READING BLUE COAT

Drugs Policy

Introduction

Reading Blue Coat's Drug Policy is born out of our duty to safeguard the students within our care. It is paramount for the safety and wellbeing of all students, and for the reputation of the School. Our policy also seeks to encourage respect for the rule of law.

All drugs have the potential to harm, but some drugs are more harmful than others. For a small number of people, drugs lead to serious and far-reaching consequences not only for themselves, but their families, their communities and society in general. For young people in particular, drugs can have an impact on their education, their relationships with family and friends and, of course, their futures. Sadly, there is also a clear relationship between drugs and organised crime.

All young people need to be able to make safe, healthy, and responsible decisions about drugs, both legal and illegal. As a school we are aware that young people face pressure to use or experiment with drugs, and schools play a central role in helping students make positive 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.

However, schools cannot act alone. They are part of a broader prevention picture which includes support from parents, a range of external partner agencies and, if required, the police. Parents are asked to give their wholehearted support to the implementation of this policy. Effective communication and cooperation with parents are essential to support young people to be safe. By working together, we can help young people navigate their way through what is a complex social issue and safeguard everyone within the community.

Statement of Policy

It is the policy of Reading Blue Coat to ensure compliance with criminal law where it is an offence for any person to possess, use, supply or sell illicit drugs, to actively discourage and, as far as possible, prevent the misuse and supply of drugs. The School treats cases of misuse and illegal supply of drugs by students as serious misconduct. It is also the policy of the School to focus on prevention through education; this forms an integral part of the Wellbeing and Futures curriculum throughout all stages of a student's time at Reading Blue Coat. These lessons are further supplemented through regular visiting speakers.

The aims of this policy are to:

- Increase students' understanding of the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse within the law
- Clarify the legal requirements and responsibilities of the School
- The School's approach to drugs and the associated sanctions that may be given

- Widen understanding of related health and social issues and enable students who are in difficulty and whose achievement and performance is impaired to identify sources of appropriate personal support
- Reinforce and safeguard the health and safety of students and others at the School
- Give guidance on developing, implementing and monitoring drugs education
- Enable staff to manage drugs on the School site, and any incidents that occur, with confidence and consistency, and in the best interests of those involved
- Ensure the response to incidents involving drugs complements the overall approach to drugs education and values and ethos of the School
- Provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the School's 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

This policy applies to all students. It includes journeys to and from the School in School uniform, work experience, residential trips, and off-site courses. Students must not bring drugs (including so-called 'legal highs'), cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or alcohol onto the School site at any time.

This policy also applies to student conduct outside of school, as this may have an adverse impact within the School community or on the reputation of the School. For example, action could be taken where a student is known to be involved in supply or possession of drugs outside school. Students must not bring drugs onto the School site or to any school activity or event at any time.

Definition of a Drug
The definition of a drug, as given by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, is: "*a substance people take to change the way they feel, think or behave.*"

The term 'drugs' and 'drug education', unless otherwise stated, are used throughout this document to refer to drugs as follows:

- Illegal drugs (those controlled by the *Misuse of Drugs Act 1971*)
- Over the counter and prescription only medicines such as anabolic steroids, benzodiazepines and behavioural medicines (Please refer to the School's *First Aid Policy* for the management of prescription medicines whilst on the School site and on school trips).
- Novel or new psychoactive substances (commonly misnamed as 'legal highs'), including volatile substances (those giving off a gas or vapour which can be inhaled), alkyl nitrites (known as poppers). (*The Psychoactive Substances Act 2016* makes it an offence to supply, offer to supply, or possess such substances).
- Performance enhancing drugs, anabolic steroids, glues, other solvents or aerosols and other substances held or supplied in each case for purposes of misuse
- Other drugs, which may not be illegal, and which may yet have a stimulating, intoxicating, or hallucinogenic effect
- All drug related paraphernalia or substances intended to resemble drugs

The above list not exhaustive. For the purpose of this policy and to maintain consistency, the substances listed above will be referred to in this document as 'drugs.'

The School has a separate approach to dealing with alcohol and tobacco misuse, as outlined in the *Student Manual*.

Definition of Use
The definition of 'use' includes inhalation, injection or ingestion, either deliberately or recklessly. The definition of 'possession' includes having the drug or substance on one's person, in one's clothing, and in one's belongings. 'Possession' may also include having knowingly concealed a drug or substance in another location with the intention of retrieving it in the future, including coercing another student to conceal the substance.

Prevention through Education
The School aims to educate students to understand that the use of illegal drugs is or may be a criminal offence and will be harmful to their health, integrity, independence, opportunities and careers. Its aim is to empower students to make safe, healthy, and responsible decisions about drugs, both legal and illegal.

The education of students about drugs and their dangers forms part of the School's Wellbeing and Futures programme, within the framework of the overall pastoral care programme. It includes classroom teaching, group discussions and talks by experts from outside the School.

All members of staff receive training about drugs so that they are alert to the warning signs of drug misuse and can respond appropriately when students seek advice or assistance.

On occasions, the School may also use drug detection dogs to help with the education process, and to act as a deterrent for the misuse of drugs by students.

Pastoral Care & Supportive Regime
Students are encouraged to discuss their anxieties about drugs in confidence with a member of staff or another responsible adult. Students also have access to information about outside agencies able to provide advice, support and assistance. Accredited counselling services can be recommended by the School in appropriate circumstances.

Matters brought to light by a student or their parents, in circumstances which are genuine and which are accompanied by a commitment to cessation, will be 'ring-fenced' from the below disciplinary sanctions. In such cases, advice and support will be given to the student and their parents. The student may remain in the School if both the student and parents agree to a *Supportive Regime* in which the student promises:

1. Not to breach the School's *Drugs Policy*
2. Agrees to regular and random testing at the parent's expense, for the remainder of their school career.

Such a circumstance would require cooperation from parents and the student with the School in every respect. Failure to cooperate with a reasonable request by the Senior Leadership Team, or a failed drug test, would result in the student being required to leave the School. (See Appendix 1, 'Supportive Regime'.)

A student who is involved with drugs outside of this context will face the full disciplinary consequences.

Disciplinary procedures
Any suspected involvement (possession, use or supply) in drugs in circumstances to which this policy applies will be subject to the disciplinary process and procedures outlined below.

Suspicion of Misuse
If a member of staff has reason to suspect that a student is misusing drugs, they must report the situation to the Deputy Head (Pastoral), or Headmaster (or other deputising member of SLT), who will decide if further investigation or a drugs test is warranted.

Suspicion of misuse may arise from:

- Behavioural signs, such as deterioration in a student's wellbeing and/or performance and/or behaviour
- Their physical appearance
- Other signs or evidence such as the finding of certain items of drugs related equipment
- Other information that has been gathered

Investigation into Possible Misuse
Once it has been confirmed that there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that a student may have been misusing drugs, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) will be responsible for any further investigations which will normally be conducted through the Director of Section and Deputy Head (Pastoral), or other deputising member of SLT. The student must be accompanied at interview by another appropriate member of staff. Sources of information will not normally be disclosed. Any failure to cooperate may result in the drawing of adverse inferences. The School will make every effort to ensure that any investigation is conducted fairly, sensitively and with as much openness towards the affected student as circumstances may reasonably allow. The student's parents will be informed at the earliest opportunity, although not necessarily prior to interview.

The Deputy Head (Pastoral) or other investigating member of staff may decide that a student and their belongings should be searched and/or tested. If required, the procedures laid out in the *Searches & Confiscation Policy* must be followed – these are designed in accordance with Department for Education advice for schools on screening and confiscation (2022). As set out in Section 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a member of staff may confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property as a disciplinary penalty, where reasonable to do so. Where the member of staff finds other substances that are not believed to be controlled drugs, these can be confiscated if they believe them to be harmful or detrimental to good order and discipline. If staff are unable to identify the legal status of a drug, it should be treated as a controlled drug and further advice or clarification should be sought from senior staff.

In-School Testing Procedure
Testing is carried out in accordance with a strict procedure. This procedure is updated from time to time as experience and/or scientific advances indicate.

Where priority medical treatment is necessary this takes precedence over any testing requirements. If a student is under the influence of a drug and needs medical treatment, they must tell staff what they have taken, if they are in a fit state to do so, in order to receive the best help possible.

'For-cause testing'
In the event that there is reasonable suspicion, allegation or rumour that a student may be misusing drugs, he or she may be asked to offer a biological sample for analysis. Parental consent for any student is not required for this to happen, if the student is of sufficient awareness and maturity to understand to consent. However, parents will be notified of the test taking place as soon as possible. If the student is not in a fit state on a given day to undergo a drug test, the School may require them to do so at a later stage. The School will cover the cost of a first test required by the School, but parents will be charged for any subsequent tests in accordance with this policy.

Without good reason, refusal to provide a sample may be viewed as a 'positive test result'. If students refuse to agree to the drug testing procedure, then the School will suspend the student indefinitely pending further investigation. The student may potentially be permanently excluded from the School.

The School may make use of various testing technologies such as urine or hair samples, depending upon suitability and availability. If necessary, students may be asked to take a subsequent test for the purpose of confirmation (e.g., a hair test following a urine test).

In the case of a urine sample being provided, the student will be asked to give a sample in the Medical Centre using a suitable container provided by the School Nurse. The student's dignity and personal privacy will be respected in taking the sample, although the supervising member of staff will need to be present at the time of the test in order to ensure that the results are fair. Where a male student is concerned, a senior male member of staff should oversee the process and likewise for a female student, a senior female member of staff should oversee the process.

The School will make use of qualified, independent, and professional providers for hair sample tests and a member of the Senior Leadership Team will be available to supervise the testing if necessary. Every effort will be made to ensure the privacy and dignity of those undergoing tests.

Outcome of Testing

The School will always assist students who have been affected by drugs so they can find support from agencies who are specialists in assisting with addiction and drug problems. The School will always take a caring approach towards students and offer support, including in cases where significant sanctions are deemed to be necessary. The student and their families will be spoken with in a supportive and considerate way, with a focus on avoiding or getting off drugs, and moving on positively.

Any student under the influence of drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes or alcohol in School, including journeys to and from school, work experience, residential trips and offsite courses may be removed from their lessons and activities in order that they can be medically assessed. Their parents may be contacted to collect them, should staff feel that this is necessary. In extreme cases whereby the student presents a danger to themselves or others, then the health services and/or the police may be informed. If an acute situation occurs, appropriate restraint may be used, in line with the School's *Restrictive Interventions Policy*, to ensure the child is protected from hurting themselves or others.

Sanctions

Parents and students are reminded that under the terms of the contract signed by all parents (Terms and Conditions), a student may be permanently excluded or removed from the School at any time if, on the balance of probabilities, it is adjudged that a student has committed a serious breach of discipline or criminal offence . Both supply and possession of drugs are criminal offences and examples of gross misconduct, for which a student would normally be permanently excluded from the School without notice (see *Permanent Exclusion & Required Removal Policy*).

Furthermore, parents and students are reminded that conduct outside school that adversely affects the School's reputation is grounds for permanent exclusion without notice (see *Permanent Exclusion & Required Removal Policy*). Students at Reading Blue Coat are therefore expected to avoid any association with drugs both on and off the School site, both during term time and during the school holidays.

A student should expect to be required to leave Reading Blue Coat if:

1. They have been involved with selling, distributing or otherwise actively encouraging possession or consumption of drugs, wherever and whenever that conduct takes place.

2. They are found to have supplied, handled, possessed or consumed drugs while under jurisdiction of the School. ("Supplied" includes supplying for money or free-of-charge, communicating with a drug dealer on behalf of someone else, introducing fellow students to a drug dealer, or any other instance of procuring drugs for another student, or from another student).

3. They attend school whilst under the influence of drugs.

4. They are involved outside of School in the supply, handling, possession, consumption or incitement to the misuse of drugs and in the view of the Headmaster this has, or may have, a negative impact on the School and its reputation, or on the student involved, or on other students, or on the wider community.

5. They refuse to undergo a drug test if it is requested by the Headmaster or another member of the Senior Leadership Team.

The School may determine whether a student's conduct falls in line with the above points 1-5 on the balance of probabilities, having regard to the information known to the School, whether or not such information would be legally admissible as evidence.

As outlined in the School's Terms and Conditions , the Headmaster is entitled to exercise a wide discretion in relation to the School's policies and rules. Each case will be considered in a reasonable and lawful manner, with procedural fairness. In some cases, there may be mitigating circumstances; if so, they will be carefully considered.

The Headmaster may, in exercising discretion and judgement, decide that a pastoral approach and a S*upportive Regime* of regular testing may be more suitable than a sanction as a result of drugs misuse (i.e. if there were significant mitigating circumstances). In such cases, the student and their parents would be expected to sign up to the *Supportive Regime*, which includes the provision that a future positive drugs test would lead to the student's permanent exclusion from the School (see Appendix 1: 'Supportive Regime'). This process is described further in the section above.

The parents accept the authority of the Headmaster to take all reasonable disciplinary or preventative action necessary to safeguard and promote the welfare of the student and the School community.

Confidentiality

The records of testing will be carefully controlled to protect the confidentiality of students and, where they serve no further purpose, will be destroyed. The School may keep a record of drugs testing where it is deemed to be relevant to Safeguarding, and in that case will do so within its secure Safeguarding records system. The School may pass on records of drugs tests to the police and other external agencies if required to do so.

Police and Social Services

It is a criminal offence to possess, consume, or supply certain drugs. In such cases parents and students can expect the police will be informed. The School seeks to uphold the rule of law and support the work of police in fighting drugs in the local area. Police are therefore informed not with

a vindictive aim towards the student(s) involved, but rather to provide police with intelligence that might help protect other students and the wider community. The School will also contact social services regarding cases of drug misuse to better support the student and their family and, generally, the police and social services will work together in a coordinated approach.

Staff
Behaviour of staff is regulated by the Staff Code of Conduct.

Staff are reminded that their own expressed attitude and behaviour with regard to drugs, especially insofar as it is witnessed by or known to students, is a matter of substantive interest to the School.

Staff are asked to act with discretion and sympathy in dealing with cases of suspected drug misuse among students. If in doubt as to how to respond to a situation, staff should seek advice from the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

Advice to Parents
The advice here is offered to parents, to help them to minimise the likelihood of their children experimenting with drugs. The starting point must be open and honest dialogue, based on reliable information and professional advice. It is always best to discuss problems before they arise, anticipating the challenges, pressures, and dangers of drugs even at an age when they are unlikely to affect a child. Children look to their parents for norms and attitudes and so, giving clear, consistent, and reasoned opinions about drugs is important.

Other steps include:

Avoid giving your children too much money and monitor what they do with it. A major driver of teen drug use is ready access to funds.

Firmly discourage your child from smoking or vaping, immoderate drinking, and other substance abuses that may be risk factors for use of drugs.

Do not allow your children to go to unsupervised parties or stay out overnight unless parents have checked with the people with whom they are staying and are satisfied that appropriate supervision is in place.

Where there is suspicion that a child is taking drugs, parents may wish to arrange their own drug testing. While many of the manifestations of drugs use are identical to the typical features of adolescence, be rigorous and be certain. In these cases, parents should also be wary of and gain an understanding of tactics that may be attempted to defeat tests.

Watch out for signs of drug use:

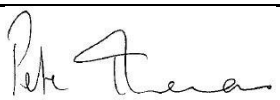
- Loss of appetite
- Being either unusually sleepy or unable to sleep at night
- Bouts of talkative, excitable and overactive behaviour
- Being unusually irritable, aggressive and even violent
- Changing moods, from happy and bright to moody and confused, for no apparent reason
- Telling lies or acting secretively
- Losing interest in schoolwork and truanting; changing friendship patterns
- Losing interest in hobbies and sport
- Money or valuables disappearing from the home
- Coming to the notice of police for unruly, disorderly behaviour or dishonesty

- Unusual spots, sores and marks on body, arms or around the mouth and nose
- Stains and chemical smells on clothing and about the body

NATIONAL HELP LINES AND LOCAL SERVICES

Organisation	Contact
ADFAM ADFAM offers information to families of drug and alcohol users, and the website has a database of local family support services.	www.adfam.org.uk Tel: 020 7533 7640 Email: admin@adfam.org.uk
Alcohol Change 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.	**www.alcoholchange.org.uk**
ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) A campaigning public health charity aiming to reduce the health problems caused by tobacco.	www.ash.org.uk Tel: 020 7739 5902 Email: enquiries@ash.org.uk
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 a Child.	www.crae.org.uk Email: info@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.	www.drinkaware.co.uk Tel: 020 7307 7450
Drinkline A free and confidential helpline for anyone who is concerned about their own or someone else's drinking.	Tel: 0300 123 110 (lines are open 24 hours a day)
Drug Education Forum This website contains a number of useful papers and briefing sheets for use by practitioners.	www.drugeducationforum.com
DrugScope 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.	www.drugscope.org.uk Tel: 020 7520 7550 Email: info@drugscope.org.uk
FRANK 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.	www.talktofrank.com Tel: 0800 776600 (24 hour helpline) Email: frank@talktofrank.com
Mentor UK	www.mentoruk.org Tel: 020 7739 8494

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.	Email: admin@mentoruk.org
National Children's Bureau Promotes the interests and well-being of all children and young people across every aspect of their lives.	www.ncb.org.uk Tel: 020 7843 6000
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.	www.re-solv.org Tel: 01785 817885 Information line: 01785 810762 Email: information@re-solv.org
NHS Quit Smoking NHS app to quit smoking	**Quit smoking - Better Health - NHS**
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.	www.gov.uk/youth-offending-team

Author(s):	Guy Williams, Deputy Head (Pastoral)
Date:	September 2026
Review Frequency:	Bi-annually *and:* • *following any serious incident involving students and drugs* • *following the issue of any new guidance from the Department for Education (DfE)*
Next Review Date:	September 2028
References:	• Education and Inspections Act 2006 • Misuse of Drugs Act 1971
Linked Policies	• Behaviour, Rewards & Sanctions Policy • Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy • Permanent Exclusion & Required Removal Policy • Searches & Confiscation Policy • Student Manual • Use of Force to Control or Restrain Students Policy • Terms & Conditions (Parent Contract)
Agreed by:	 Pete Thomas (Headmaster)
Date of Agreement:	September 2026

APPENDIX 1: 'Supportive Regime'

Date: _____

Full name of student: _____

Student's date of birth: _____

1. I have made a voluntary admission that I have violated the terms of the School's *Drugs Policy*.

2. As an alternative to permanent exclusion, the Headmaster has offered me a supportive regime under which:

    - I agree to abide by the terms of the School's *Drugs Policy*, which I have read and understood. I hereby pledge that I will not violate the terms of this policy again whilst at Reading Blue Coat.

    - For the remainder of my school career, without obligation on the part of the School, I may at any time be asked to provide a biological sample under medical supervision for analysis in accordance with the procedures described in the policy.

    - I understand that I may be asked to provide a biological sample at any reasonable time even though no grounds exist at that time to suspect that I have been involved with drugs or substances.

    - I agree to be subject to this regime and to co-operate with the School in every respect. I understand that the School will take all reasonable care to preserve my confidentiality and human rights in the operation of this regime.

    - I understand that I will be expected to engage in a counselling programme for a probationary period of time.

3. I also understand that, if without good reason, I fail to co-operate with this regime or if a test proves positive, I would be required to leave Reading Blue Coat.

Signed: _____

Declaration of parents/guardian/education guardian

I/We, the undersigned, have read and agreed to Reading Blue Coat's *Drugs* Policy and this Appendix. For my/our part, I/we accept the Headmaster's offer of a supportive regime for the above-named student.

I/We undertake to co-operate with the screening procedure in all respects and to pay any associated charges.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Full Name: _____ Full Name: _____

Relationship to Student: _____ Relationship to Student: _____

Date: _____ Date: _____