Communications Officer (Education).

Current Trends: Vaping, Smoking, and Synthetic Substances

The trends identified in this section—particularly around mis-sold substances and social media influence—are viewed by the school as potential indicators of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Extra-Familial Harm (EFH). These risks require a coordinated multi-agency response to support children at risk.

Substance Misuse Services report a rise in students using THC vapes in schools, with some displaying aggressive or unusual behaviour. There are also concerns that some parents are purchasing vape pens for their children under the misconception that it is a healthier or safer alternative to smoking cigarettes.

Feedback provided by Newham substance misuse service, Change, Grow, Live (CGL), indicates that this issue is widespread. In many cases, Spice or other Synthetic Cannabinoid Receptor Agonists (SCRAs) are mis-sold as THC vapes, significantly increasing the risk to young people. Key findings and feedback from local services highlight the following:

- **Spice Mis-selling:** Investigations indicate that serious side effects and adverse symptoms are frequently connected to the use of Spice rather than THC.
- **Testing and Harm Reduction:** Schools Police are being urged to establish testing protocols for confiscated vapes to determine the precise substances being used, enabling staff to deliver appropriate harm reduction interventions.
- **Links to Child Exploitation:** Reports suggest that perpetrators of child exploitation are distributing vapes to young people claiming they contain THC, whereas the observed side effects indicate the presence of Spice.
- **Financial Factors:** Police units report that genuine THC vapes are generally unaffordable for young people, making it highly probable that products used by students contain SCRAs or similar cheap synthetic compounds.
- **Social Media Influence:** Platforms such as TikTok heavily influence young people's uptake of vaping by creating viral "trends" and normalising use.
- **Medical Emergencies:** Local areas have seen increased hospital admissions linked to the adverse effects of Spice and mis-labelled THC vapes.

School Action Plan In response to these emerging concerns, the school has implemented a structured Vape Reduction Action Plan in direct partnership with the Healthy Schools team.

Useful Links and Resources

- **Synthetic Cannabinoids Information:** Guidance on synthetic cannabinoids via the KFx Drug Consultancy Initiative.
- **PSHE Association:** Evidence-based prevention resources, school guidance, and lesson plans for all key stages (including adapted plans for pupils with SEND) available at the PSHE Association Drug Education Hub. *(Note: Complementary PowerPoint resource slides are attached separately to this policy).*
- **FRANK:** National drug advice and topic updates for teachers and young people at Talk to FRANK - Cannabis.
- **RCPsych Quality Standards:** Clinical standards for young people with substance misuse problems published by the RCPsych CCQI.
- **Mental Health & Cannabis:** Royal College of Psychiatrists guidance on Cannabis and Mental Health for Young People.
- **DfE Teacher Training Modules:** Statutory guidance for teaching about relationships, sex, health, drugs, tobacco, and alcohol via GOV.UK RSHE Guidance.
- **Healthy Schools Toolkit:** Practical school guidance available via the Healthy Schools Toolkit - Smoking and Vaping.

APPENDIX A: ***Drug situations – medical emergencies***

Immediate Reporting: Report the incident immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and record all observed facts, behavioral indicators, and statements directly onto **CPOMS**.

- **Emergency Response:** If a pupil appears acutely unwell, disoriented, or medically compromised due to suspected substance ingestion, staff must immediately implement the emergency first-aid protocols outlined in **Appendix A** of the school's **Drugs Policy** (e.g., placing an unconscious pupil in the recovery position, sending for emergency medical assistance/ambulance, and preserving samples for analysis).

Contextual Risks, Exploitation, and Multi-Agency Action

- **Vaping and Synthetic Cannabinoids (SCRAs):** Staff must remain vigilant regarding emerging substance risks—such as the mis-selling of synthetic cannabinoids (Spice) or SCRAs disguised as THC vapes. The school recognizes that the distribution or gifting of vapes to pupils by older peers or external actors can serve as a primary indicator of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and Extra-Familial Harm (EFH).
- **Support and Family Help:** Cases involving substance misuse or supply on site, during transport, or on educational visits will be reviewed individually. Interventions focus on child-centred support, including reflective practice with the pastoral team, Family Help provisions under Section 17 of the Children Act 1989 where thresholds are met, and targeted referrals to external specialist services such as **Newham Change Grow Live (CGL)**.
- **Police and Safeguarding Liaison:** While there is no automatic legal obligation to inform the police for every incident, the Head Teacher retains discretion—following consultation with the DSL and local authority Children's Social Care—to involve community police or escalate concerns through the Newham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).