

Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping Policy



Should be read in conjunction with the Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy and the Internal, Fixed Term & Permanent Exclusions Policy

UPDATED BY	DATE OF ISSUE	NEXT REVIEW DATE
Senior Deputy Head, Pastoral	August 2025	July 2026

The South Hampstead High School Drugs, Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping Policy is borne out of our duty to safeguard pupils within our care. Drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and vapes all have the potential to harm young people, either directly due to their effects on the developing teenage body and brain or indirectly through the behaviour they may lead to or the company they may lead a young person to keep. For a small number of people, drugs and alcohol can lead to serious and far-reaching consequences not only for themselves but for their families, their communities and society in general. For young people in particular, these substances can have an impact on their mental health, their education, their relationships with family and friends and their futures.

All young people need to be empowered to make safe, healthy and responsible decisions about drugs, legal and illegal, and schools play a central role in helping them make such decisions. This is through a combination of education, pastoral care and clear sanctions for breaches of the school's rules on these substances. As a school, we are aware that some young people face pressure to use or experiment with controlled drugs and we aim to do all that we can to reduce those pressures and empower girls to resist them.

In accordance with The Girls' Day Schools Trust's policy, SHHS aims to:

- 1) have a clear programme of education about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and vapes as well as helping pupils to understand the mechanisms by which they can find themselves drawn into their use and the ways in which they can avoid the pressure to do so
- 2) have in place clear disciplinary procedures for dealing with any substance-related incidents;
- 3) provide pastoral care and support for all pupils within the context of a whole school community;
- 4) assist parents through education, in the prevention of drug or other substance abuse

Drug, Alcohol, Smoking and Vaping Education at SHHS

- Education about drugs, alcohol, smoking and vaping is an integral part of the PSHEE curriculum provided to every pupil throughout her school career.
- Outside agencies and speakers, such as drugs educators, addiction specialists, etc, will be used when appropriate to help pupils have a realistic understanding of the pitfalls and risks of substance use.
- Girls will be given accurate information about substance use and its risks, and will be encouraged to develop skills and attitudes which will enable them to make informed and sensible choices about their health.
- Peer group pressure exerts a significant influence on the initiation and maintenance of drug use. Girls will be encouraged to resist drugs in the context of personal values and personal responsibilities towards other people.
- Pupils will be educated on risk minimisation and the safest responses to situations where someone has taken a substance and concerns exist, either about their immediate safety or around possible addiction.
- The school aims to provide a strong pastoral framework to afford both girls and parents easy access to appropriate support, in and out of school.
- The school aims to support parents in their efforts to prevent substance use or abuse, through education and dissemination of helpful information when it is relevant.

Illegal drugs and novel or new psychoactive substances:

South Hampstead High School aims to actively discourage and, as far as possible, prevent the handling and use of controlled drugs and harmful substances within the SHHS community. This policy applies to all pupils, staff, governors, volunteers, parents and agencies working with the school.

The GDST's view is that the possession, use or supply of drugs in schools or in school-related contexts **will not be condoned under any circumstances**, and will be treated as a very serious disciplinary offence. It will usually result in the offending pupil's permanent exclusion from the school.

For clarity, 'school-related contexts' includes any time that the pupil is in school uniform, work experience, day and residential trips and other activities outside of school, organised by or representing South Hampstead High School.

The disciplinary actions are clearly set out in the School's exclusions procedures, a copy of which is available on the school website. The police may also need to be involved. In the very rare event that exclusion is not permanent, there may be a requirement to comply with subsequent drugs testing at the parents' expense.

The GDST also recognises the role that schools have to play in helping to prevent the misuse of drugs or similar substances. All schools have pastoral care and support schemes and seek to assist parents in preventing abuse, through educating pupils about the physical, emotional and social dangers involved. This is primarily delivered through the school's Launchpad and Perspectives programmes. The consequences of committing a criminal offence will be made very clear to pupils.

Response to incidents in school or school context:

- All incidents involving actual or suspected use or possession of illegal substances will be reported to the Head. Suspicion may arise from behavioural signs, such as a deterioration in a pupil's wellbeing or performance or from unusual behaviour witnessed. It may also come from the finding of certain items, drugs or equipment or other information that has been gathered.
- While staff are always willing to offer sensitive advice and support to pupils, girls should be aware that *any information divulged to staff about illegal activity cannot be held to in confidence and will be passed to the Head.*
- While respecting pupils' rights to privacy, where there are reasonable grounds, the Head may require a pupil to show the contents of her desk, locker, bag or other property to a senior member of staff (for additional information about the searching of pupils' possessions, please see Appendix 1)
- In accordance with the policy of the GDST, any girl found possessing, supplying or being under the influence of illegal drugs on school property or within the school context should expect to be permanently excluded from school.
- In any incident involving possession of illegal substances, the Head may inform the police.
- In certain circumstances, the Head may agree with the pupil and her family, that, as alternative to permanent exclusion, a supportive contract is agreed by all parties within which specific requirements are set out that will govern the pupil's continued attendance at the school, including being tested for drugs regularly and without warning. The details of such a contract will be drawn up in the best interests of the pupil and signed by all parties. The most likely circumstance under which this option would be considered would be if the pupil and parents were to quickly and responsibly 'come clean' about the full extent of their involvement with drugs. An example of such a contract is attached as an appendix to this policy but each contract is written to best suit the individual and her circumstances.

Response to incidents outside of the school context:

- If well-supported information concerning out-of-school use of drugs is received by the Head she or the Senior Deputy Head, Pastoral will inform parents.
- Out-of-school use of drugs will be treated primarily as a pastoral matter, however, in certain circumstances it could still be seen as happening within the school context if the Head deems that it has brought the school into disrepute or it involves a number of South Hampstead pupils (eg. drugs featuring at party hosted by an SHHS pupil or attended by many other SHHS pupils.)

- Pupils known to have taken drugs outside of school may be required to sign up to a supportive contract governing their attendance at the school. Such a contract could include unannounced bag searches and / or drugs testing to ensure that drugs are not being introduced into the school context through the pupil being under the influence whilst in school. The details of such a contract will be drawn up in the best interests of the pupil and signed by all parties. An example of such a contract is attached as an appendix to this policy but each contract is written to best suit the individual and her circumstances.
- Pastoral support for pupils known to have taken drugs outside school could include counsellor support, referral to support organisations, a strict, structured regime in school, a supportive contract or any other strategy deemed helpful for that individual student.

The School may determine whether a pupil's conduct has breached the drugs policy on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the information known to the School, whether or not that information would be legally admissible as evidence or would result in a conviction in a court of law. The Head is entitled to exercise wide discretion in relation to the School's policies and rules. Each case will be considered in a reasonable manner with procedural fairness. In some cases, there may be mitigating circumstances and, if so, they will be carefully considered.

The School must maintain a very firm line on substance use within the school context; controlled drugs are illegal. However, the school wishes to be as helpful as possible to girls for whom substance use may present a problem outside of the school context. These pupils need to have trusted adults they can turn to for help and guidance as their welfare is of paramount importance. Girls in this position are encouraged to seek help from the school counsellor, the school nurse, their Head of Year or the Deputy Head, Pastoral, whether they wish to discuss their own experiences or those of a peer about whom they are concerned.

Confidentiality

The records of testing will not be used for any other purpose and they will be destroyed, unless required by the police, or where appropriate after the final conclusion of an appeal. If a pupil is required to leave the School, the pupil and their parent/carers will be notified in writing when a record of testing has been destroyed, unless required by the police.

Police

It is a criminal offence to possess, consume, or supply certain drugs. In such cases parents and pupils can expect that the police will be informed. The School seeks to uphold the rule of law and support the work of police in fighting drugs in the local area. Police are therefore informed not with a vindictive aim towards the pupil(s) involved, but rather to provide police with intelligence that might help protect other pupils and the wider community.

Reminder

Staff are reminded that their own expressed attitude and behaviour with regard to controlled drugs, especially insofar as it is witnessed by or known to pupils, is a matter of substantive interest to the School.

Alcohol

The school's policy is that the consumption of alcohol by pupils, on or in the vicinity of the school premises, or whilst involved in school-based activities is prohibited (the only exception to this is at special evening events, such as the Leavers' Ball, for which specific arrangements are made for students in Year 13.)

The school's view is that the possession, use or supply of alcohol in school-related contexts will not be condoned and will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence. It may result in the offending pupil's temporary or permanent exclusion from the school.

Staff should refer to the Staff Code of Conduct for details on the expectations of staff in their use of alcohol whilst being involved in school activities.

Response to incidents involving alcohol:

All incidents involving actual or suspected consumption of alcohol in school, in close proximity to school or whilst participating in school activities, will be reported to the Head

- While staff are always willing to offer sensitive advice and support to pupils, girls should be aware that any information divulged to staff about illegal activity cannot be held in confidence and will be passed to the Head
- While respecting pupils' rights to privacy, where there are reasonable grounds, the Head may require a pupil to show the contents of her locker, her bag or other property to a senior member of staff.
- Pastoral support for pupils known to have an unhealthy relationship with alcohol could include counsellor support, referral to support organisations, a strict, structured regime in school, a supportive contract or any other strategy deemed helpful for that individual student.

Sanctions:

- A girl who consumes alcohol on the school premises or within the context of any school event (including trips, work experience, theatre visits, Duke of Edinburgh, etc) will be externally excluded and given a warning about the possibility of permanent exclusion should the offence occur again. She may also be asked to sign a supportive contract.
- A girl who consumes alcohol near the school premises, within school hours, will be externally excluded.
- A girl who consumes alcohol near the school premises or whilst in school uniform, out of school hours, will be externally excluded.
- Repeated offences could result in permanent exclusion from the school.

Smoking and Vaping

Smoking and vaping pose serious hazard to the health of young people and, because of their addictive nature, can have long term consequences. Whilst some consider e-cigarettes (vapes) to be a safer option, they still pose a threat, particularly because of their largely unregulated nature (therefore contents can be variable in potency) and because they can act as a gateway into other substance abuse.

The school's policy is that pupils must not purchase or smoke cigarettes or purchase or use vapes on or in the vicinity of the school premises. The use of cigarettes and vapes is also forbidden in any school context, including trips, evening activities, Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, etc. The school's view is that the possession, use or supply of cigarettes or vapes in school-related contexts will not be condoned and will be treated as a serious disciplinary offence. It may result in the offending pupil's exclusion from the school.

We aim to assist parents and girls through education in the prevention of substance abuse. We provide pastoral care and support for all pupils within the context of a whole school community. Girls are taught about the dangers and effects of smoking and vaping in Launchpad and Perspectives lessons.

Response to incidents in school involving cigarette or vape use:

All incidents involving actual or suspected smoking or vaping in school, in close proximity to school (this includes purchasing these items in local shops) or in a school context will be reported to the Head.

- While staff are always willing to offer sensitive advice and support to pupils, girls should be aware that any information divulged to staff about illegal activity cannot be held in confidence and will be passed to the Head.
- While respecting pupils' rights to privacy, where there are reasonable grounds, the Head may require a pupil to show the contents of her locker or other property to a senior member of staff
- Where there is perceived to be a need for counselling, the school will provide help and support and advice about professional services available.

Sanctions:

- A girl who is found smoking or vaping on the school premises will be externally excluded for one day in the first instance.
- A girl who is found smoking or vaping near the school premises in school uniform (Years 7-11) or not in school uniform (Sixth Form) within school hours will be externally excluded for one day in the first instance. For further details regarding Sixth Form Smoking Policy, please refer to the Sixth Form Handbook.
- A girl who is found smoking or vaping near the school premises in school uniform out of school hours will be internally excluded for one day in the first instance. A repeat offence would result in external exclusion.
- A girl who is found in possession of tobacco, cigarettes, cigarette papers, vapes or related materials whilst at school or in a school context will be internally excluded for one day in the first instance. A repeat offence would result in external exclusion. (The same sanction would apply to a pupil purchasing such items from a supplier local to the school or local to a school event or activity off-site.)
- Repeated offences could result in permanent exclusion from the school.

Appendix 1 – The Searching of Pupils

The DfE guidance Searching, Screening and Confiscation (September 2022) states:

- School staff can search a pupil's possessions for any item if the pupil agrees
- The Head and staff authorised by her have a statutory power to search pupils' possessions, without consent, where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil may have a prohibited item.

There would be few occasions when it was justifiable to search a pupil's person; one such reason would be if it was thought that the pupil was carrying a weapon and there was serious risk of harm to others or themselves. In such a case, the Head and staff authorised by her have a statutory power to search the pupil. DfE guidance, listed above, must always be consulted and advice followed, prior to and whilst doing so.

What constitutes 'reasonable grounds' must be decided in each particular case. For example, it might be they have heard other pupils talking about the item or they might notice a pupil behaving in a way that causes them to suspect that a pupil is concealing something

Prohibited items are:

- Knives or weapons
- Alcohol
- Illegal drugs
- Stolen items
- Tobacco, cigarettes, cigarette papers and vaping equipment
- Fireworks
- Pornographic images
- Any article that the member of staff reasonably suspects has been, or is likely to be used to:
 - Commit an offence
 - Cause personal injury to themselves or another
 - Damage property of any person
- * Fire-lighting equipment (eg. lighters, matches) – these items are not statutorily prohibited but are banned at SHHS – searching for them must only be with consent of the pupil or their parents

Appendix 2

SHHS Supportive Contract in support of the School's Drugs, Alcohol & Smoking Policy

Date: _____

Full name of pupil: _____

Pupil's date of birth: _____

I have made a voluntary admission that I have violated the terms of the School's Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking Policy.

As an alternative to permanent exclusion, the Head has offered me a supportive regime under which:

- I agree to abide by the terms of the School's Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking Policy, which I have read and understood. I hereby pledge that I will not violate the terms of this policy again whilst at South Hampstead.
- For the remainder of my school career, without obligation on the part of the School, I may at any time be asked to be subject to a drugs test or have my bag / belongings / locker searched, even if no specific grounds exist at that time to suggest that I have been involved with drugs or substances.
- I agree to be subject to this regime and to co-operate with the School in every respect. I understand that the School will take all reasonable care to preserve my confidentiality and human rights in the operation of this regime.

I also understand that, if without good reason, I fail to adhere to the terms of this contract or if a test proves positive, I would be required to leave South Hampstead High School.

Signed (pupil): _____

Declaration of parents/guardian/education guardian:

I/We, the undersigned, have read and agreed to the South Hampstead High School Drugs, Alcohol and Smoking Policy and this Appendix. For my/our part, I/we accept the Head's offer of a supportive contract for the above-named pupil.

I/We undertake to co-operate with the screening procedure in all respects and to pay any associated charges.

Signed: _____

Full Name: _____

Relationship to Pupil: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Full Name: _____

Relationship to Pupil: _____