



Drugs Education Policy

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Aims of this policy

- To clarify the legal requirements and responsibilities of the school
- To reinforce and safeguard the health and safety of students and the whole school community
- To clarify the school's approach to drugs for all staff, students, governors, parents/carers, external agencies and the wider community
- To give guidance on developing, implementing and monitoring the drug education programme
- To clarify the procedures for responding to and managing any drug-related incidents that may occur so that they are managed with confidence and consistency and in the best interests of those involved
- To ensure that the response to incidents involving drugs and the drug education programme complement the values and ethos of the school
- To provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the school drug education programme and the management of incidents involving illegal and other unauthorised drugs
- To reinforce the role of the school in contributing to local and national strategies

Policy context

The school is committed to safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of all members of the school community. In providing drugs education and responding to incidents involving drugs, our first concern is the pastoral care, health and safety of students.

This Drugs Education Policy has been developed with reference to:

1. *DfE and ACPO drug advice for schools (DfE-00001-2012)*

2. *Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff* (DfE, 2024)
3. *Searching, screening and confiscation at school* (DfE, 2022, updated 2023)
4. *Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England* (DfE, 2024)
5. *Keeping children safe in education* (DfE, 2025)
and should also be read alongside Thornden's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Medical Conditions Policy and Personal Development (PD) curriculum documentation.

Education and Prevention

We believe that knowledge is power and so we ensure that age-appropriate education and support is provided through Personal Development lessons, science lessons, tutor periods and assemblies.

We also recognise the importance of training of staff and will make sure this is regular, up to date and context specific.

Definition of Drugs

The definition of a drug given by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is: "A substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave". Here, 'drugs' is used to refer to illegal drugs (those controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971) and all legal drugs, including alcohol, tobacco, volatile substances, over the counter and prescription medicines, and new psychoactive substances. By 'drugs paraphernalia' we mean items such as cannabis grinders, rolling papers, filters, matches, lighters and pipes etc.

Drugs on school premises

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

This policy also applies to the underpass that runs under Winchester Road.

Medicines

The school has a policy/procedure for the administration of medicines that must be followed for everyone's safety. Please refer to our Medical Conditions Policy.

Alcohol

If alcohol is being given as a present for any member of staff, it must be bought to reception and left there to be collected; at no time should alcohol be left in classrooms. During the course of a standard school day (i.e. a normal teaching day), no alcohol may be brought on to the school premises or consumed. There are exceptions to alcohol being consumed on

school site and these are staff events (when there are no students present) or in the vicinity of Thornden Hall where there is a fully licensed bar.

Any adult (or staff, students, parents, carers and visitors) under the effects of alcohol will be asked to leave the premises and return at a later date for the safety of the whole school. Any student under the effect of alcohol will be kept safe until they are collected from school by their parents/carers and we will then encourage them to seek immediate medical support. Any bottles of alcohol found (either on the student or in another location) will be tipped away so that we do not store it in school.

Smoking

School premises are a no smoking site at all times. Students are not permitted to bring 'smoking paraphernalia' to school. In the interests of health and safety, should a student be found in possession of any of these on school premises, the paraphernalia will be confiscated and destroyed and the parents will be informed and sanctions applied.

Vaping and the use of e-cigarettes are prohibited on school premises and during any school activity. This includes both single-use (disposable) vapes and re-usable vapes, regardless of whether they contain nicotine or any other substance.

From 1 June 2025, it is illegal for businesses in England to sell or supply single-use vapes. Disposable vapes brought into school are therefore likely to have been obtained illegally. Any vapes found on students will be confiscated and disposed of appropriately in line with environmental guidance, and sanctions will be applied in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

Illegal drugs and “psychoactive substances”

No illegal drugs, new psychoactive substances or drugs paraphernalia are allowed to be brought on to, or used on school premises, this includes substances such as nitrous oxide ("laughing gas") when used for its psychoactive effects. Bringing any such items onto school premises is considered a serious breach of this drugs policy. Seeking to influence or "glamorise" illegal drug use or the use of psychoactive substances either in person on school premises or via social networking platforms, including WhatsApp, is also considered a serious breach of this drugs policy and will result in further sanctions.

This policy will also apply to any emerging substances or trends (for example new forms of vaping products, nitrous oxide, or other psychoactive substances) which have the potential to cause harm to young people, even if they are not yet widely known.

Solvents

The school will ensure that potentially hazardous substances it authorises are stored safely, and students will be supervised if it is necessary that they come into contact with them in the course of their work. Students are not permitted to be in possession of solvents.

Bringing solvents or hazardous substances onto school premises is considered a serious breach of this drugs policy.

Searching and confiscation (for further details please see the school's behaviour policy)

Designated staff may carry out searches in line with statutory protocols, and any prohibited or harmful items found will be confiscated. This includes vapes (e-cigarettes), which are not permitted on the school site under any circumstances, regardless of their content.

Confiscated items may be disposed of, retained, or passed to the police, depending on their

nature. Parents or carers will be informed of any such incidents, and further sanctions may be applied in line with the school's behaviour policy.

Responses to drug related incidents

Drug incidents include any or all of the following:

- drugs or drugs paraphernalia found on school premises;
- students in possession of illegal or unauthorised drugs;
- students supplying unauthorised or illegal drugs;
- students under the influence of drugs, or exhibiting signs of intoxication or illness;
- disclosure of drug use;
- information which suggest student(s) are involved in substance misuse; and
- illegitimate sale/supply of drugs in the school vicinity/hiding drugs in or around the school premises

If there are any suspicions, observations, disclosures or discoveries of situations involving illegal and other unauthorised drugs (possession, supply or imbibing):

- a) Utmost priority will be placed on safety, meeting any medical emergencies with first aid and summoning appropriate help before addressing further issues. If in doubt, medical assistance will be sought immediately.
- b) The Headteacher or an available member of SLT will be informed of the situation immediately.
- c) Dialogue with the student(s) will be undertaken by the Headteacher or a member of SLT as soon as possible to determine the facts. The emphasis will be on listening to what people have to say and asking open rather than closed or leading questions. Consideration will be given to separating any students involved in the incident and ensuring that a second adult witness is present.
- d) The Headteacher or a member of SLT will inform, consult, and involve others as necessary. Careful attention will be given to respecting the confidentiality of those involved.
- e) Details on student searches is detailed in the Behaviour Policy.
- f) Staff may search school property, for example, students' lockers, if they believe drugs to be stored there.
- g) If something illegal, or of concern is discovered then parents and carers will be notified by the school.
- h) Any substance suspected of being a drug will be confiscated. If the substance is suspected to be an illegal drug, the police will be notified immediately, in order that they may collect it for identification and then store or dispose of it in line with locally agreed protocols. In the majority of cases, parents will be notified immediately unless this is not in the best interests of the student.
 - a. A detailed record of the incident will be made on CPOMS, as per the school procedures.
 - b. The school will maintain vigilance about drug-related incidents in the local community through contact with police and other relevant agencies. The school

will consider each incident individually and will employ a range of responses to deal with them, as per the Behaviour Policy.

Suspension from Thornden School is not an automatic response to a drug incident but permanent exclusion is considered in serious cases where:

There is a serious breach or persistent breaches of our Drugs and/or Behaviour for Learning Policies.

and

Allowing a student to remain at Thornden School would seriously harm the education, safety or welfare of the student or others in the school.

Decisions about suspension or permanent exclusion following a drug-related incident will take account of the statutory guidance *Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England* (DfE, 2024), including consideration of the student's age, SEND, any safeguarding concerns (including potential criminal exploitation), and the impact on the wider school community.

In all incidents involving drugs or suspected drugs, staff and leaders will consider whether there are indicators of **child criminal exploitation (CCE)** or **county lines** activity. Where there is any concern that a student may be being coerced, controlled or exploited to possess or supply drugs, the incident will be treated primarily as a **safeguarding concern** in line with *Keeping children safe in education* and Thornden's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, and support from Children's Services and/or the Police will be sought as appropriate.

Drug Misuse outside the school premises

In line with Behaviour & Discipline in Schools (January 2016) the school may impose sanctions on a student for misusing drugs outside schools when students are:

- taking part in any school-organised or school-related activity or
- travelling to or from school or
- in some way identifiable as a student at the school.

The school may also impose sanctions on a student for misusing drugs at any time, whether the conditions above apply, if the misuse:

- could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school or
- poses a threat to another student or member of the public or
- could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

Individuals in possession of drugs

If any student or adult on school premises is found in possession of an unauthorised drug it will be confiscated, if possible. If the drug is suspected to be illegal, the school will contact the police.

Confiscated illegal substances will be handed to the police to be legally destroyed as soon as possible and not stored. Parents and carers will be informed (unless for safeguarding

reasons this is not in the best interests of the student) and other professionals such as the local authority, Children's Services, Youth Offending Team, Catch 22 or the GP may be informed or consulted as appropriate.

In all incidents involving drugs or suspected drugs, staff and leaders will consider whether there are indicators of **child criminal exploitation (CCE)** or **county lines** activity. Where there is any concern that a student may be being coerced, controlled or exploited to possess or supply drugs, the incident will be treated primarily as a **safeguarding concern** in line with *Keeping children safe in education* and Thornden's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, and support from Children's Services and/or the Police will be sought as appropriate.

Confidentiality

Thornden School will always seek to work with parents and carers when information or allegations of drug use are made. There may be occasions when, for safeguarding reasons, this may not be appropriate (please refer to our Safeguarding & Child Protection policy for more information on this).

Complete confidentiality can never be promised to a student though information given in confidence will not generally be disclosed to anyone else. If a student chooses to disclose that they are using a drug without medical authorisation, this information will not be used against them. However, action will be taken to try to ensure the student comes to no serious harm if this is considered a risk. Regarding disclosures staff will follow the advice given in the Child Protection policy, and at the annual safeguarding training.

Support for students

At our school the welfare of the student is paramount and intervention will be made if the school feels a student is showing signs which indicate risks of, or from, involvement with drugs, whether their own or the involvement of their parents'/carers'. We believe that early intervention, where possible, is significant.

Such interventions may include:

- Support and advice in school (Pastoral team, School Nurse, Head of Year or Tutor)
- Referral to specialist outside agencies for support or
- Working with the Police

Right to Search

In line with legislation the staff at Thornden School reserve the right to search students if they have reason to believe that they are carrying offensive weapons, illegal substances or anything that is illegal or dangerous. Similarly, students can expect to be physically restrained if they present a danger to themselves or other members of the community.

All searches, screening and confiscation will be carried out in accordance with *Searching, screening and confiscation at school* (DfE 2022, updated 2023) and Thornden's Searching and Confiscation Protocol.

Searches will be carried out by members of the Senior Leadership Team (with a Head of Year if appropriate) of the same gender as the student (if this is possible) and Parents/Carers will always be informed when this has happened. Students will be asked to

read and sign a Search Form as part of this process and this will be stored in the student file and recorded on CPOMs.

Thornden School works closely with its Police Community Support Officers. If students are involved with any activity which breaks the law the police may be involved in the confiscation of items, unless there are reasons why this should not be the case (for instance, serious safeguarding concerns). Parents/Carers will always be informed when the police are involved and given the opportunity to attend any interviews.

Similarly, the police will be involved if any student is suspected of having contact with an illegal substance. This includes possession, using or dealing. In such cases, the police will decide whatcourse of legal action, if any, should be taken.

Annex 1

Drugs Education

Drug education is a major component of drug prevention. The following aims of drug education at Thornden will be consistent with the values and ethos of the school and laws of society as well as being appropriate to the age, ability and maturity of the students, and relevant to their particular circumstances:

- To increase students' 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
 - local and national use
 - the complex moral, social, emotional and political issues surrounding drugs
- To develop students' personal and social skills to make informed decisions and keep themselves safe and healthy, including:
 - promoting positive attitudes to healthy lifestyles
 - assessing, avoiding and managing risk
 - communicating effectively
 - resisting pressures
 - finding information, help and advice
 - devising problem-solving and coping strategies
 - developing and maintaining self-awareness and self-esteem in order to motivate them to value their welfare and conscientious care of themselves
- To enable students to explore their own and other peoples' attitudes towards drugs, drug use and drug users, including challenging stereotypes, and exploring media and social influences.
- To ensure that students have access to and knowledge of up-to-date information as sources of help. This includes local and national, youth and community services and drug services. These sources are used in addition to the school's own drug and alcohol education.

Drug Education Content

Thornden provides a planned drug education curriculum through the following:

Preventative Drug Education

A. Purpose of Preventative Drug Education

- Thornden School delivers a comprehensive, age-appropriate preventative education programme which equips students with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make informed and safe decisions about drugs, alcohol, vaping and other risky behaviours. Through our KS4 PD lessons as well as the tutor-time Personal Development

curriculum, students explore real scenarios and case studies such as *Alex being offered cannabis by a friend* and reflect on how peer influence and early experimentation can create vulnerability. They also examine authentic health evidence through guided reading on vaping-related lung injuries, nicotine addiction, and mental-health impacts. This proactive approach helps students to recognise risks early, understand the consequences of substance misuse, and know when to seek support for themselves or peers.

B. Content of the Curriculum

- Preventative safeguarding around drugs is taught explicitly through a sequence of lessons including *Lesson 2: What are the harms caused by vaping?*, *Lesson 3: What are illegal drugs and what harm can they do?*, and the *Unhealthy Behaviours and Health & Wellbeing* units in the Year 10 PD rotation. Students learn about:

Vaping harms and addiction:

- Guided reading activities exploring symptoms seen in young hospital patients (e.g., chest pain, GI symptoms, shortness of breath), the presence of heavy metals such as lead, nickel and tin, and the dangers of substances such as vitamin E acetate.
- A discussion prompt centred on Estelle’s story—*chest pain after regular vaping despite never smoking*—highlighting early-risk decision-making.
- Critical thinking about peer pressure, flavours, social media influence and the misconception that vaping is harmless for non-smokers.

Illegal drugs and peer risk:

- Definition and classification work on stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens and narcotics.
- The *Alex and Ben cannabis scenario*, teaching students how experimentation typically begins, and why cannabis is often described as a “gateway drug”.
- Real-life cases including ketamine harm, Rachel Whitear, synthetic pills and links to fatal overdoses.
- Use of the “Most Dangerous Drugs” chart to compare perceived vs actual harm and explore why some harmful drugs remain legal.

Alcohol education:

- Exploration of why teenagers drink, using national statistics on early alcohol use (e.g., age 13.3 average first drink, 36% of 15-year-olds drinking monthly) and scenarios illustrating the consequences of intoxication.
- Lessons on organ damage (brain, liver, pancreas), alcohol poisoning, vulnerability, consent, and unsafe environments.
- Comparative activities on the risks of binge drinking, long-term health effects, and the legal framework for under-18s.

Addiction and unhealthy coping strategies:

- Explicit teaching on nicotine, alcohol and drug addiction through dopamine-pathway explanations and video-supported content.
- Tasks analysing why people continue harmful behaviours even when aware of risks.
- Identification of safer alternatives and protective behaviours (e.g., travelling safely, watching out for friends, emergency response steps).

C. Safeguarding Approach / Early Identification (with explicit lesson references)

- Thornden's drug education is tightly linked to safeguarding, with lessons explicitly designed to help students recognise signs of risk in themselves and others. For example, in *Lesson 2 (Vaping)* students evaluate why a non-smoker like Estelle might become addicted, enabling them to recognise early warning signs such as persistent chest pain, increased vaping frequency, or using nicotine products to manage stress. In *Lesson 3 (Illegal Drugs)*, students analyse realistic peer scenarios—such as Alex being pressured to try cannabis—to identify grooming, manipulation and coercion.
- The *Unhealthy Behaviours* lesson teaches students how addiction develops, how withdrawal feels, and why substance use is often linked to mental-health struggles such as stress, anxiety or low mood. Students also practise safety planning (e.g., not walking home alone, staying with friends, recognising unsafe environments) and learn how to respond in emergencies, including placing someone in the recovery position and calling 999.
- These learning experiences help students notice behavioural changes—such as secrecy, risk-taking, emotional dysregulation or unexplained physical symptoms—and understand that they may indicate underlying safeguarding concerns, including exploitation or substance misuse.

D. Alignment with Policy, Law and Current Risks (with explicit examples)

- The curriculum reflects current national risks and legal updates, introducing students to key emerging issues such as the rising misuse of ketamine, the dangers of synthetic pills (e.g., the “deadly 30p pills” referenced in lesson videos), and the health and legal implications of youth vaping. Lessons integrate legal literacy—for example:
- Understanding drug classifications (A, B, C) and possession laws through the “What is an illegal drug?” section.
- Exploring alcohol legislation and the consequences of underage drinking.
- Discussing whether vaping is legal but why it is not safe for developing lungs, and analysing misconceptions created by flavoured products and online culture.
- Students evaluate national and local data, consider harm profiles using the drugs danger chart, and critically explore why UK drug laws are not based solely on harm but also on societal, economic and cultural factors. Furthermore, all lessons signpost students to appropriate help, including Talk to Frank, Supportline, Childline, Young Minds, NHS Better Health and other age-appropriate resources.

E. Supporting Behaviour, Health and Personal Development (with examples)

- Drug education at Thornden reinforces our Behaviour Policy, safeguarding practice and Personal Development curriculum by embedding consistent expectations around safety, responsibility and wellbeing. Through repeated exposure to key concepts—such as the dopamine cycle in nicotine and drug addiction, the long-term consequences of alcohol misuse, and real-life harms shown in organ-dissection videos on vaping—students understand how substances directly undermine health, learning and future opportunities.
- Activities such as comparing vaping statements, analysing why people still smoke or vape despite known dangers, and designing warning labels for vape devices encourage students to challenge peer norms and misinformation. Lessons also provide protective factors: students practise refusal skills, identify healthy alternatives to stress relief, and learn when and how to seek help from trusted adults, the safeguarding team or external services.
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Organisation

a) Responsibility for coordination

- The coordination of Drugs Education is the responsibility of the Deputy Headteacher. Each Head of Department has responsibility for elements of drugs education where it is taught within their subject.

b) Delivery

- This is through assemblies, tutor periods and bespoke PD lessons in Year 10 and 11.

c) Staffing

- Teachers, as tutors, deliver most of the drug education programme in Years 7 and 8 through the tutor period. PD lessons which have a specific drugs education focus (in Years 10 and 11) are normally delivered by a specialist teacher in mixed gender and ability groups. Other staff who may deliver specific aspects of Drug Education will have access to on-going advice, support and appropriate training as part of their own professional development.

d) Visitors

- Occasionally, appropriate and suitably experienced and/or knowledgeable visitors from outside school may be invited to contribute to the delivery of drug education.

e) Students with special educational needs (SEN)

- Relevant staff will ensure that drug education is accessible to students with special educational needs by considering resources and materials used, timings, teaching strategies etc.

f) Teaching strategies and resources

- A variety of teaching strategies is used but active learning methods are used at all times. A wide range of materials are also available to teachers and can be inspected by parents on request.

g) Monitoring and evaluation

- This is conducted through some lesson observations and through the PSHE reviews and written evaluations by students in the Year 11 survey. These are all used to inform future planning.

Specific issues

The following issues may occur within Drugs Education:

a) Confidentiality

- Staff always ensure that students know that teachers cannot offer unconditional confidentiality.
- All students are offered sensitive and appropriate support as needed.
- Students are encouraged to talk to their parents and carers and supported to do so.
- Information about sources of help is made available e.g., helplines.
- If there is any possibility that a child may be at risk or putting others at risk, the school's Child Protection & Safeguarding procedures are followed. Staff will reassure students that their best interests will be maintained, and any child concerned will be supported through the process.

b) Dealing with questions

- Ground rules established with the class set clear parameters of what is appropriate and inappropriate in a whole class setting.

- Students' questions are answered according to the age and maturity of the student concerned. Questions may be addressed individually later if more appropriate.
- Staff are given appropriate support, advice and training for dealing with questions.
- If a teacher is concerned, they will follow the Child Protection & Safeguarding procedures.

Annex 2

Useful organisations

ADFAM - offers information to families of drug and alcohol users, and the website has a database of local family support services.

Website: www.adfam.org.uk

Alcohol Change UK - works to reduce the incidence and costs of alcohol-related harm and to increase the range and quality of services available to people with alcohol-related problems.

Tel: 020 3907 8480

Email: contact@alcoholchange.org.uk

Website: www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) - A campaigning public health charity aiming to reduce the health problems caused by tobacco.

Tel: 020 7404 0242

Email: enquiries@ash.org.uk

Website: <http://ash.org.uk>

CATCH 22 - Hampshire 24/7 (Substance Misuse Support); a county-wide service offering specialist, targeted and family support for children and young people effected by substance misuse.

Tel: 0845 459 9405

Email: chris.cunnane@catch-22.org.uk or 247Hants@catch-22.org.uk

Children's Legal Centre - operates a free and confidential legal advice and information service covering all aspects of law and policy affecting children and young people.

Tel: 01206 714 650 (general queries only)

Email: info@coramclc.org.uk

Website: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Children's Rights Alliance for England - A charity working to improve the lives and status of all children in England through the fullest implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Email: info@crae.org.uk

Website: www.crae.org.uk

Drinkaware - An independent charity that promotes responsible drinking through innovative ways to challenge the national drinking culture, helping reduce alcohol misuse and minimise alcohol related harm.

Tel: 020 7766 9900

Website: www.drinkaware.co.uk

Drinkline - A free and confidential helpline for anyone who is concerned about their own or someone else's drinking.

Tel: 0300 123 1110 (lines are open 24 hours a day)

Drugwise - is a centre of expertise on illegal drugs, aiming to inform policy development and reduce drug-related risk. The website includes detailed drug information and access to the Information and Library Service. DrugScope also hosts the Drug Education Practitioners Forum.

Tel: 020 7520 7550

Email: info@drugs scope.org.uk

Website: www.drugwise.org.uk

FRANK - is the national drugs awareness campaign aiming to raise awareness amongst young people of the risks of illegal drugs, and to provide information and advice. It also provides support to parents/carers, helping to give them the skills and confidence to communicate with their children about drugs.

24 Hour Helpline: 0300 123 6600

Email: frank@talktofrank.com

Website: www.talktofrank.com

Mentor UK - is a non-government organisation with a focus on protecting the health and wellbeing of children and young people to reduce the damage that drugs can do to their lives.

Tel: 020 963 2751.

Email: admin@mentoruk.org

Website: <https://mentoruk.org.uk/>

National Children's Bureau - promotes the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.

Tel: 020 7843 6000

Website: www.ncb.org.uk

Family Lives - A charity offering support and information to anyone parenting a child or teenager. It runs a free-phone helpline and courses for parents, and develops innovative projects.

Tel: 0808 800 2222

Website: www.familylives.org.uk

Re-Solv (Society for the Prevention of Solvent and Volatile Substance Abuse) - A national charity providing information for teachers, other professionals, parents and young people.

Text: 07496 959930 Information line: 01785 810762

Email: info@re-solv.org

Website: www.re-solv.org

Smokefree - NHS Smoking Helpline: 0300 123 1044

Website: <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree>

Stars National Initiative - offers support for anyone working with children, young people and families affected by parental drug and alcohol misuse.

Website: www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Youth Offending Teams - Local Youth Offending Teams are multi-agency teams and are the responsibility of the local authority, who have a statutory duty to prevent offending by young people under the age of 18.

Website: <https://www.gov.uk/youth-offending-team>