



DRUG EDUCATION AND INCIDENT POLICY

Policy reviewed and agreed by: Finance, Health & Safety Committee
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1 Ethos of our school

The philosophy of our school is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment in which all pupils and staff are encouraged to develop their knowledge, skills, attitudes and understanding about drugs and appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

Provision of drugs education at our school takes account of pupil's views and opinions, so that it is both appropriate to their age and ability, and relevant to their particular circumstances.

2 Rationale

It is acknowledged that our school community plays an important role in tackling drug misuse by providing drug education and pastoral support to all pupils. It is our aim to help all pupils to be able to take their place safely in our society where a wide range of drugs exists. We recognize that some drugs have beneficial effects, but also that every drug has potential harm. For this reason, all drugs need appropriate and responsible care and management. In order to be able to make informed choices, staff and pupils need to understand the nature of drugs, their social and legal status, their uses and effects.

3 Relationship to other school policies

This policy is linked to other school policies, for example on, behaviour, medicines, confidentiality, behaviour, anti-bullying, health and safety, equal opportunities, safeguarding and child protection, outside visits and residential trips. If drugs are addressed in more than one policy then the approach needs to be consistent and include clear cross-referencing.

4 External Guidance and advice

The school actively co-operates and seeks support with other agencies such as the Thames Valley Police, Social and Health Care Services, Local Education Authority, Health and other appropriate Drug Agencies to deliver its commitment to drugs education and to manage incidents of drug use and misuse. In all our planning and responses to drug issues we take careful account of LEA and national guidance, in particular *Drugs: Guidance for Schools (DFES February 2004)* and *DfE and APCO drug advice for schools (September 2012)*.

5 Definition of Drugs

In our school a drug is defined as ‘**a substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave**’. This definition includes illegal substances and also legal substances such as: alcohol and tobacco, volatile substances, over the counter and prescription medicines. (*Drugs: Guidance for Schools (DFES February 2004)* and (*National Drug Strategy 2008*).

6 Formation and Consultation Process

This policy was originally prepared following consultation with pupils, school staff, governors and parents/carers. The DFES (*Drugs: Guidance for Schools (DFES February 2004)*) has been used during the preparation together with advice from the LEA School Drug Education Consultant (Briefing Paper attached) plus the DfE and ACPO drug advice for schools (September 2012).

7 Purpose of our School Drug Policy

- clarify the legal requirements and responsibilities of the school providing accurate information
- reinforce and safeguard the health and safety of pupils and others who use the school
- clarify the school’s approach to drugs for all staff, pupils, governors, parents/carers, external agencies and the wider community
- give guidance on developing, implementing and monitoring the drug education programme
- enable staff to manage drugs on school premises, and any incident that occur, with confidence and consistency, and in the best interests of those involved
- ensure that the response to incidents involving drugs compliment the overall approach to drug education and the values and ethos of the school
- provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the school drug education programme and the management of incidents involving illegal and other unauthorised drugs
- reinforce the role of the school in contributing to local and national strategies

8 The aim of Drug Education in our school

The aim of drug education is to provide opportunities for pupils to develop their **knowledge, skills, attitudes** and **understanding** about drugs and appreciate the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, relating this to their own and others' actions. Drug education is an important aspect of the curriculum for our school. The intention is to:

Increase pupils' knowledge and understanding and clarify misconceptions about:

- the short- and long-term effects and risks of drugs
- the rules and laws relating to drugs
- the impact of drugs on individuals, families and communities
- the prevalence and acceptability of drug use among peers
- the complex moral, social, emotional and political issues surrounding drugs

Develop pupils' personal and social skills to make informed decisions and keep themselves safe and healthy, including:

- assessing, avoiding and managing risk
- communicating effectively
- resisting pressures
- finding information, help and advice
- devising problem-solving and coping strategies
- developing self-awareness and self-esteem
- enabling pupils to explore their own and other peoples' attitudes towards drugs, drug use and drug users, including challenging stereotypes, and exploring media and social influences.

9 The role of the Head teacher and Governing body

The Head-teacher takes overall responsibility for the policy and its implementation, for liaison with the Governing body, LEA and appropriate outside agencies. The Head-teacher will ensure that all staff dealing with substance issues are adequately trained and supported.

The Governing Body governing board ensures that the school complies with its statutory duties and will monitor and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the policy

10 Monitoring, Review and Dissemination of the policy

The policy will be distributed to all staff and governors and is available to parents/carers, pupils and relevant outside agencies. The policy and associated documentation will be reviewed periodically and updated as applicable.

11 Definition of School Premises

The legal definition of premises of a school includes everything within the property boundaries including buildings, outbuildings, playgrounds, fields and also extends to include other settings such as vehicles, boats, marquees or any venue managed by the school at the time e.g. premises of a school trip or visit.

Pupils, staff and visitors to the premises are made aware of the school's drug policy.

12 Prescribed Drugs on the School Premises

In our school we follow the recommendations of the Oxfordshire Health and Safety guidelines and DfES guidance 'Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions' December 2015.

Our policy in respect of prescribed drugs is set out in our "Medication Policy".

13 Illegal Drugs, smoking and alcohol on the School Premises

It is understood by the whole school community that the possession, use or supply of illegal and other unauthorised drugs within the school boundaries is unacceptable.

The school is designated a "no smoking" area for staff and visitors and we look to everyone, including parents/carers to support this policy. If pupils are found smoking on site the Head teacher will be informed immediately.

Alcohol may only be consumed on the school premises for events organised by members of staff, governors or the school association, which take place after the end of the school day. Verbal permission must be obtained from the senior management team prior to the event. No alcohol should be stored on the school premises. The organisers are responsible for ensuring that alcohol is not supplied to those under the age of 18. Staff are not permitted to drink alcohol during normal school hours or whilst supervising children.

To protect the health and safety of the school community regular checks will be made of the site to ensure that drug paraphernalia, particularly needles and syringes, are cleared away safely and legally.

The school will ensure that potentially hazardous substances are stored safely and pupils will be supervised if it is necessary that they come into contact with them in the course of their work. Pupils are not permitted to be in possession of sniffable products.

14 Illegal Drug Incident; where substance misuse or supply is suspected.

The Head teacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (if different) will be informed immediately of all illegal drug-related incidents. This includes any possession, usage or supply of illegal drugs.

The first concern whilst managing drugs is the health and safety of our school community and meeting the pastoral needs of pupils.

Staff will follow the flow chart Drug Situations – 'medical emergency' found in the *Drugs: Guidance for Schools (DFES February 2004) pages 117 -118* (See Appendix A) and will also refer to the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Head teacher will then assess the school's legal requirements, this may include the involvement of appropriate outside agencies, and the proposed school response, the involvement of parents/carers, the arrangements for recording and informing other agencies, and the Health & Safety procedures (see Health & Safety policy) including safe handling of suspect substances.

All incidents will be recorded on a school incident form.

The consequences of such incidents involving pupils will follow broadly the same procedures as laid down in the school Behaviour Policy.

15. Disclosure and Confidentiality

Disclosure refers to when a pupil discloses to a member of staff that he/she has been using drugs or is concerned about someone else's drug use.

In these situations, staff will be non-judgemental and caring and will show concern for the pupil's welfare. An Early Help Assessment will typically be undertaken. Pupils know that teachers cannot promise total confidentiality if further support is to be considered such as referral to a drug service or counselling service. Information about the pupil will only be given to key staff. The Designated Safeguarding Lead will coordinate the most appropriate support including referral to specialist services.

Parents/Carers will be informed immediately if their child has been involved in a drug-related incident. However, there may be some exceptional situations where involving the parents may put the pupil at risk of abuse and in these exceptional cases, the school will exercise some caution. The decision will be taken by the Head teacher in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (if different) with the child's welfare the priority.

16. Intoxicated Parents/Carers

Our school rules for drugs apply to all people who are on the school premises and we expect that parents/carers will adhere to these rules. If a parent/carer comes to school and appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they will be asked to leave. If they have come to collect their child, we will sensitively offer to phone for someone else to collect. If we are concerned that a pupil is in imminent danger, we will contact emergency services on 999. We will also follow our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy if we are concerned about the risk of harm.

17. Family issues- needs of children

We are sensitive to the needs of pupils whose parents/carers or family members have problems with drugs. Where problems are observed or suspected or a pupil discloses problems, we will assess the pupil's welfare and support needs, and if needed, involve external support for the child and where appropriate, for the family. This will typically be done via an Early Help Assessment.

Appendix A: DRUGS SITUATIONS - MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

The procedures for an emergency apply when a child or young person or others are at immediate risk of harm. A person who is unconscious, having trouble breathing, seriously confused or disorientated or who has taken a harmful toxic substance, should be responded to as an emergency.

Your main responsibility is for any pupil at immediate risk, but you also need to ensure the well-being and safety of others. Put into practice your school's first aid procedures.

IF IN ANY DOUBT, CALL MEDICAL HELP

ALWAYS:

- assess the situation
- if it is a medical emergency, send for medical help and an ambulance

BEFORE ASSISTANCE ARRIVES:

If the person is conscious:

- ask the person what has happened and to identify any drug used
- collect any drug sample and any vomit for medical analysis
- **do not** induce vomiting
- keep the person under observation, warm and quiet

If the person is unconscious:

- ensure that the person can breathe and place in recovery position
- **do not move the person** if they have fallen, as a fall may have led to spinal or other serious injury which may not be obvious
- do not give anything by mouth
- do not attempt to make the person sit or stand
- do not leave the person unattended or in the charge of another pupil

WHEN MEDICAL HELP ARRIVES:

- pass on any available information and any vomit and drug samples.

Appendix B: COLLECTION OF HYPODERMIC NEEDLES

Schools and colleges should be vigilant in checking premises and grounds for health and safety hazards including signs of any discarded equipment, which may be drug-related. If needles or syringes are found they should not be touched.

STOP NEEDLES

TAKE ACTION!

STOP NEEDLES

If you find a needle or syringe
DO PHONE!

- If it's in a public place **PLEASE** phone the District Council to arrange to have it picked up.
- Remember the exact location – if possible stay at the site until the Collection Team arrive.
- Tell the owner if it's on private land or in a building.
- If you want to do something at your own risk, cover with a strong box or drinks can.
- Don't put the needle / syringe in a litter bin, or kick it down a drain.

DON'T TOUCH!

Oxfordshire

What are the hazards?

If a **skin puncture** is caused by a **hypodermic needle** the injured person is potentially infected with viruses including **Hepatitis B and C**, and **HIV**.

If you find a needle or syringe:

DO PHONE! DON T TOUCH!

- If it's in a public place **PLEASE** phone the District Council to arrange to have it picked up:
- Remember the exact location – if possible stay at the site until the Collection Team arrive.
- Tell the owner if it's on private land or in a building.
- If you want to do something at your own risk, cover with a strong box or drinks can.

DO PHONE! DON T TOUCH!

- Don't put the needle / syringe in a litter bin.

If you receive a needlestick injury:

- Encourage the injury to bleed by gently squeezing.

DO NOT SUCK THE WOUND!

- Wash the area with soap and running water for at least five minutes.
- Cover with a waterproof plaster.
- Immediately visit your Doctor or Accident and Emergency Department where you should enquire about the relevant immunisation.

Collection Team Numbers

Cherwell:
01295 221940

Hook Norton
01295 221531
(After 5pm and at weekends)

West Oxfordshire:
01993 861020
(24 hours)

Oxford City:
0800 783 1957
(24 hours)

Vale of White Horse:
01235 520202

South Oxfordshire:
01491 823416

01235 821886
(After 5pm and at weekends)

01491 824933
(After 5pm and at weekends)

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I have been asked to comment on a number of issues effecting the good management of drug incidents in schools. I have therefore prepared this briefing paper for you to consider when reviewing your drug policy.

Introduction

All schools should have a drug policy, which also covers the content and organisation of drug education, the management of drug incidents, and meeting the needs of pupils. The policy should be developed in consultation with pupils, parents, governors and the wider school community.

‘All children and young people need to be able to make safe, healthy and responsible decisions about drugs, both legal and illegal. Schools play a central role in helping them make such decisions by providing education about the risk and effects of drugs; by developing their confidence and skills to manage situations involving drugs; by creating a safe and supportive learning environment; and ensuring that those for whom drugs are a concern receive appropriate support.’

Drugs: Guidance for schools (DFES 2004)

The School drug policy will help to:

- provide a secure framework within which staff can operate with confidence
- clarify legal responsibilities, entitlement and obligations
- express and clarify a school's attitude and responses for staff, pupils, parents and governors
- comply with OFSTED expectations in the event of a school inspection.

These guidelines have been produced to assist PSHE leads and other key members of staff responsible for the writing and reviewing such a policy.

Schools may choose to have either a combined policy of drug education and management of a drug related incident, or a separate policy for management of a drug related incident.

These guidelines are intended to give more detailed advice and information on the issues relating the management of drug-related issues and incidents in schools.

How would I define a drug?

Drugs refer to all drugs including medicines, volatile substances, alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs. Drugs: Guidance for schools (DFES 2004)

What are the laws relating to drugs?

The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is the main piece of legislation covering drug use and misuse in the UK. The law places drugs into three different categories, known as Class A, B and C. Class A drugs are those considered to be the most harmful, while drugs classified C are those considered not as harmful.

Under the **Misuse of Drugs Act 1971** it is an offence to:

- Possess a controlled substance unlawfully – (simple possession)
- Possess a controlled substance with intent to supply it - (possession with intent to supply)
- To unlawfully supply a controlled drug (even where no charge is made for the drug)
- To allow premises you occupy or manage to be used for the purpose of drug taking (including school premises)
- Trafficking (supply) attracts the more serious of punishments, including life imprisonment for Class A offences

The **Drugs Bill 2005**, deals with the 'aggravated supply' of controlled drugs, stipulating conditions that have particular reference to schools, namely:

(a) The offence was knowingly committed in the vicinity of a school when it was in use by under 18 year-olds, or one hour before or after any such time; or

(b) In connection with the commission of the offence, the offender used a courier who was under 18 at the time of the offence.

The **Medicines Act 1968** regulates drugs that are used for medicinal purposes, and again there are three main categories. A pharmacist can only sell 'Prescription Only' drugs, but only if they have been prescribed by a doctor. The 'General' category allows the medicines to be sold without a prescription in any shop, and a pharmacist can sell 'Pharmacy Medicines', without the need for a prescription.

Possession of 'Prescription Only' medicines without a prescription is a serious offence. Drugs such as amyl nitrite, GHB and calamine are regulated under the Medicines Act.

The **Road Traffic Act 1972** makes it an offence to drive while under the influence of drugs and drink. Drugs include illegal and prescribed substances.

Licensing Act 1964 is the main piece of legislation relating to the sale and supply of alcohol. It sets down the times alcohol may be served and who it may be served to. The act makes it illegal to sell alcohol to anyone under the age of 18 (there are some exceptions).

The **Cigarette Lighter Refill (Safety) Regulations 1999** is an amendment to the Consumer Protection Act 1987. It makes it illegal to supply gas cigarette lighter refills to anyone under the age of 18. Retailers could face a hefty fine or a prison sentence.

The **Intoxicating Substances (Supply) Act 1985** makes it an offence for a retailer to sell solvents to anyone under the age of 18, if they suspect there are going to be misused.

Children and Young Persons (Protection from Tobacco) Act 1991, along with the Children and Young Persons Act 1933, makes it illegal to sell tobacco products, which includes cigarettes, to people under the age of 16. It also makes it mandatory to display warning signs.

The Confiscation of Alcohol (Young Persons) Act 1997 makes it an offence for a young person under the age of 18 to be in a public place with alcohol. The Police can seize the alcohol and take the person's name and address. Failure to comply can result in arrest.

What about authorised drugs on the school premises?

All illegal substances are banned on school premises.

The school is designated as a "no smoking" area for staff and visitors.

Alcohol may only be consumed on the school premises for events organised by members of staff, governors or PTA, which take place after the end of the normal school day. Verbal permission must be obtained from the senior management team prior to the event. The organisers are responsible for ensuring that all those consuming alcohol are over the age of 18.

Staff are discouraged from drinking alcohol during normal school hours.

To protect the health and safety of the school community, regular checks will be made of the site to ensure that any drug paraphernalia, particularly needles and syringes, are disposed of safely and legally.

The school will ensure that potentially hazardous substances are stored safely and pupils will be supervised if it is necessary that they come into contact with them in the course of their work. Pupils are not permitted to be in possession of sniffable products.

Collection of Hypodermic Needles

Care must be taken when dealing with hypodermic needle finds. The District Councils have a collection team, which will arrange collection and safe disposal;

South Oxfordshire

01491 823416

Are we responsible?

In loco parentis – this refers to the schools delegated duty to exercise adequate supervision and to act as wise, responsible and careful parents would towards any child in their care. The responsibilities of supervision are variable and depend on the age and maturity of the child and the circumstances. This could be interpreted as giving adequate advice and instructions, rather than constantly watching a child, unless there is obvious danger.

What about prescribed drugs on the school premises?

Schools are not required to manage pupils' medicines. However, where schools do so, medicines must be managed safely. This must be in accordance with their employer's health and safety policy.

DfES and DH advise that schools have sufficient numbers of suitably trained and contracted members of school support staff to manage pupils' medicines. School support staff that are not contracted to do this may volunteer to be trained.

There is no legal duty on teachers to manage pupils' medication, and they do so on a voluntary basis.

School staff that administer medication (whether voluntarily or as part of their contract of employment) should receive appropriate training and support from health professionals (e.g. school nurse). Where it is agreed to manage medication, there should be robust systems in place to ensure that the medicine is managed safely. Medication must be in original packaging with the prescriber's instructions and expiry date. There must be an assessment of the risks to the health and safety of staff and others and measures put in place to manage and identified risks.

It is up to the parent/carer's to inform the school if their child has a medical condition and requires some support during the normal school day. It is important that a school is well informed about a pupil's medical condition so that it may support the pupil effectively. Where support is needed this should be discussed between the school, parents/carers, children and health professionals, as appropriate. Schools need the advice from the school health team (for example, school nurse) or the child's GP or psychiatrist about the appropriate levels of support the school can provide.

What are the school premises?

The legal definition of premises of a school includes everything within the property boundaries including buildings, outbuildings, playgrounds, fields and also extends to include other settings such as vehicles, boats, marquees or any venue managed by the school at the time e.g. premises of a school trip or visit.

Pupils, staff and visitors to the premises should be made aware of the school's drug policy.

What could be a drug incident?

Any incident involving legal or illegal drugs on school premises should be classes as a drug incident, for example:

- drug or associated paraphernalia are found on school premises
- a pupil is found in possession of drugs or associated paraphernalia
- a pupil is found to be a recognised source of supply of drugs on school premises
- a pupil is thought to be under the influence of drugs
- a pupil is displaying signs of illness or inappropriate behaviour as a result of substance misuse
- a staff member has information that the illegitimate sale or supply of drugs is taking place in the local area

- a pupil discloses that they are misusing drugs or a family member/friend is misusing drugs
- a parent/carer or staff member is thought to be under the influence of drugs on school premises.

When can I search a pupil or member of staff?

• **Searches**, when considered appropriate, must be explicit in the school drug policy. Consent should be sought and a second adult witness must be present. If a search is refused, consideration needs to be given to involving the police. Searches should be carried out so as to minimize embarrassment or distress.

• **Personal searches**, should not be carried out by a member of staff, though staff may endeavor to persuade the person voluntarily to hand over any drugs, again in the presence of a second adult witness. The police can perform personal searches if they believe a crime has taken place.

Schools are not permitted to detain a person without their consent.

• **Searches of school property** may be carried out by school staff, for example, pupils' lockers or desks, if they consider drugs may be present; however, prior consent should be sought, even though the school may still proceed with a search if consent is refused. Where consent is refused, schools need to weigh carefully the merits of confirming an offence against the risk of infringing privacy without just cause. (Section 4.10.1 page 62 DFES Drugs: Guidance for schools 2004)

• **Searches of personal property** must not be conducted without consent. Where consent is refused, a parent or carer may be able to persuade the child to give consent or the school may wish to involve the police.

The 2004 Guidance advises schools planning such action to ascertain in advance that the intention to utilise such action is stated clearly in the school's drug policy and that parents or carers have given their consent (usually in writing). Whilst not enforceable as a legal requirement, Appendix 10 to the Guidance sees it as 'good practice'. Where parents withhold consent, procedures must be in place to remove their child from the search. Schools also need to exercise sensitivity and respect the right to privacy of pupils whom dogs may indicate because of exposure to an environment in which drugs are used or who are taking prescription medicines.

What about identifying drugs

The identification of drugs may be a major issue. It may not be possible to identify a drug (or to be sure it is a drug) without formally testing it. Your local police Youth & School Involvement Officer may be able to help. A simple way is to ask the pupil what it is.

Can I confiscate and dispose of suspected drugs.

The law permits school staff to take temporary possession of a substance suspected of being an illegal drug for the purposes of preventing an offence from being committed or

continued in relation to that drug providing that all reasonable steps are taken to destroy the drug or deliver it to a person lawfully entitled to take custody of it. In taking temporary possession and disposing of suspected illegal drugs schools are advised to:

- ensure that a second adult witness is present throughout
- seal the sample in a plastic bag and include details of the date and time of the seizure/find and witness present. Some police forces provide schools with drug bags for this purpose
- store it in a secure location, such as the school safe or other lockable container with access limited to two senior members of staff
- without delay notify the police, who will collect it and then store or dispose of it in line with locally agreed protocols. The law does not require a school to divulge to the police the name of the pupil from whom the drugs were taken. Where a pupil is identified the police will be required to follow set internal procedures
- record full details of the incident, including the police incident reference number
- inform parents/carers, unless this would jeopardise the safety of the pupil.

School staff should not attempt to analyse or taste unknown substances. Police can advise on analysis and formal identification, although this is normally carried out only if it will be required as evidence within a prosecution.

If formal action is to be taken against a pupil, the police should make arrangements for them to attend a local police station accompanied by an appropriate adult for interview. Only in exceptional circumstances should arrest or interviews take place at school. An appropriate adult should always be present during interviews, preferably a parent/carer or duty social worker.

Alcohol and tobacco

Parents/carers should normally be informed and given the opportunity to collect the alcohol or tobacco, unless this would jeopardise the safety of the child.

Volatile substances

Given the level of danger posed by volatile substances schools may arrange for their safe disposal. Small amounts may be placed in a bin to which pupils do not have access, for example a bin within a locked cupboard.

Medicines

Disposal of medicines held at school should be covered in the school's medicines policy. Parents/carers should collect and dispose of unused or date-expired medicines.

Should I record a drug-related situation?

Schools must, as a matter of course, record details of any incident involving the use of unauthorized drugs. A copy can be found in Appendix 11 of the 2004 Guidance.

Schools have no legal obligation to report an incident to the police but schools should consider whether or not to inform the police where a criminal offence has taken place. However, not reporting a crime and not identifying an offender may prove to be counter-productive for a school and the wider community. They should also consider whether or not to inform other agencies. Schools should feel able to contact police to discuss a case and ask for advice without needing to divulge a pupil's name. Your local police can support schools that would prefer to deal with a situation internally.

The police will not normally need to be involved in incidents involving legal drugs, but schools may wish to inform trading standards or police about the inappropriate sale or supply of alcohol or volatile substances to pupils in the local area

What next?

The head teacher or designated staff member leading on drugs issues should be informed of the incident and if necessary instigate an appropriate investigation. All witnesses should be invited to make a written statement about what they saw. Careful attention should be given to respecting the confidentiality of those involved.

A few ideas for consideration:

- does the pupil admit the allegations?
- is this their first drug offence?
- What type of drug is it
- what quantity of the drug was involved? (personal use or supplying)
- what was the pupil's motivation? (Why)
- what were they going to do with the drug?
- Who else might be involved?
- does the pupil have a parent/carer or family member who is misusing drugs?
- does the pupil know and understand the school policy and school rules?

Great care must be taken to record any statements provided by those involved or by witnesses as police may require these if the incident becomes a criminal investigation. Schools should consider separating any pupils involved in the incident and obtaining another adult to support and witness both the teacher dealing with the incident and the pupils involved. The records may be used as evidence in any subsequent prosecution.

What happens now?

Schools should be ready to involve or refer pupils to other services when needed. These do not necessarily need to be drug specific agencies, and in some situations the general youth service or young people's counselling may be more appropriate. Where possible, and where this will not compromise the pupil's safety, the school should seek the involvement of the pupil and the pupil's parents/carers in such a decision.

Informing parents/carers

In any incident involving illegal and other unauthorised drugs, schools are normally advised to involve the child's parents/carers and explain how the school intends to respond to the incident and to the pupil's needs. Where the school suspects that to do this might put the child's safety at risk or if there is any other cause for concern for the child's safety at home, then the school should exercise caution. In any situation where a pupil may need protection from the possibility of abuse, the school's child protection coordinator should be consulted and local child protection procedures followed. Parents/carers should be encouraged to approach the school if they are concerned about any issue related to drugs and their child. Schools can refer parents/carers to other sources of help, for example, specialist drug agencies or family support groups.

When responding to the media

If the school/college receives a media enquiry after a drug-related incident the caller should be referred only to the head-teacher/principal or deputy in their absence

- A checklist of appropriate key facts is prepared in advance.
- If you are contacted unexpectedly ask to be called back later to allow time for this to happen.
- Ensure that the privacy of the pupil and their family is respected, and do not release any information that could be prejudicial to any future enquiry.
- Statements should be short, factual and without elaboration. Do not be drawn into saying more than you intend to.
- Avoid commenting on events or circumstances that are outside the control or remit of the school.
- Show that the incident has been managed effectively.
- Be positive wherever possible and conclude with reassurance about the incident.
- Remember that there is no such thing as an "off the record" comment.

Schools/colleges receiving media enquiries should inform the County Hall Press Office who may be able to offer support and manage the media for them if required.

Bill Russell
School Drug Education Consultant
April 2009