



WESTONBIRT
— SCHOOL —

Smoking, Vaping, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy

Whole School (including Boarding)

Policy Title:	Smoking, Vaping, Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy	Effective Date:	September 2026
Staff Member Responsible:	Deputy Head Pastoral	Review Date:	September 2027

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour and Discipline Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and relevant medical, boarding and searching/confiscation procedures.

Policy Review and Revision Record

This record summarises the principal September 2026 changes and provides a clear audit trail for leadership, proprietor oversight and inspection.

Area reviewed	September 2026 update	Reason / reference	Status
Vaping and nicotine	Vaping is now explicit throughout the title, definitions, School Rules, searching, sanctions and education. Includes reusable vapes, pods, cartridges, e-liquid, nicotine products and associated paraphernalia.	Reflects current prevalence, legislation and DfE searching guidance.	Updated
Single-use vapes	Recognises the UK ban on sale/supply of single-use vapes from 1 June 2025 and requires safe electrical/battery-waste disposal.	Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) Regulations 2024 / 2025 implementation.	Added
Tobacco and Vapes Act	References the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026 and its phased commencement, without implying that provisions not yet commenced are already operative.	Current tobacco/vaping legislation.	Added
Substance definitions	Updated to include psychoactive substances, misuse of prescription/OTC medication, nitrous oxide, performance-enhancing substances, illicit/counterfeit products and substances contained in vapes.	Current risk profile and legal changes.	Updated
Nitrous oxide	Recognises nitrous oxide as a Class C controlled drug where possessed for wrongful inhalation from 8 November 2023.	Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 amendments.	Added
Searching/confiscation	Aligns to the 2022 DfE searching/confiscation guidance and expressly identifies vapes/e-cigarettes and paraphernalia as School Rule searchable items.	Vapes are not in the statutory tobacco list and must be specified by School Rules.	Updated
Drug/alcohol testing	Updated to current MOSA 2024 guidance; strengthened consent, chain-of-custody, confirmatory testing and fairness around refusal/initial screening.	Current independent-school good practice.	Updated
Safeguarding	Strengthened links to KCSIE 2026 and Working Together 2026, including exploitation, trauma, family difficulties and child criminal exploitation.	Current safeguarding framework.	Strengthened
Education	Expanded prevention education to include vaping, illicit vapes, synthetic drugs, medicine misuse and drink spiking.	2026 statutory RSE/Health Education content and current harms.	Updated
Sanctions	Replaced automatic exclusion language with proportionate, evidence-based case decisions while preserving the seriousness of possession, supply and trafficking.	Fairness, independent-school disciplinary framework and current Behaviour Policy.	Updated
Named personnel	Replaced named Head sign-off with role titles.	Policy resilience.	Updated

Contents

1. Aims
 2. Scope and application
 3. Regulatory framework
 4. Definitions
 5. Responsibilities
 6. Smoke-free and vape-free School
 7. Education, prevention and pastoral support
 8. School Rules
 9. Alcohol at authorised School events
 10. Responding to suspected intoxication or overdose
 11. Investigation, searching and confiscation
 12. Alcohol and drug testing
 13. Police and external agency involvement
 14. Safeguarding and welfare response
 15. Sanctions and disciplinary response
 16. Staff, Parents and visitors
 17. Risk assessment
 18. Training
 19. Record keeping, monitoring and review
- Appendix 1 - Alcohol testing procedure
- Appendix 2 - Drug testing procedure
- Appendix 3 - Examples of prohibited items and paraphernalia

1. Aims

1.1 Westonbirt School seeks to protect pupils from the health, safeguarding, behavioural and legal risks associated with smoking, vaping, alcohol misuse and the misuse of drugs or other substances.

1.2 The aims of this policy are to:

- promote pupil safety, welfare and good physical and mental health;
- prevent smoking and vaping by pupils and reduce exposure to nicotine addiction;
- prevent the possession, use, misuse, supply or distribution of illegal drugs, psychoactive substances and other harmful substances;
- promote an informed and responsible understanding of alcohol and reduce alcohol-related harm or misconduct;
- identify pupils who may need safeguarding, medical, pastoral or specialist support;
- provide clear, proportionate and consistent expectations, investigation procedures and sanctions; and
- ensure that incidents involving substances are managed in a way that protects the wider School community.

2. Scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all pupils in the whole School, including boarders and day pupils.

2.2 It applies when a pupil is on School premises, in the care of the School, representing the School, wearing School uniform, travelling on School-arranged transport, taking part in a School activity or trip, or otherwise associated with the School.

2.3 It may also apply to conduct outside School where the conduct affects the health, safety or welfare of a member of the School community, has repercussions for the orderly running of the School, creates a safeguarding concern, or brings the School into disrepute.

2.4 This policy covers possession, use/consumption, attempted use, being impaired or under the influence, purchase, supply, attempted supply, distribution, facilitation, storage and possession of related paraphernalia.

3. Regulatory framework

3.1 This policy has been prepared with regard to the following legislation and guidance, as applicable to an independent school in England:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and the DfE Independent School Standards guidance (April 2026);
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001;
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016;
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 (Amendment) Order 2023 and related regulations controlling nitrous oxide;
- Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026, including relevant provisions as they come into force;
- Environmental Protection (Single-use Vapes) (England) Regulations 2024 and the ban on sale and supply of single-use vapes from 1 June 2025;
- DfE and ACPO Drugs: advice for schools (2012), which remains published DfE advice and applies to independent schools;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: guidance for schools (July 2022, updated publication page July 2023);
- MOSA, Testing for Substance Misuse in Schools (updated May 2024);
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance for introduction from September 2026;
- Equality Act 2010; and
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR.

3.2 Where legislation or guidance changes, the current legal and statutory framework takes precedence over this policy until the document is formally updated.

4. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Alcohol	Intoxicating liquor of any description, including beer, cider, wine, spirits, liqueurs and fortified wine.
Controlled drug	A substance controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, including a drug controlled because of the circumstances of its intended misuse.
Drugs and substances	Controlled drugs, psychoactive substances, solvents/volatile substances, prescription or over-the-counter medicines when misused, performance-enhancing/anabolic substances, counterfeit or imitation drugs, illicit/counterfeit products, and any substance possessed, supplied or consumed for the purpose of intoxication, stimulation, sedation or another psychoactive effect.
Nitrous oxide	A Class C controlled drug where possessed or supplied for wrongful inhalation; legitimate medical, dental, culinary or industrial use is outside this prohibition where lawfully authorised.
Psychoactive substance	A substance capable of producing a psychoactive effect and within the scope of the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016 or other applicable law.
Tobacco / smoking product	Cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, herbal smoking products, cigarette papers and smoking-related products.
Vape / vaping product	Any e-cigarette, electronic cigarette, vape, vaporiser or device intended to vaporise a substance for inhalation, whether or not it contains nicotine, together with pods, cartridges, tanks, coils, e-liquid or refill liquid.
Nicotine product	A product that delivers nicotine for recreational/consumer use, including nicotine pouches or similar products. Medically authorised nicotine-replacement therapy used under School medical arrangements is excluded.
Paraphernalia	Any item associated with the use, storage, preparation, concealment, supply or administration of a prohibited substance, including grinders, rolling papers where drug-related, vape pods, cartridges, e-liquid, empty illicit containers, canisters/balloons used for nitrous oxide misuse and similar items.
Prescribed medication	Medication lawfully prescribed or supplied for a pupil and managed in accordance with the School's medical/Health Centre arrangements. Misuse, sharing, trading or unauthorised possession remains prohibited.
Biological sample	A breath, saliva, hair or urine sample provided under the procedures in this policy and current testing guidance.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Proprietor / governance	Overall assurance that the School maintains appropriate policies and arrangements.
Head	Overall executive responsibility and approval of serious disciplinary outcomes.
Deputy Head Pastoral	Policy lead; oversees implementation, investigations, sanctions, liaison with pastoral staff and review of patterns.

Role	Responsibility
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Leads safeguarding assessment where substance misuse may indicate abuse, exploitation, neglect, mental-health difficulty or other risk.
Health Centre / medical staff	Provides medical assessment, emergency response and clinical support; supports testing where this is undertaken.
Boarding staff	Monitor boarder welfare and whereabouts and respond to substance-related concerns in residential time.
All staff	Report concerns promptly, protect pupil safety, preserve evidence appropriately and follow this policy and safeguarding procedures.

6. Smoke-free and vape-free School

6.1 Westonbirt is a smoke-free and vape-free School. Smoking and vaping are prohibited in School buildings, grounds and vehicles.

6.2 The prohibition applies to pupils, staff, volunteers, Parents, visitors, contractors and members of the public using School premises or School vehicles, subject only to any lawful and specifically authorised medical arrangement.

6.3 Pupils must not possess vaping products, nicotine products or related paraphernalia while in the care of the School. This applies whether or not a particular product contains nicotine or is otherwise lawful for an adult to possess.

6.4 The sale or supply of single-use vapes has been prohibited in the UK since 1 June 2025. Any confiscated vape requiring disposal must be handled as electrical/battery waste using an appropriate recycling route and must not be placed in general waste because of fire and environmental risk.

7. Education, prevention and pastoral support

7.1 The School provides age-appropriate education through RSE/PSHE, pastoral programmes, assemblies, tutorials and other appropriate opportunities. Education will include:

- the health and legal risks of illegal drugs and psychoactive substances;
- the risks of potent synthetic drugs, counterfeit medicines and illicit vapes containing unknown or controlled substances;
- the physical and psychological risks of alcohol and problem alcohol use;
- drink spiking, personal safety and how to seek help;
- the dangers of misuse of prescribed and over-the-counter medicines;
- the serious health harms caused by smoking;
- the facts about vaping, including nicotine addiction and particular harms to children and young people; and
- how to seek confidential medical, pastoral or safeguarding support.

7.2 A pupil who seeks help for their own substance use before an incident or disciplinary investigation begins will normally be approached first as a welfare matter. The School cannot promise confidentiality or immunity from action where there is a safeguarding risk, a serious breach, supply to others, criminality or a risk to the School community.

7.3 Staff must not promise secrecy. Where information indicates that a pupil may be at risk of harm, the matter will be shared with the DSL in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

8. School Rules

8.1 Pupils are forbidden from:

- smoking or vaping while in the care of the School or in circumstances within the scope of this policy;
- possessing, using, purchasing, obtaining, supplying, distributing or attempting to supply tobacco, vapes, vaping liquid, nicotine products or related paraphernalia;

- possessing, using, producing, supplying, distributing or attempting to supply illegal drugs, controlled drugs, psychoactive substances or other substances for misuse;
- misusing prescribed or over-the-counter medication, or sharing, selling or giving medication to another pupil;
- possessing paraphernalia reasonably associated with drug or substance misuse;
- bringing alcohol onto School premises without authorisation, possessing alcohol without authorisation, supplying alcohol to another pupil, or being impaired by alcohol while in the care of the School;
- possessing or using a vape or other device containing, or suspected to contain, cannabis/THC, synthetic cannabinoids, controlled drugs or unknown illicit substances;
- spiking, attempting to spike, adulterating or tampering with another person's drink, food, medicine or substance; and
- engaging in substance-related conduct which creates a safeguarding risk, seriously affects the School community or brings the School into disrepute.

8.2 Vapes, e-cigarettes, nicotine products and associated paraphernalia are expressly identified as School Rule items for which a search may be undertaken in accordance with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy and applicable law.

9. Alcohol at authorised School events

9.1 The ordinary rule is that pupils must not possess or consume alcohol while in the care of the School.

9.2 Exceptionally, pupils aged 16, 17 and 18 (ordinarily Sixth Form students) may be permitted to consume a limited amount of beer, cider or wine at a specifically authorised School event where the arrangement is lawful and all of the following conditions are met:

- the Head has expressly approved the event and the arrangements;
- the premises/licensing position has been checked where relevant;
- a suitable risk assessment and supervision plan is in place;
- prior written parental consent has been obtained where the School requires it;
- alcohol is offered by an authorised adult and consumption is directly supervised;
- spirits, liqueurs and fortified wines are not served to pupils; and
- the pupil is not permitted to purchase alcohol themselves.

9.3 This is a limited privilege, not an entitlement. The School may decide that no pupil alcohol will be served at any event or may impose stricter conditions.

10. Responding to suspected intoxication or overdose

10.1 Pupil safety takes priority over investigation or discipline. Where a pupil may be intoxicated, poisoned, overdosing, unconscious, significantly impaired or medically unwell, staff must seek medical assistance immediately and call 999 where indicated.

10.2 The pupil must be appropriately supervised and should not be left alone. Staff should preserve any relevant packaging/substance safely where this can be done without risk and provide accurate information to medical professionals.

10.3 Parents will normally be contacted promptly unless safeguarding circumstances require a different approach. The DSL will be informed where the incident raises a safeguarding concern.

11. Investigation, searching and confiscation

11.1 Every credible complaint, allegation, observation or report concerning smoking, vaping, alcohol or substance misuse will be considered and, where appropriate, investigated in accordance with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy and safeguarding procedures.

11.2 Searches must be lawful, proportionate, safeguarding-led and carried out only by authorised staff in accordance with the School's Behaviour and Discipline Policy and current searching/confiscation guidance. The pupil's age, SEND, disability, vulnerability and reasonable-adjustment needs must be considered.

11.3 Searches may include alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco/cigarette papers and any additional items specified in School Rules, including vapes, e-cigarettes, nicotine products, e-liquids and related paraphernalia.

11.4 The DSL/deputy should be informed where a search concerns a prohibited item or reveals a safeguarding risk. Parents will be informed in accordance with the School's searching procedures and any safeguarding/police advice.

11.5 Controlled drugs should normally be delivered to police as soon as possible unless there is a good reason not to do so and safe disposal is appropriate. Where staff are unsure whether a substance is controlled, it should be treated as such and police advice sought.

11.6 Alcohol, tobacco, cigarette papers, vapes, nicotine products and other harmful items will not be returned to the pupil. Retention, parent collection where lawful and appropriate, or disposal will be managed under School procedures. Vapes and batteries requiring disposal must use an appropriate electrical/vape recycling route.

12. Alcohol and drug testing

12.1 Testing may be considered where there are reasonable grounds to suspect unauthorised alcohol consumption or drug/substance use and where testing is permitted by the School's contractual arrangements and current guidance.

12.2 Testing is not routine mass screening. Its purposes may include safeguarding, clarifying evidence, deterring serious breaches and avoiding unfair suspicion of pupils who have not used a substance.

12.3 The School will have regard to current Medical Officers of Schools Association (MOSA) guidance on testing for substance misuse in schools. Detailed procedures are set out in Appendices 1 and 2.

12.4 A pupil capable of understanding the nature, purpose and implications of the test should give informed consent. Where capacity/maturity is uncertain, the School will obtain appropriate medical advice and consider parental consent and the contractual position. Reasonable efforts will normally be made to notify Parents before testing unless urgent welfare or safeguarding circumstances make this inappropriate.

12.5 A refusal to test will be recorded and the pupil will be asked, without pressure, to explain the reason. Refusal is not automatic proof of substance use. Where permitted by the Parent Contract/School Rules, it may be considered alongside all other available evidence when reaching a disciplinary decision.

12.6 A positive screening result is not infallible. Where the result is materially relied on for a serious disciplinary outcome, appropriate confirmatory testing, chain-of-custody procedures and access to independent analysis should be used.

13. Police and external agency involvement

13.1 The School will decide whether to involve police, Trading Standards, local safeguarding services or other agencies on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the nature and quantity of the substance, supply/distribution, exploitation, risk to others and any criminal offence.

13.2 Suspected supply, trafficking, spiking, significant quantities of controlled drugs, evidence of exploitation or repeated serious criminal behaviour will normally prompt police consultation/referral.

13.3 The School may continue its own safeguarding and disciplinary processes where appropriate, while liaising with police/social care so that School action does not prejudice an external investigation.

14. Safeguarding and welfare response

14.1 Substance misuse may be a symptom of wider need or harm. Staff must consider whether the pupil may be experiencing or at risk of:

- child criminal exploitation or coercion into carrying/supplying substances;
- abuse, neglect, trauma or family difficulties;
- mental-health difficulty or self-harm risk;
- peer pressure, bullying or abusive relationships;

- dependency/addiction;
- unsafe sexual behaviour or other risk while intoxicated; or
- exploitation associated with debt, supply networks or online contact.

14.2 Any safeguarding concern must be referred to the DSL/deputy and recorded on CPOMS. Safeguarding support may run alongside disciplinary action.

14.3 Where appropriate, the School will consider Family Help, health services, specialist substance-misuse services, counselling or other external support.

15. Sanctions and disciplinary response

15.1 Breaches will be addressed under the Behaviour and Discipline Policy. Sanctions will be proportionate, consistent and determined on the evidence and circumstances of the individual case.

15.2 Relevant factors include the substance/product, possession versus use, quantity, supply or intent to supply, concealment, coercion/exploitation, previous breaches, age and vulnerability, impact on others, honesty/cooperation and safeguarding information.

15.3 Smoking, vaping, nicotine possession and alcohol misuse will normally attract the School's graduated behaviour sanctions, with escalation for repeated, deliberate, unsafe or supply-related breaches.

15.4 Possession or use of controlled drugs, supply or attempted supply, spiking, possession of a vape containing controlled/illicit substances, or other serious substance-related misconduct may constitute a serious breach and may result in suspension, permanent exclusion or required removal.

15.5 No pupil will be automatically permanently excluded solely because a category of substance is involved. Serious decisions will follow the procedures in the Behaviour and Discipline Policy and Permanent Exclusion and Required Removal: Review Procedure and will take safeguarding information into account.

16. Staff, Parents and visitors

16.1 Staff conduct in relation to alcohol, drugs, smoking and vaping is governed by employment, safeguarding and Staff Code of Conduct arrangements in addition to this policy.

16.2 Parents, visitors and contractors must comply with the smoke-free and vape-free campus requirement.

16.3 Where a Parent collecting a child appears impaired by alcohol or drugs and staff reasonably believe the child may be at risk, the School will follow safeguarding procedures and will not release the child into an unsafe situation. Police or children's social care may be contacted where necessary.

17. Risk assessment

17.1 Welfare and operational risks arising from substance misuse will be assessed and managed systematically. This may include individual pupil risk/support plans, boarding arrangements, supervision changes, transport arrangements, medical plans and restrictions on contact or movement where proportionate.

17.2 The School will also consider patterns by location, time, year group or peer group using behaviour, safeguarding/CPOMS, confiscation and pupil-voice information to identify preventative action.

18. Training

18.1 Staff receive induction and periodic guidance appropriate to role, including recognising intoxication, responding to medical emergencies, safeguarding indicators, searching/confiscation, safe handling of substances/vapes and referral routes.

18.2 Staff authorised to administer alcohol or drug tests must receive appropriate training and follow the approved procedure.

19. Record keeping, monitoring and review

19.1 Behavioural incidents, searches, confiscations, sanctions and testing will be recorded through the appropriate School systems. Safeguarding concerns and welfare decision-making will be recorded on CPOMS.

19.2 Records will be factual, proportionate and handled under the School's data-protection and records-retention arrangements. Sensitive information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis.

19.3 The Deputy Head Pastoral, working with the DSL and relevant senior leaders, will review patterns of smoking, vaping, alcohol and substance incidents at least termly and identify any necessary changes to education, supervision, sanctions or support.

19.4 This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if legislation, statutory guidance, substance trends or significant case learning require it.

Appendix 1 - Alcohol testing procedure

- **Authorisation:** only trained staff authorised by the Head may administer a breath alcohol test. In practice this will normally be a member of SLT or an appropriately trained Health Centre/medical professional.
- **Grounds:** the reasons for testing must be recorded and explained to the pupil.
- **Consent:** informed consent must be obtained in accordance with section 12.
- **Privacy:** testing should be conducted discreetly and respectfully, with an appropriate second adult present where practicable.
- **Equipment:** approved, maintained equipment should be used in accordance with manufacturer instructions and staff training.
- **Result:** the result and any relevant observations must be recorded. A positive screening result should be considered with other evidence and, where required for a serious disciplinary decision, confirmation/retesting should be considered.
- **Refusal:** refusal and the pupil's explanation will be recorded; refusal is not conclusive evidence of alcohol consumption.
- **Welfare:** any pupil suspected of harmful intoxication must receive medical assessment regardless of disciplinary considerations.

Appendix 2 - Drug testing procedure

- **Grounds:** testing will only be requested where reasonable grounds exist and the request is permitted by School contractual arrangements and this policy.
- **Supervision:** collection of saliva, hair or urine will be undertaken under appropriate medical/clinical supervision or by an approved provider using recognised procedures.
- **Consent and dignity:** informed consent, privacy, dignity and any SEND/disability adjustments must be addressed.
- **Chain of custody:** samples must be labelled, sealed, documented and transferred in a way that minimises contamination or misidentification.
- **Laboratory standard:** where a serious disciplinary decision may depend on the result, an appropriately accredited laboratory/validated method should be used and screening findings should be confirmed where required.
- **Independent analysis:** where practicable and appropriate, a second sample or equivalent mechanism should be available for independent analysis following a positive result.
- **Medical records:** the disciplinary testing result should not automatically become part of the pupil's permanent medical record, although clinically relevant information required for safe care may be recorded appropriately by medical staff.
- **Parents:** reasonable efforts will normally be made to notify Parents; outcome communication will take account of safeguarding and the pupil's welfare.
- **Refusal:** refusal and the reason given will be recorded and considered fairly with all other evidence; it is not automatic proof of drug use.

Appendix 3 - Examples of prohibited items and paraphernalia

This list is illustrative and not exhaustive. The School may treat an item as prohibited where its possession or intended use is contrary to School Rules, safety or applicable law.

Category	Examples
Smoking / tobacco	Cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, herbal smoking products, cigarette papers and related smoking equipment.
Vaping	Reusable or single-use vapes, e-cigarettes, vaporisers, pods, tanks, cartridges, coils, refill/e-liquid, empty containers, chargers/batteries associated with a prohibited device.
Nicotine	Nicotine pouches or comparable recreational nicotine products. Authorised

Category	Examples
	medical nicotine-replacement therapy is excluded.
Drug paraphernalia	Grinders, pipes, bongs, improvised smoking/vaping devices, bags/containers, scales or items reasonably associated with preparing, using, concealing or supplying drugs.
Nitrous oxide misuse	Canisters/cylinders, balloons or dispensing equipment where circumstances indicate intended wrongful inhalation.
Medication misuse	Prescription or over-the-counter medicines held, used, shared or supplied contrary to medical/School arrangements.
Unknown / illicit products	Counterfeit pills, powders, liquids, edibles, vapes or other items suspected to contain controlled drugs, psychoactive substances or unknown harmful substances.

Policy administration

Field	Detail
Policy lead	Deputy Head Pastoral
Safeguarding lead	Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approval / sign-off	Head / Proprietor as applicable
Effective date	September 2026
Next review	September 2027, or earlier if legislation/guidance changes
Publication	School policy library / website as applicable