



THE ORATORY

THE ORATORY SCHOOL

Drugs Policy

Policy Owner:	Second Master
Type of Policy:	Non-Regulatory
Regulatory Body* (if a regulatory policy)	n/a
Relevant Legislation* (if a regulatory policy)	n/a
Last approved by/date:	Newman Committee – March 2026
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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to give a clear statement to students, staff and parents about The Oratory School's attitudes regarding drug use. It is also to prevent students from using controlled drugs at any time. It aims to strike a balance between concern for the individual, and concern for the welfare of the community.

For the purpose of this policy, 'drugs' include: illegal drugs, solvents, so called 'legal highs', Nitrous Oxide, and other drugs not yet covered by the Law.

Background

***"The use of drugs inflicts very grave damage on human health and life. Their use, except on strictly therapeutic grounds, is a grave offence. Clandestine production of and trafficking in drugs are scandalous practices. They constitute direct co-operation in evil, since they encourage people to practices gravely contrary to the moral law."* (Catechism of the Catholic Church par. 2291)**

The Oratory School recognises that the use of drugs of all kinds in society at large, and in particular among young people is widespread. There is a wide range of views on the subject expressed in the media and by public figures: attitudes vary between age, social and cultural groups; the legal framework is complicated; medical advice is sometimes contradictory. The principles underlying The Oratory School's policy are as follows:

- respect for the Law is fundamental
- the school has a duty to safeguard the physical and mental well-being of all its students, and enable them to grow and learn in a healthy environment
- the school has a duty to inform students about the ways in which different substances can affect their physical and mental state
- the school has a duty to encourage individuals to think carefully about their attitudes and aspirations, and to develop the self-esteem necessary to enable them to make sensible and independent decisions.

Authority

The person responsible for ensuring the implementation of this policy is the Head Master, as part of his overall responsibility for education and discipline in the school. The policy has been made after consulting Governors, teachers and medical advisers.

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of The Oratory School that through a programme of education and example, it will actively seek to prevent the abuse of controlled drugs and will treat cases of abuse by students as serious misconduct and by staff as gross misconduct. Any case of drug abuse may be reported to the police.

The policy will be implemented as follows:

Prevention through education

Priority will be given at all levels of the school to a continuing programme of education about drugs. The Oratory School's PSHE programme course provides accurate information about the effects and dangers of different substances, and a clear understanding of the legal implications about drug misuse. Students are also encouraged to think carefully about their attitudes and aspirations, and to explore ways of making decisions and of developing strategies for resisting 'peer pressure'. Throughout the school there are a range of lessons are given by staff in tutor periods and talks from outside agencies and specialists; local police; videos/DVDs and written information about drugs. The subject is also covered in Biology, PE and RS. The students are made aware of the implications for them in their future career terms of any police record of involvement in drugs. Training is also offered to staff, and information is available through the school. Students, parents and staff will be regularly kept up to date on developments in drug abuse to ensure that sensible and informed discussions can be held, and decisions made about the misuse of drugs.

Help will be provided for anyone genuinely seeking help in this area. We encourage students to discuss their anxieties about drugs or substances in confidence with a member of staff. Matters brought up in this way, in circumstances which are genuine, can be ring-fenced from disciplinary sanctions, unless to do so would fail adequately to safeguard other students. Anyone with a drugs problem will receive help but will go onto a programme of regular testing (see below).

Parental permission for testing to be carried out under the circumstances outlined below will be assumed on the student's entry to the school. All efforts will be made to contact parents at the earliest opportunity should the school need to take this course of action.

Discipline

The aim of the school's disciplinary approach to drugs is to deter individuals who may be tempted to experiment or to persuade others to do so.

Illegal Drugs

These drugs include, for example, cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy, heroin, amphetamines, barbiturates, magic mushrooms etc.

Solvents and other drugs not yet covered by law

There is a wide range of substances such as solvents, glues, aerosols, Nitrous Oxide, etc. which can be abused. There are also an ever-increasing number of other synthetic or natural substances, which affect the user's physical and mental state, but are not yet covered by any legislation.

Suspicion of Misuse

If a member of staff has reason to suspect that a student is using drugs, he/she must report the situation to the relevant Housemaster or Second Master. The Second Master will decide if further investigation or a drug test is warranted.

Suspicion of misuse may be aroused by certain behavioural and other signs, which may in turn be associated with deterioration in a student's welfare and/or performance. Accordingly, all staff must be alert to signs of drug misuse, considering the warning signs. Such signs may include:

1. Repeated lateness to lessons
2. A noteworthy decline in quality of work
3. Noteworthy behaviour such as repeated sleepiness in class
4. Any unusual behaviour from an individual or a small group that may indicate current or recent intoxication
5. Changes in behaviour/character or noteworthy mood swings
6. Any noteworthy decline in physical appearance (e.g., untidiness, poor hygiene, changes to complexion)

Other signs or evidence may include the finding of certain items of equipment/drug paraphernalia; the smell of drugs; behaviour on a particular occasion; a member of staff witnessing an exchange of money or packages under suspicious circumstances; social media posts; written notes or conversations overheard by a member of staff that drug use has taken place or other information that has been gathered – for example, in the opinion of the medical centre that a student might be under the influence of drugs rather than alcohol.

Any suspicion of drug sale/supply, use or possession will be investigated thoroughly. Investigation may include questioning of the individual(s) under suspicion and others; searches of students' room or belongings; examination of other evidence.

It is the standard practice of the school to ask a student to take a drug test in the case of any of the criteria mentioned above. A student may also take a test if they feel that they are under suspicion and wishes to exonerate themselves.

Investigation into Possible Misuse

Once there has been confirmation that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student has been using controlled drugs, the Second Master will be accountable for any further investigation. Responsibility for all investigations rests with the Head or as delegated to the Second Master, who will make every effort to ensure that they are conducted fairly and with as much openness towards the affected student as the circumstances may reasonably allow.

Testing will be carried out in accordance with a strict procedure, details of which are available from the school. The procedure may change from time to time as dictated by experience and/or scientific advance and therefore the written procedure may be updated from time to time. Complete chain of custody records for the sample will be kept. It is intended that the procedures be fully in accordance with the standards required to satisfy any legal challenge.

The school reserves the right to use sniffer dogs to assist with any search for drugs. This may be done randomly and without notice.

Action Following Misuse

If there is firm evidence that a student has been taking controlled drugs then they should expect to be suspended pending a meeting between the Head, the pupil and the parents. If it is a first offence then the Head has the option to allow the pupil to remain at school on the understanding that they will engage in drugs education, counselling and random testing during the following six months. A second offence will result in the pupil being required to leave the school. Any pupil caught supplying or inciting the use of controlled drugs or so called "legal high" substances or being in possession of them with intent to supply, will be excluded.

Confidentiality

The records of testing will not be used for any other purpose, and they will be destroyed when the pupil concerned leaves the school.

DRUG ABUSE AMONGST PUPILS

Drug taking by children and young people is a well-documented national problem. We recognise that our children are as liable as any to come into contact with drugs. If we deny this, we deceive ourselves. More importantly, we fail the children in our care. Accordingly, our drugs policy seeks to establish a sound balance between education, detection and deterrence. Nevertheless, its overriding and single most important aim is to prevent the abuse of controlled drugs by pupils: to that end, cases of drug abuse by pupils will always be treated as serious misconduct. In this light, we work to protect our pupils in the following ways:

Vigilance

Staff are trained to watch for and detect tell-tale signs of possible drug abuse. These signs are listed above. Staff receive INSET on drugs education, and they discuss and readily share information with each other. Where appropriate, guidance is also sought from other organisations.

Working Together Through Education and Example

Teaching clearly about the dangers and consequences of drug abuse is an increasingly important part of our Life Skills/PSHE Programme. This programme is taught in each year and involves many members of staff. Our approach to drugs education will involve the following: deterrence, raising self-esteem, decision-making skills and whole school approaches via health promotion, and will incorporate skills, values, attitudes and feelings. Visiting 'experts'/lecturers are incorporated into the programme. We believe we can only be truly effective in our aims and objectives here if parents join us in a partnership with their children and the school. Accordingly, provision will be made for parental involvement in our PSHE programme and openness between parents and the school is both encouraged and crucial. The school also works closely with the police to assist them in their vital work of detection and surveillance in the battle against drug pushing and enticement.

Testing

We carry out tests where we have reason to believe drugs are being taken. Detection is an important part of our drugs policy: testing acts as a powerful deterrent against drug abuse, and we value it as such. Tests are not carried out randomly. They are however always carried out where there is reasonable cause for concern. When a test is taken parents will be sent information describing the testing procedures. Parents or pupils can refuse a test. In such circumstances, the school must assume that drug abuse is taking place and that our policy for preventing it has been rejected.

Working with the Problem

We believe that drug abuse cannot be combated by punishment alone. Punishment must of course have its place in an integrated policy of drugs education and prevention, but we do not believe it is morally or educationally acceptable to "write off" a young person for experimenting with drugs. Nevertheless, we are firm in our conviction that drug abuse *is* damaging and we will not hesitate to apply the sanctions described above.

Application

This policy has been authorised by the Governors of The Oratory School and is available to parents and pupils on request. The policy relates to the misuse of controlled drugs and other substances and applies to all pupils at The Oratory School. It applies at all times whether or not the pupil is in the care of the school. The same will apply to pupils who come into school suffering from the after-effects of drug use, or who are shown by a test to have drugs still in their system. The procedure and sanctions may be adapted as appropriate to meet the policy aims and circumstances of each case. Certain of the procedures can only be carried out during term time.

Pastoral/Medical Care

If there is a possibility that a pupil has been using any of the above substances, normal first aid procedures should be followed; they should not be left alone, and the Medical Centre Staff should be informed immediately.

If it becomes clear that a pupil is in need of support in relation to drug misuse, whether or not disciplinary action has to be taken, The Oratory School will make every effort to recommend appropriate sources of help and guidance.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The policy is a living document, which will be evaluated, refined and updated on a regular basis.
- All drug incidents will be recorded on My Concern.
- There will be a continuing programme of INSET as deemed necessary.
- There will be regular pupil input, via questionnaires and pupil voice in lessons

Other Policies/Staff Guidelines, which have relevance to the *Drugs Policy*, are:

- Alcohol Policy
- Smoking Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Pupil Restraint
- Self-Harm Policy
- Pupil Confidentiality
- RSE Policy

Member of Staff responsible: Matthew Syddall (Second Master)

Reviewed Annually in September

Appendix One

Signs and Symptoms of Drug Abuse

Drug or solvent misuse: recognising the signs (Reproduced from "Drug Misuse and the Young - A Guide for the Education Service").

Warning Signs

Early detection of drugs misuse is extremely important. If a young person's drug misuse is identified at an early stage, it is easier for action to be taken to prevent his or her further misuse of drugs. Therefore, teachers need to be vigilant, particularly when they oversee activities which take groups of young people away from the school premises. Research has shown that first experiments with drugs by young people almost always involve a substance provided by a friend. The warning signs listed below may indicate that individuals or groups of young people are misusing drugs. Their presence alone is not conclusive proof of drug or solvent misuse: many of them are a normal part of adolescence, but the presence of several signs together may point to a need for greater vigilance.

The Objects List gives an indication of equipment which, if found in certain circumstances, might also give grounds for concern.

Warning Signs in Individuals

- Changes in attendance, and being unwilling to take part in school activities
- Decline in performance in schoolwork
- Unusual outbreaks of temper, marked swings of mood, restlessness or irritability
- Reports from parents that more time is being spent away from home, possibly with new friends or with friends in older age groups
- Excessive spending or borrowing of money
- Stealing money or goods
- Excessive tiredness without obvious cause
- No interest in physical appearance
- Sores or rashes especially on the mouth or nose
- Lack of appetite
- Heavy use of scents, colognes etc. to disguise the smell of drugs
- Wearing sunglasses at inappropriate times (to hide dilated or constricted pupils)

Warning Signs in Groups

- Regular absence on certain days
- Keeping at a distance from other pupils, away from supervision points (e.g. groups who frequently gather near the gate of a school playground or sports field)
- Being the subject of rumours about drug taking
- Talking to strangers on or near the premises
- Stealing which appears to be the work of several individuals rather than one person (e.g. perhaps to shoplift solvents)

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- Use of drug takers' slang
- Exchanging money or other objects in unusual circumstances
- Associating briefly with one person who is much older and not normally part of the peer group
- **Objects that may indicate Drug Misuse**
 - Foil containers or cup shapes made from silver foil, perhaps discoloured by heat
 - Metal tins
 - Spoons discoloured by heat
 - Pill boxes
 - Plastic, cellophane or metal foil wrappers
 - Small plastic or glass phials or bottles
 - Twists of paper
 - Straws
 - Sugar lumps
 - Syringes and needles
 - Cigarette papers and lighters
 - Spent matches
 - Plastic bags and butane gas containers (solvent abuse)
 - Cardboard or other tubes (heroin)
 - Stamps, stickers, transfers or similar items
 - Shredded cigarettes, home-rolled cigarettes and pipes (cannabis)
 - Paper (about 2 inches square) folded to form an envelope (heroin)

Appendix Two

Protocol for Drug testing using urine

The nurse is informed by Second Master, DSL or DDSL that a pupil needs testing.

The pupil is brought to the Health Centre by either the DSL or any of the DDSLs and another member of teaching staff or Housemother.

The DSL/DDSL explains the procedure to the pupil and answers any questions.

Informed consent is required before the sample is collected. The pupil does not need to be over 16 years of age to give valid consent. 'Competency', i.e., the ability to understand the nature of the test and the consequences of refusing to provide a sample, is the measure. A sample cannot be taken if a pupil does not consent.

It is not necessary to have parental consent although this is desirable. Pupils' medical consent form should be checked by the Health Centre. The parents should be informed at the earliest opportunity, although a test should not be delayed unreasonably to achieve this. Significant delay can allow the pupil to influence the outcome of the test e.g., drinking copious amounts

of water overnight can dilute the urine sufficiently to produce a negative result where the levels of the drug are not high to start with.

The testing procedure is standardised and is performed by the same team. To ensure that the process is witnessed, there will be two school collection officers and Health Centre staff, who are only there to facilitate the process.

The pupil is asked to remove their jacket and empty pockets.

A cubicle and lavatory should be chosen that does not contain a wash basin within the cubicle itself. The water in the bowl of the lavatory and in the cistern should be coloured with a dye (e.g., Jeyes Bloo or fountain pen ink). The pupil should be prepared in such a way that it is impossible for them to bring anything on them or in pockets into the cubicle. Cups should be prepared prior to collection. A suitable 99% accuracy example is the Poct Urine Drug test EZ-SPLIT KEY CUP urine sample container system from Abbott. This is the test of choice for The Oratory. The pupil takes the collection test cup into the lavatory cubicle, whilst the House Master waits outside. SureStep™ Urine Test E-Z Split Key™ Drug Screen Cup | Abbott Toxicology

Each cup is prepared by bringing to room temperature and writing the date and initialling the security seal label.

The pupil returns to the DSL/DDSL, accompanying member of staff and member of Health Centre staff, and the staff must be satisfied that the liquid in the bottle contains urine from the pupil. The cup is then sealed with the security seal in the pupil's presence. Place the cup on a flat surface and push the key from the lid of the cup into the socket of the cup to initiate the test. Start the timer. The results are indicated in 10 minutes.

The test result should be documented on the pupil's medical record and photo of control panel results (evidence) will be sent to the Second Master and DSL..

If a parent requests a confirmation test result from the laboratory the original sample is sent to Abbot. This will be at the cost of the parents. This needs to be done with the same sample of urine collected originally and sent off to Abbott toxicology the same day.

The original sample should be transferred into a different storage system to send off in the mail to Abbott.

Chain of custody form completed/sent with sample, add a copy for parent's, and pupils' medical notes.

The formal testing should be carried out by a recognised organisation (Abbott) adhering to the principles of "chain of custody" so that any positive result can stand up to subsequent legal action.