

For 'parents', understand 'parents or guardians'

The misuse of drugs not only damages individual drug takers directly but also impacts on many others, such as their families and the wider community around them. For the user, drugs can cause underachievement, ill-health, even death, whilst families and friends can experience extreme stress and distress. Drug misuse is often associated with crime in the local community. It extends across socio-economic boundaries. No school can afford to be complacent or to think its pupils are not at risk.

The Governors of Lytchett Minster School are unequivocal in their disapproval of drug misuse in any form and are committed both to providing an appropriate level of student and parental education in this area and to treating any related incident with the utmost seriousness. It is important that, in a society where mixed messages are often conveyed, that the school is very clear in its stance and in its response to students who become involved in activities that are not only prejudicial to their health but also illegal. Wherever possible, support for an individual involved in the use of illegal substances will be provided. However, realistically, support may be beyond the resources and expertise of the school and it may be necessary to involve outside agencies. The school has a prime duty to protect the overwhelming majority of students who are not involved in drug misuse from the impact of any student who is involved either as a user or supplier of illegal substances. Parents are entitled to expect that the school should seek to be a walled garden, a place of safety, where not only are illegal substances not present on site but where a vigorous culture exists that opposes the misuse of these substances. Significant-length fixed term or permanent exclusion are appropriate ways of establishing this.

Tobacco

Lytchett is a no smoking school. This is as true for any adult who comes on site as it is for students. In law, it is an offence for children under the age of 16 to smoke in a public place. All smoking by students of any age is strictly prohibited whilst on site or on a school-organised activity. If a student is found with tobacco in his/her possession, it will be confiscated immediately and may only be returned to the student's parent. If a student is found smoking, in possession of a cigarette *or associating with such a person*, he/she will be subject to an escalating scale of disciplinary sanctions. Persistent offence is likely to result in a fixed term exclusion. As with all persistent disregard of school regulations, repeated exclusions may lead to permanent exclusion.

Alcohol

Any student found to be in possession of, or under the influence of, any alcoholic substance whilst on site or involved in a school-organised event is a danger to themselves and to others and is in breach of school rules. Immediate exclusion is likely in such circumstances. Where a student has consumed alcohol, parents will normally be required to collect the student if the requirements of safety demand this. Nowhere is this rule more important than with school trips abroad, where the possession or consumption of alcohol by students would present the supervising members of staff with particular difficulties. In such circumstances, parents will normally be expected to collect their child and return them to England. They will also be responsible for handling any conflicts with regional laws.

Illegal substances and solvent abuse

In the event of a pupil being discovered to be in possession of, using, sharing or selling an illegal substance or solvent intended for use as a stimulant whilst on site, or involved in a school activity anywhere,

- The drug/solvent will be immediately confiscated.
- The pupil will be immediately withdrawn from associating with other pupils and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) informed.
- If the pupil is clearly suffering from the effects of the illegal substance or solvent, appropriate emergency care will be sought, firstly, through the school's first-aiders and, secondly, where necessary through professional medical services. Where the latter is involved every attempt should be made to contact parents at this point.
- If the incident occurs whilst on a field trip or trip abroad of more than one day's duration, the member of staff should contact the school immediately so that parents can be asked to collect their child/repatriation can be arranged.
- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will inform the Head at the soonest possible occasion and launch an investigation into the facts of the incident.
- Once the Deputy Head (Pastoral) is reasonably convinced of the facts of the case:

- i) The Headmaster will be fully briefed.
 - ii) The police would normally be informed that a drugs incident is under investigation at the school.
 - iii) Once the initial investigation is complete and the essential facts of the incident are clear, parents will be informed that a full investigation is under way, that their child would normally be excluded for five days whilst the matter is reviewed and they should be asked to come to collect their child from school. Where verification of substance or special consultation with Governors is required, this may be extended to up to ten days, but this should be exceptional.
- Before deciding an appropriate sanction for a pupil, the Head will meet with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and the pupil's Head of House or Year, to examine the pupil's record whilst in the school, to consider his/her age and to explore any mitigating factors. In deciding on the sanction, the Head will be guided by the desire of the governors to treat any involvement in illegal substances as a matter of the utmost seriousness. Sanctions should be proportionate to the offence. Possession, use or supply of illegal substances are criminal offences and rank highly in comparison with other behavioural misdemeanours that warrant shorter fixed term exclusions. Direct abuse of staff or assault on a pupil, where they fall short of a permanent exclusion, may warrant a substantial exclusion, particularly if the student has a record of other offences and exclusions but this type of offence, being isolated in impact, does not threaten the walled garden principal in the same way that a drug incident does: experience shows that these behavioural incidents are unlikely to spread to other students, are not addictive, do not lead to crime, do not have a direct impact on a student's work over months or years etc. Drug incidents, however, almost inevitably threaten the principle because very often the incidents are communal or, unchecked, become communal - and certainly, from a parent's point of view, are more 'infectious', more explosive in terms of impact on pupil's attitude to life, work, relationships and much longer term if addiction established. A habit casually slipped into under the influence of the peer group whilst quite young can lead to enormous repercussions and years of misery and underachievement. Supplying an illegal substance or solvent for solvent misuse is obviously the most immediate threat in this respect, but involvement of any sort on a school trip or on the school site breaches the defences in a way that other offences do not. It therefore requires a more significant response from the school. Consideration of the educational needs of the student must be balanced against the imperative to send an unequivocal message both to the student and school at large that involvement with illegal substances is unacceptable to the school community. The Governors' guidelines to the Head, therefore, are that:
- i) Any instance of supplying (whether or not money is involved) an illegal substance or solvent for solvent misuse whilst on site or involved in a school activity should usually result in permanent exclusion.
 - ii) Where possession or use has been established, a first offence would usually result in an exclusion of between 20 and 35 days.
 - iii) Knowingly associating with a pupil whilst involved in a drugs or solvent misuse incident may result in an exclusion of between 15 and 25 days.
 - iv) Where a pupil is found to have been in possession of, or used, an illegal substance on a second occasion, permanent exclusion is appropriate.

Medication

Students should not be in possession of medication whilst at school or on a school trip without prior notification and consent of their Head of House and without the knowledge and consent of the trip leader. Under no circumstances should students ever give any medication to another student. If a student appears to be misusing medication themselves or to be giving any to another student, it should be confiscated immediately and the parents contacted.

Appendix:

- An extract of this policy will be issued to parents annually together with details of drug education opportunities for parents and an outline of drug education provided within the school PSE programme.