

Do schools need a drug and alcohol policy?

All schools need a suitable policy or procedure in place for managing cases of drug and alcohol misuse at work. Any quantity of alcohol and certain types of drugs have a negative effect on our performance and behaviour.

Alcohol is a legal substance but should be used in moderation and with respect. To minimise health risks associated with alcohol, the UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) low risk drinking guidelines advise it is safest for men and women not to drink more than 14 units a week on a regular basis.

However, abuse or use in the wrong circumstances is dangerous. Certain prescription or 'over the counter' drugs and all illegal drugs also have negative effects on our performance and behaviour.

Employers have a legal duty of care to all who may be affected by its undertakings (including employees, visitors, contractors, the public etc.). Schools have a responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of not only the user of drugs and alcohol but also all those who may be affected by that person's action whilst at work.

Responsibilities

Staff at all levels have responsibilities to fulfil, in order to protect the health and safety of all persons affected.

Head of Provision

- Accountable for the implementation of the organisation Drugs and Alcohol Procedure.
- Ensure that the guidance in this document is implemented and promoted in the school.
- Ensure that the procedure and guidance are regularly reviewed.
- Take action as soon as is possible following a suspected case of alcohol or drug misuse.
- Ensure all persons under their control are aware of the drugs and alcohol guidance and the school's stance on drug and alcohol use at work.
- Provide assistance and support, alongside occupational health or Human Resources where necessary, to those who have alcohol or drug related dependencies.

All Employees will:

- Raise issues of concern regarding fellow employees and their potential misuse of drugs or alcohol whilst at work.
- Ensure they do not report for work being under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol or any medication that could affect their performance or behaviour.
- Ensure they verify all medication, either prescribed or “over the counter”, will not affect their performance or behaviour at work.
- Ensure that all medicines, that may affect performance or behaviour whilst at work, are reported immediately to their line manager.
- Ensure that they are not in possession of, have consumed any amounts of, or are under the influence of illegal drugs when at work or have responsibility over any school pupil.
- Ensure they adhere to the requirements of the school’s Drugs and Alcohol policy and / or procedures.
- Ensure that they do not use, possess or supply any illegal or prescription drugs that could be abused whilst at work.
- Ensure they do not discontinue an agreed course of treatment for a drug or alcohol related problem without good reason.
- Ensure that they do not misuse any legal substances (e.g. glue, solvents etc.)
- Report any concerns regarding issues of dependence on drugs or alcohol to their Manager or Human Resources, as soon as it becomes evident. Employees are also not to discuss drug and alcohol use with pupils in any way which could be seen as promoting their use. If approached by any pupil wishing to confide the use of drugs or alcohol with, employees should follow the schools safeguarding and or pupil wellbeing policies.

What are the limits?

To define what the limits of each substance are we must first split them into two.

Alcohol:

In England and Wales, the alcohol limit for drivers is 80 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, 35 micrograms per 100 millilitres of breath or 107 milligrams per 100 millilitres of urine. In most other European countries, the limit is less, usually 50 milligrams per 100 millilitres of blood.

As of 5th December 2014 the drink driving limits in Scotland have been reduced. Before the change if a person was breathalysed the limit was 35 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath – that figure has now been reduced to 22 micrograms per 100 ml or;

For all employees regardless of limits; the consumption of alcohol within working hours or where it affects the judgement, performance or general competency of the individual while at work, even where consumed outside of work.

Drugs:

Drug levels are more complicated to define, and are tested based on microgrammes per litre of blood. Guidance on threshold limits can be found on the Government's drug driving page.

For the purpose of this guidance, any use of recreational drugs in work time, or any use where it affects the judgement, performance or general competency of the individual, is unacceptable.

Drugs commonly misused include:

Amphetamines	Opiates	Propoxyphene
Cocaine	Methadone	Phencyclidine
Benzodiazepines	Cannabis	MDMA (Ecstasy)

What about possession of alcohol or drugs at work?

The possession of any classed drug on school premises or whilst carrying out works for the school should be strictly forbidden.

The possession of alcohol is not automatically forbidden, however the misuse of alcohol whilst at work is a prohibited action.

What about 'over the counter' or prescription drugs?

As a responsible employee, you must consider the effects 'over the counter' medicines or prescription drugs can have on your ability to work safely.

All workers must check the medicines they purchase or are prescribed to find out if they will affect their ability to function correctly. You can obtain this information simply by;

- Questioning the dispensing chemist or doctor prescribing the medicines as to side effects.
- Consulting the instructions that accompany any medicines
- Consulting with your line manager who can contact the Health, Safety & Resilience team for further information.

Where effects are identified, look or ask for substitutes that offer no side effects; although you should not request less effective medication simply to reduce the impact

it has on your work. Where substitutes are not available you must report this to your manager so that they can risk assess the situation to ensure you are safe to carry out work activities whilst using these drugs.

If you fail to tell your manager that you are on prescription drugs or over the counter drugs that have side effects and fail a random or 'for cause' screening you will be treated as providing a positive result.

What if I have a drug or alcohol dependency problem?

If you have either a drug or alcohol dependency problem, you must let your line manager know. Although it is an extremely sensitive issue, we understand that an individual's dependence on alcohol or drugs is an illness and the same provisions and treatments will be given in these cases as to any other illness. We will facilitate assistance where employees voluntarily come forward with an acknowledged alcohol and / or drugs problem.

Employees who have alcohol / drugs problems will be encouraged to seek assistance through counselling or a rehabilitation programme. Such employees will not be employed on safety critical work until they have successfully completed their treatment but will not be discriminated against unfairly either.

If you are seeking this assistance you will be required to provide us with proof of attendance at treatment centres.

Deferred admission of a problem, i.e. admission after an issue has been highlighted through other means, will not be taken into account in any dismissal or appeal proceedings.

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Approved by: RAISE-AP Educational Directors, September 2025

Next Review Date: September 2027