The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Vaping Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco and Vaping Policy	**Version**	V1
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Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Substance use among young people is most often a sign of distress, not delinquency. PACE shapes how we respond — with curiosity, acceptance of the pupil and what they are feeling, while still being clear that the substance has no place in school:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Scope

This policy covers all illegal and controlled drugs, prescription medicines used inappropriately, alcohol, tobacco, e-cigarettes, vapes and any psychoactive substances. It applies on the school site, on educational visits, while travelling to or from school in school uniform or insignia, and to any pupil whose conduct outside school has implications for safeguarding inside school.

4. Statutory framework

This policy is in line with: the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016; the Children and Social Work Act 2017 (statutory RSE/Health Education); the DfE's DfE and ACPO drugs advice for schools; KCSIE; and the Health Act 2006 (smoke-free premises).

5. Curriculum and prevention

Pupils are taught about substances and the law through PSHE and RSHE, in age- and stage-appropriate ways. Teaching draws on evidence-based programmes and is honest, unsensational and grounded in harm reduction alongside abstinence.

6. The school site

The school site, vehicles and immediate environs are smoke-, alcohol- and substance-free for all pupils, staff, contractors and visitors. Vapes and e-cigarettes are included in this restriction.

7. Responding to incidents

If a pupil is suspected of being under the influence

The pupil is moved to a safe, quiet space with a known adult. A first-aider assesses for medical emergency. The DSL is informed immediately. Parents/carers are contacted. Where there is a medical concern, 999 is called as the first action.

If substances are found

Suspected illegal substances are confiscated, witnessed by a second adult, secured and handed to police. Confiscation is recorded. The DSL is informed.

If a pupil discloses use

Disclosures are received using PACE — the adult listens, accepts what the pupil says, is curious, and follows the safeguarding pathway. Disclosures are not punished, but are addressed through targeted support, family work and (with consent) external referral.

8. Working with families and external agencies

The school works with families and with substance-use services such as Turning Point and local young people's services. Where a pupil's use indicates exploitation (county lines, child criminal exploitation), the safeguarding pathway is followed in full.

9. Sanctions

In line with our relational approach, the school avoids punitive sanctions for substance-related incidents. The response focuses on safety, repair, learning and external support. In serious or repeated cases the Suspensions and Exclusions Policy applies.

10. Roles and responsibilities

- DSL — overall safeguarding response.
- Headteacher — implementation of policy.
- All staff — recognising signs, recording, reporting.
- Parents/carers — partnership in addressing substance-related concerns.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.