

FOOTSTEPS TRUST DRUGS POLICY

1. Policy Statement

Footsteps Trust Academy is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students.

The Academy recognises that drug, alcohol, vaping and substance misuse issues can significantly affect:

- Health and wellbeing.
- Educational achievement.
- Attendance.
- Behaviour.
- Mental health.
- Safeguarding.
- Community safety.

As an Alternative Provision, Footsteps recognises that substance misuse may be linked to wider vulnerabilities including:

- Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE).
- County Lines activity.
- Gang involvement.
- Trauma.
- Neglect.
- Mental health needs.
- Child-on-child abuse.
- Social and emotional difficulties.

The Academy adopts a preventative, educational and safeguarding-focused approach whilst maintaining high expectations regarding student conduct.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Students.
- Staff.
- Contractors.
- Volunteers.
- Visitors.

The policy applies:

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

- On Academy premises.
- During Academy transport.
- Educational visits.
- Work experience placements.
- Alternative learning locations.
- Activities undertaken on behalf of the Academy.

This also includes incidents occurring off-site where they affect safeguarding or the safety and wellbeing of members of the Academy community.

3. Definition of Drugs

For the purpose of this policy, "drugs" includes:

Illegal Drugs

Including controlled substances under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Legal Drugs

Including:

- Alcohol.
- Tobacco.
- Cigarettes.
- Vapes and e-cigarettes.
- Nicotine products.
- Volatile substances.

Medicines

Including:

- Prescription medicines.
- Over-the-counter medicines.
- Misused prescribed medication.

Emerging Harmful Substances

Including:

- Nitrous oxide.
- Synthetic cannabinoids.
- New psychoactive substances.
- Unregulated substances purchased online.

4. Aims

The Academy aims to:

- Protect students from harm.
- Educate students regarding substance misuse.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.
- Reduce risks associated with substance misuse.
- Provide support and intervention where concerns arise.
- Safeguard vulnerable students.
- Work collaboratively with families and external agencies.
- Ensure proportionate responses to incidents.

5. Safeguarding Principles

All substance-related incidents will be viewed through a safeguarding lens.

Staff will consider:

- Child Criminal Exploitation.
- County Lines involvement.
- Coercion.
- Peer pressure.
- Mental health concerns.
- Neglect.
- Risk of significant harm.
- Family substance misuse.

The welfare of the child will always be the primary consideration.

Referrals to:

- The DSL,
- Children's Social Care,
- MASH,
- Police,
- Health services,

will be made where required.

6. Drug Education

Drug education forms part of:

- PSHE.
- RSHE.

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

- Science.
- Personal Development.
- Safeguarding education.

Students will learn about:

- Drugs and alcohol.
- Vaping and nicotine.
- Prescription medication misuse.
- Exploitation linked to drugs.
- County Lines.
- Mental health impacts.
- Risk-taking behaviour.
- Decision making.
- Healthy lifestyles.

Education will be age-appropriate, evidence-informed and adapted to students' needs.

7. Medicines

Students who require medication will be supported in accordance with the Academy's Medicines Policy.

Prescription medicines:

- Must be authorised.
- Must be stored appropriately.
- Must only be used by the individual for whom they are prescribed.

The misuse or sharing of medication is prohibited and may trigger safeguarding procedures.

8. Prohibited Items

Students must not possess, use, distribute or supply:

- Illegal drugs.
- Drug paraphernalia.
- Alcohol.
- Cigarettes.
- Tobacco products.
- Vapes or e-cigarettes.
- Nicotine products.
- Nitrous oxide.
- Misused medication.

Items will normally be confiscated and managed in line with statutory guidance.

9. Responding to Drug-Related Incidents

Where concerns arise:

Immediate Actions

- Ensure safety.
- Inform the DSL or Principal.
- Assess medical risk.
- Obtain emergency assistance where required.
- Secure substances.
- Contact parents/carers as appropriate.
- Record the incident fully.

Every incident will be assessed individually.

The Academy will not operate a rigid automatic sanction system but will consider:

- Risk to self.
- Risk to others.
- Level of involvement.
- Previous concerns.
- Safeguarding factors.
- Vulnerability.
- Context of the incident.

10. Substance Influence and Intoxication

If a student appears under the influence of drugs or alcohol:

- Staff will prioritise welfare and safety.
- Medical assistance will be sought where necessary.
- Parents/carers will be contacted.
- The DSL will complete a safeguarding assessment.
- Referring schools and relevant professionals will be informed where appropriate.

Students who are intoxicated must not travel home unaccompanied.

11. Vaping and Tobacco

Footsteps Trust is a smoke-free and vape-free environment.

Students are prohibited from:

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

- Smoking.
- Vaping.
- Possessing tobacco.
- Possessing nicotine products.

Responses may include:

- Education.
- Health interventions.
- Parent meetings.
- Behaviour support.
- Safeguarding assessments.

Repeated concerns may lead to more formal interventions.

12. Searching, Screening and Confiscation

Searches will be undertaken in accordance with current DfE guidance.

The Academy may search where there are reasonable grounds to suspect prohibited items are present.

Searches will:

- Be lawful.
- Be proportionate.
- Respect for dignity.
- Be appropriately recorded.

Where illegal substances are suspected, police involvement may be required.

The previous policy should be updated to reflect current statutory searching powers rather than relying solely on consent-based searches.

13. Disposal of Substances

Staff must not:

- Taste substances.
- Test substances.
- Analyse substances.

Illegal substances will:

- Be secured safely.
- Be witnessed by another member of staff.
- Be recorded.

Date of Issue: September 2026

Date of Review: September 2027

- Be passed to police where appropriate.

Drug paraphernalia and sharps will be disposed of using approved biological waste procedures.

14. Support and Intervention

Where substance misuse concerns are identified, support may include:

- Pastoral mentoring.
- Early Help.
- Behaviour support planning.
- Targeted PSHE.
- Referral to specialist agencies.
- Family support.
- Mental health interventions.

The aim is to reduce harm and support positive outcomes.

15. Parents and Carers

The Academy will usually work in partnership with parents/carers.

Parents/carers will normally be informed where:

- Drug-related incidents occur.
- Students are found in possession of substances.
- Safeguarding support is required.

Exceptions may apply where informing parents/carers could place a child at risk of harm.

16. Staff Responsibilities

Principal

- Overall responsibility for implementation.

Designated Safeguarding Lead

- Leads safeguarding responses.
- Liaises with external agencies.

All Staff

- Report concerns immediately.
- Follow safeguarding procedures.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.

- Deliver consistent responses.

The named Drugs Education Lead should be reviewed annually to ensure details remain accurate.

17. Monitoring and Review

The Academy will monitor:

- Substance-related incidents.
- Trends and patterns.
- Safeguarding referrals.
- Student outcomes.
- Effectiveness of interventions.

This policy will be reviewed annually and following significant changes to legislation or safeguarding guidance.