



Substance Misuse Policy

Thrive Alternative Provision

Date: September 2025

Review Date: September 2026

Policy Lead: Jack Broadhead

1. Introduction

Thrive Alternative Provision is committed to providing a safe, healthy, and supportive environment for all children and young people in our care. Substance misuse poses significant risks to the health, safety, wellbeing, and education of pupils. This policy outlines our approach to preventing, identifying, responding to and managing incidents involving drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful substances.

This policy applies to:

- All pupils on roll
- All staff, contractors and visitors
- All Thrive sites, off-site activities, commissions, transport, and alternative provision settings



2. Purpose of the Policy

- To protect the health, safety and wellbeing of pupils, staff and visitors
- To ensure a consistent and safe response to substance misuse concerns
- To outline expectations for pupil behaviour regarding drugs, alcohol, vapes and other substances
- To clarify the procedures staff must follow if there is suspicion or evidence of substance misuse
- To ensure safeguarding responsibilities are upheld
- To comply with all relevant legislation including:
 - The Misuse of Drugs Act (1971)
 - Education Act (2011)
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education
 - Health and Safety at Work Act

3. Definitions

Substances covered by this policy include:

- Illegal drugs (e.g., cannabis, cocaine, MDMA)
- Psychoactive substances (“legal highs”)
- Alcohol
- Tobacco, vapes, nicotine products
- New and emerging substances
- Prescription or over-the-counter medication used inappropriately
- Solvents and volatile substances



4. Preventative Work

Thrive Alternative Provision works proactively to reduce the risk of substance misuse by:

- Embedding education on risks and consequences of substance misuse into the curriculum
- Delivering targeted 1:1 or small-group interventions for vulnerable pupils
- Working with external agencies (e.g., drug and alcohol support workers, youth offending teams)
- Ensuring staff receive training in recognising signs of substance misuse
- Building strong relationships with families and carers to address concerns early

5. Procedures if a Student is Suspected of or Found With Drugs on Premises

This section outlines what staff must do to protect students and ensure a legally compliant response.

5.1 Initial Response

If a student is suspected or found to be in possession of drugs, alcohol, or related paraphernalia:

1. **Ensure the immediate safety** of pupils and staff.
2. **Confiscate the substance** if it is safe to do so.



3. **Do not attempt to analyse the substance.**
4. **Contact a senior leader immediately.**
5. **Remove the students from peers** and supervise them in a safe, calm space.

5.2 Confiscation, Secure Storage and Disposal

Following Department for Education guidance:

- Staff have the statutory power to confiscate and search for illegal substances where reasonable suspicion exists.
- The substance must be **sealed in a labelled bag**, placed in the secure office safe, and logged in the **Incident and Confiscation Record**.
- Illegal substances must be **handed to the police** as soon as possible and recorded.
- Staff must not dispose of substances themselves unless explicitly advised by police.

5.3 Safeguarding and Risk Management

A student bringing drugs into school is treated as a **safeguarding concern**.

Actions include:

✓ **Mandatory safeguarding referral**

- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately
- Consider referral to MARF (if Nottingham) or Early Help



✓ Substance Misuse Risk Assessment

A risk assessment must be completed the same day, including:

- The nature of the substance
- Where it was found
- Whether it was intended for personal use or distribution
- Any peer influence or coercion
- Impact on other pupils
- Health risks to the student
- Probability of repeat incidents
- Necessary supervision or support adjustments
- Whether a managed move or additional safety plan is required

This risk assessment is added to the child's secure file and reviewed regularly.

✓ Updated Student Risk Plan

The students:

- Behaviour Support Plan
- Individual Risk Assessment
- Reintegration Plan (if suspended)
- Safeguarding notes

You must be updated and shared with relevant staff.



5.4 Communication with Parents/Carers

Parents/carers must be contacted on the same day and informed of:

- The substance found
- Actions taken
- Next steps, including support and consequences

A meeting should be scheduled as soon as possible.

5.5 Consequences and Sanctions

Thrive Alternative Provision will take action appropriate to the incident, including:

- Internal sanction
- Fixed-term suspension
- Reintegration contract
- Behaviour contract
- Referral to external agencies
- Managed move in high-risk circumstances
- Police involvement (mandatory for illegal substances)

Disciplinary action is balanced with safeguarding need.

5.6 Support for the Student

Following investigation, the student may be offered:



- Referral to substance misuse services
- Early Help support
- Mentoring or key-worker sessions
- Wellbeing or mental health support
- Family support intervention
- Targeted educational sessions on drugs/alcohol

6. Searching Pupils

Staff authorised by the Head may search pupils following DfE guidance.

Searches will be:

- Conducted by two staff members
- Same-sex where possible
- Logged in the Search Incident Record
- Carried out respectfully and safely

7. Staff Training

All staff will receive training in:

- Recognising signs of substance misuse
- How to respond safely to incidents
- Safeguarding and reporting processes
- Searching, confiscation and the law



- Completing substance-related risk assessments

8. Working With External Agencies

We work closely with:

- Nottingham City Police
- Substance Misuse Services
- Social care teams
- Youth Justice and Early Help
- Health professionals

9. Monitoring and Review

All incidents are monitored termly by senior leaders.

This policy is reviewed **annually** or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- There is a serious incident
- Patterns of concern emerge



10. Policy Approval

Approved by:

Date:

Next Review Date: