



Drug Policy

VLC defines a drug as a substance which, when taken into the body, changes the way we feel, the way we perceive things, and the way our body works. This definition includes illegal drugs (those controlled by the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971), but also legal substances such as alcohol, tobacco, solvents, new psychoactive substances (“legal highs”), and medicines.

Introduction

It is the aim of VLC to help all students be able to take their place safely in a world where a wide range of drugs exists. We recognise that some prescription and medicated drugs have beneficial effects, but also that every drug has the potential to harm. For these reason, all drugs need appropriate and reasonable care and management. In order to be able to make informed choices, staff and students need to understand the nature of drugs, their social and legal status, their uses and effects.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- clarify the legal requirements and responsibilities of VLC;
- reinforce and safeguard the health and safety of students;
- clarify VLC’s approach to drugs for all staff, volunteers, students, parents/carers, external agencies and the wider community;
- enable staff to manage drugs on VLC’s premises, and any incidents that occur, with confidence and consistency, and in the best interests of those involved;
- provide a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the management of incidents involving illegal and other unauthorised drugs;
- reinforce the role of VLC in contributing to local and national strategies of drug misuse prevention.

This policy applies to all VLC’s staff, volunteers, students, parents/carers and other agencies.

Statement

VLC operates a zero tolerance approach to the possession of illegal drugs and will work proactively with partners in the Criminal Justice Sector on all such matters. Discovery of any illegal drugs will result in the police and the student’s school being informed. VLC staff and volunteers will be vigilant in their monitoring of drug possession and use.

Drug Incidents and Situations

Such incidents may include:

- drugs or related paraphernalia found on VLC premises;
- students in possession, or rumoured or reported to be in possession, of unauthorised drugs on VLC premises;
- students supplying, or rumoured or reported to be supplying, unauthorised drugs on VLC premises;
- students suspected to be under the influence of drugs;
- students using drugs on VLC premises;
- disclosure of drugs use;

- illegitimate sale/supply of drugs in the vicinity of VLC.

Policy Principles

- Following an assessment of each situation, the Principal is responsible for coordinating the management of drug related incidents, offering sources of support and liaising with outside agencies. This responsibility will be delegated to the Deputy where appropriate.
- Appropriate support will be offered to those with substance misuse problems.
- VLC will always seek to respond appropriately to each individual case by selecting from a range of possible responses, that which is most appropriate.
- VLC will liaise with the Police to ensure a proportionate response to the type and quantity of possession of substances.

Drug Education

We will provide all students with informal drug education and to enable students to make healthy informed choices by increasing their knowledge, exploring a range of attitudes towards drug use and developing and practicing decision making skills. Any such education programme will be appropriate to the age, maturity and experience of our students, and will be initiated in conjunction with a students school or referring agency.

We use visitors to support our informal drugs education, in line with national and local guidance. There may be occasion where a student is working with a member of the COMPASS drug support service. On these occasions lone working will be facilitated.

Managing Drug Related Incidents

Medicines

VLC's First Aid Policy encompasses the administration of medicines that must be followed for everyone's safety.

Alcohol

Students are not allowed to bring alcohol onto VLC's premises. Parents and visitors under the effects of alcohol will be asked to leave the premises for the safety of all others at VLC.

Energy Drinks

VLC notes the mood altering effects and negative health impact of many energy drinks. Any sugary high-energy drinks found in students' possession will be confiscated.

Tobacco

Smoking is not permitted.

Electronic Cigarettes

VLC notes that whilst some people do use e-cigarettes to support them in quitting smoking, for others it encourages them into activities they would not otherwise do. Therefore e-cigarettes are not permitted at VLC.

Where a student can provide a medical note outlining the reason for their e-cigarette use, VLC will provide safe and supervised opportunities for students to use it.

Solvents

VLC will ensure that potentially hazardous substances (eg. cleaning products) are stored safely. Students will be supervised if it necessary that they come into contact with them in the course of their work. Students are not permitted to be in possession of solvent based products.

Illegal drugs

No illegal drugs are permitted to be brought on to, or used, shared or supplied on VLC's premises.

Procedures

Medical emergencies

If an individual is unconscious, is having trouble breathing, is seriously confused or disorientated, has taken a harmful toxic substance or is otherwise at risk of immediate harm, medical help will be sought and first aid given if required. The priority will be the student's safety. VLC's First Aid Policy will be followed.

Individuals in possession of drugs

If any student or adult on VLC's premises is found to be in possession of an unauthorised drug it will be confiscated. If the drug is suspected to be illegal, VLC will contact the police and immediately hand over the drug. The drug will be handed to the police as soon as possible and not stored for any longer than is necessary. Talking with an individual about a drug related incident will have as its purpose to confirm or reject suspicions or allegations, rather than to conduct a wider investigation.

Parents of students will be informed and other professionals from the LA, Young Persons Substance Misuse Service (COMPASS), Youth Service, Police, Social Services, etc., may be informed or consulted as appropriate.

Support for students

Following actions to preserve immediate safety, the health and emotional needs of students will be considered. Support is available through the pastoral system to ensure a caring response to students in distress. Interventions will be considered if VLC feels a student is showing signs which indicate particular risks of, or from, involvement with drugs, whether their own or that of their parent or carer. Such interventions may include CAF, Priority Family Referral, Social Care consultation and subsequent referral.

VLC will ensure that a student's school and/or the LA are informed of pastoral support given to a student and any interventions being considered.

Recording

All incidents will be recorded. Information will be stored securely in the student's file.

Confidentiality

Complete secrecy can never be promised to a student, though information given in confidence will only be disclosed to anyone else in the interests of Child Protection and Safeguarding.

If a student discloses that they are using a drug without medical authorisation, action will be taken to ensure that the student comes to no serious harm if this is considered a significant risk. Staff are committed to protect a young person's anonymity where their disclosure may implicate others.

Staff need to carefully define and communicate the boundaries of confidentiality offered. Staff have a commitment to inform the student in advance of any disclosure of information to others and if possible enable the student to be involved in the process.

Needles/Sharps

Needles or syringes found on VLC premises will be removed and placed in a plastic screw top bottle or other suitable container. This will be placed in the domestic waste. If a significant number of syringes are found, we will consult the District Council for further advice on disposal.

Searches

VLC will not physically search students.

VLC may ask students to declare any authorised or unauthorised drugs in their possession. This may include asking students to disclose the contents of their bag/pockets. VLC will always seek consent and ensure that a second adult witness is present.

If VLC has a great suspicion that a pupil is in possession of illegal drugs (or weapons), the Police may be contacted to assist with searches.

Staff Conduct and Drugs

All incidents of allegations of drug misuse by staff must be directed to the Principal.

Managing Parents/Carers Under the Influence of Drugs

If a student is thought to be "at risk" or "in harm" by handing over to the parent, VLC can, in extreme circumstances, refuse to hand over the student. This can only happen if in the opinion of staff and in conjunction with VLC's Designated Safeguarding Lead (or Deputy) the parent is in no fit state to take care of the student. The appropriate services will be notified immediately, and VLC's Safeguarding Procedures will be followed to record and action the safeguarding concerns.

On occasion, VLC might wish to discuss with the parent/carer if alternative arrangements could be made, for example asking another parent/carer to accompany the child home.

Police Involvement

The police will not normally be involved in incidents involving legal drugs, eg. alcohol and tobacco. However, where appropriate, VLC will inform Trading Standards or the police about the inappropriate sale or supply of tobacco, alcohol or volatile substances in the local area.

When it is discerned or concluded that a student is in possession of illegal drugs the police will be called. The police will also be contacted to dispose of any illegal drugs actually found either on a person or on VLC's premises.

VLC is not permitted to detain a person without their consent unless a citizen's arrest is made.

Staff Training and Support

We recognise the need for staff, and volunteers, to receive appropriate training to support their work in delivering drugs education and dealing appropriately with incidents should they arise.