ST PETER'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Policy on Illegal Drugs and Substance Misuse

Approved by Governing Body on 4 November 2026

A. Introduction

1. St Peter's College is committed to providing a safe, healthy, inclusive and supportive environment in which students can pursue academic studies and personal development.

2. The College recognises that psychoactive substances, including illegal drugs, prescription medications used without authorisation, and certain psychoactive substances, can present significant risks to physical health, mental wellbeing, academic performance and community safety. Different substances carry different risks, and individuals may experience differing effects from the same substance.

3. The College also recognises that substance use and dependency are complex health and social issues. Students may engage in drug-taking and/or substance misuse for many reasons, including curiosity, peer influence, self-medication, mental health difficulties or other personal circumstances. The College therefore seeks to balance its legal responsibilities with a compassionate and evidence-informed approach that prioritises education, early intervention, support, and harm reduction.

4. The College recognises the Collegiate University Guidance on Student Drug Use which outlines a 'harm reduction approach' to student drug use and this *Policy* is designed to dovetail with that guidance.

5. Harm reduction includes providing evidence-based information about the effects and risks of substances, encouraging safer behaviours, reducing stigma associated with seeking help, and supporting students to engage with appropriate health services.

B. Legal Framework

6. The possession, production and supply of many drugs is illegal under UK law.

7. As part of the University of Oxford, all students are subject to University regulations as well as College regulations. Under University disciplinary regulations, students must not possess, use, offer, sell, or give to any person items (including drugs and weapons), the possession, use, or provision of which is illegal (section 2.g Statute XI)

8. The College is legally prohibited from knowingly permitting the use, production or supply of controlled drugs on its premises under relevant applicable laws including the Medicines Act 1968, Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and the Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.

9. Any such activities occurring on College premises, in College accommodation, at College events, or in any wider College or University context may be subject to disciplinary action.

C. College Principles Underpinning this Policy

The College's approach is based on the following principles:

Student Wellbeing

10. The primary concern of the College is the health, safety and wellbeing of students and the wider College community.

Education and Informed Decision-Making

11. The College provides (through the agencies and mechanisms noted in sections D and E) information and signposting to help students understand:

- the legal consequences of drug possession and supply;
- risks associated with drug and alcohol use;
- interactions between substances;
- links between substance misuse and physical or mental health difficulties; and
- sources of support and treatment.

Harm Reduction

12. The College does not condone the use of illegal drugs. However, it recognises that disciplinary approaches alone may discourage students from seeking help.

13. Where appropriate, the College will support harm-reduction measures that encourage students to seek advice, access healthcare and reduce risks to themselves and others.

14. Students who seek help for substance-related concerns will normally be met initially with support and guidance rather than judgement.

Community Responsibility

15. The College notes that all its members share responsibility for maintaining a safe environment. Behaviour associated with substance misuse that causes risk, nuisance, harm, harassment, violence, academic disruption or safeguarding concerns will be addressed promptly in accordance with the relevant sections of the Student Regulations, the Policy and Procedure on Harassment, the Safeguarding Policy, the Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure and any other relevant College policies.

D. Prevention and Community Education

16. The College will promote a culture of informed student decision-making through:

- student induction and orientation activities;
- health, wellbeing and welfare communications and campaigns;
- signposting to evidence-based information and support services; and
- collaboration with the University's Student Welfare and Support Services (SWSS), the College Doctors' Practice, and agencies such as Turning Point, Oxford.

17. The aim is to foster a community in which students feel able to seek help early and support one another responsibly.

18. Such education will underscore the responsibility of each student to

- comply with UK law;
- comply with University and College regulations;
- seek medical help in emergencies;
- consider the safety of others; and
- seek support when concerned about their own or another person's substance use.

E. Support and Early Intervention

19. Students are encouraged to seek help for themselves or others at the earliest opportunity.

20. The College recognises that concerns about disciplinary consequences can sometimes deter individuals from seeking assistance.

21. Students should always call emergency services when there is concern that someone may be experiencing an overdose, poisoning, loss of consciousness, severe distress or another medical emergency. Fear of disciplinary consequences should never delay seeking urgent medical assistance.

22. Where a student seeks support in good faith for themselves or another person whose health or safety may be at risk, the College's primary concern will be the welfare and safety of those involved. College will normally prioritise wellbeing and support over disciplinary action unless there are serious safeguarding concerns, evidence of supply or dealing, or other significant risks. This welfare-led approach is consistent with the College's commitment to harm reduction, early intervention and student wellbeing

23. Support is available through:

- The College Health, Wellbeing and Welfare Team
- The College Doctors Practice
- The University Counselling Service
- NHS and specialist drug and alcohol services
- External support organisations such as Turning Point, Oxford.

24. The College recognises that substance misuse may sometimes be associated with mental health difficulties, disability, trauma, social isolation or other welfare concerns. Where appropriate, the College's Health, Wellbeing and Welfare team will work collaboratively with other College authorities, and University and external support services, to address these wider issues in line with the College's Confidentiality Statement (see below).

F. Confidentiality

25. The College is aware that concerns about confidentiality may deter students from seeking support.

26. Students seeking support will be treated with respect and assured that information will be kept confidential in line with the St Peter's College Confidentiality Statement. This means that confidentiality is maintained where possible and information sharing will be limited to what is necessary and proportionate

27. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where:

- there is a significant risk of harm to the student or others;
- criminal activity requires reporting;
- safeguarding concerns arise; or
- the College is legally required to disclose information.

G. Responding to Concerns

28. When concerns arise regarding drug use or substance misuse, the College will consider:

- the nature of the substance involved;
- whether possession, use, supply or dealing is alleged;
- risks posed to the individual or others;
- the student's welfare and support needs;
- whether there are safeguarding concerns;
- previous incidents or disciplinary history;
- legal and regulatory obligations.

29. The College will assess each case individually and proportionately. (For example, the Dean and the Junior Deans may refer a student to the Health, Wellbeing and Welfare Team, rather than following a disciplinary route both in an initial instance and if they recognise a pattern of concern.)

30. Where there is an immediate risk to health or safety, emergency medical assistance will be sought without delay.

H. Fitness to Practise

31. Students enrolled on programmes subject to professional, regulatory or fitness-to-practise requirements should be aware that substance-related concerns may also have implications under those professional standards.

J. Disciplinary Action

32. In line with the St Peter's College *Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure*, the Dean will undertake any necessary investigations and, where appropriate, disciplinary action will be taken in line with that *Procedure*. Outcomes may include one or more of the following:

- mandatory engagement with the College Health, Wellbeing and Welfare team, and / or external support services;
- formal warning and / or fine;
- restrictions relating to College accommodation or College activities;
- suspension or expulsion.

33. The College will seek to ensure that disciplinary decisions remain proportionate, evidence-based and consistent with its desire to support the health, wellbeing and welfare of each student and of the student community as a whole.