

Statement of Policy

At Cobham Hall the educational, physical, mental, social and moral welfare of all students is our priority. Alcohol is a depressant drug, particularly when taken in large quantities. There is a medical consensus that drinking alcohol has an adverse effect on the adolescent brain. Excessive consumption of alcohol can be fatal and will almost certainly lead to health problems later in life. Underage drinking remains a challenging social problem. We are mindful that alcohol consumption by young people is accepted within many areas of society today and that there are increasing pressures on young people to experiment with alcohol.

It is important that we make our position on alcohol clear so that students receive consistent messages. If alcohol is drunk in sensible amounts by adults it may produce feelings of relaxation and health risks are considerably reduced if drinkers keep below the recommended levels. However, even at low levels, the potential for serious accidents increases.

The aim of Cobham Hall's policy statement is to encourage a mature approach by students to alcohol consumption, and respect for those who choose not to drink. Because the risks of alcohol consumption are age related and there are different legal positions the policy also makes a clear distinction between alcohol consumption by sixth-formers and by students in Years 7 - 11. To achieve these objectives we set out to state our rules clearly, to educate coherently and to deter through disciplinary action, where appropriate.

We expect all staff, parents and visitors to support the policy.

The Law

Apart from young people aged 16 or 17 consuming alcohol with a meal bought by someone over the age of 18, the drinking of alcohol in public under the legal age of 18 years is expressly forbidden. It is illegal to purchase alcohol from a shop or an off-licence under the age of 18 years. It is illegal to purchase or provide alcohol for anyone under the legal age except in strictly controlled (effectively domestic) circumstances.

Aims

The aims of the policy statement in respect of use and misuse are:

- 1) to enable students to make healthy, informed choices by increasing knowledge, challenging attitudes and developing and practising skills.
- 2) to provide accurate information about alcohol.
- 3) to increase understanding about the implications and possible consequences of use and misuse of alcohol.
- 4) to encourage an understanding of those experiencing or likely to experience alcohol misuse.

- 5) to widen understanding about related health and social issues e.g. sex and sexuality, crime, pregnancy, long term health implications
- 6) to seek to minimise the risks that users and potential users face.
- 7) to enable students to identify sources of appropriate personal support.

Rules

- a) Students must not be in possession of alcohol or engage in unsupervised drinking whilst at school.
- b) Housemistresses may take sixth formers out for a meal and drink on occasions. Otherwise no student may enter a public house, wine bar etc., without permission from a member of staff.
- c) Parents who take students out for a meal during term time should ensure that consumption of alcohol is supervised, in moderation, and only with parental permission. Under no circumstances should those who are under age be allowed to consume alcohol.
- d) Sixth formers are allowed specified and monitored consumption of beer and wine, but not spirits, at certain formal school functions where a meal is served, under the supervision of school staff. Alcohol will be served in small measures to discourage over-consumption. Attractive options of non-alcoholic drinks will always be available at such events.
- e) The purchase or supply of drink to other students is most likely to be illegal and is expressly forbidden.
- f) Rules on alcohol apply to students on and off the school premises during term time, school outings and expeditions. They also apply on journeys to and from school, on exeat, at the beginning and end of term and at half term. Students must not bring the school into disrepute for any reason associated with alcohol, whether or not the student is in the care of the School at the time.

Managing alcohol-related Issues

After full consultation with the students, staff and leadership of the school, the Governors agree with the school's alcohol policy, applying equally to Daygirls and Boarders, should be strongly enforced and the following procedure adopted.

1. **First offence** - a letter to be sent to parents informing them fully of the situation and advising that a second offence will incur a suspension.
2. **Second offence** - suspension. The period of absence from school will be decided by the Head.
3. **Further offences** will incur further periods of suspension with the option of exclusion.
4. **Aggravated offences** – i.e. putting other people at risk - may be punished by immediate gating, suspension or exclusion, even if it is a first offence. Underlying this policy is the understanding that if a student drinks, it is a problem for her to resolve with the support of her parents or guardians who are responsible for her. The school has a clear rule which, for reasons of legislation, is non-negotiable.

Any alcohol found will not be returned to the student.

Education programme

Education about the dangers of alcohol takes place through Wellbeing, SRE and Science lessons, visiting lecturers and dramatic presentations, as well as in other appropriate contexts in the curriculum. Alcohol education is delivered in a manner appropriate to the student's level of understanding:

- To enable students to make healthy, informed decisions by increasing knowledge, understanding, challenging attitudes and developing communication and social skills.
- To provide accurate and appropriate information.
- To help students develop an understanding for those experiencing or likely to experience alcohol misuse.

Knowledge and Understanding

Lower School

- ✓ School rules relating to the alcohol policy.
- ✓ Information about legal drugs, such as alcohol and their effects and associated health risks.
- ✓ Scientific terminology including the following words: use, misuse, abuse, addiction, tolerance, dependence, withdrawal and adulteration.
- ✓ The effects of different levels of intake of alcohol.
- ✓ Advice and support available including advice on how to say "No" to people who distribute alcohol, help lines and organisations.

Middle School

- ✓ School rules relating to the alcohol policy.
- ✓ Information about legal drugs, such as alcohol and their effects and associated health risks.
- ✓ Scientific terminology including the following words: use, misuse, abuse, addiction, tolerance, dependence, withdrawal and adulteration.
- ✓ The effects of different levels of intake of alcohol.
- ✓ Advice and support available including advice on how to say "No" to people who distribute alcohol.
- ✓ Identifying risks to health.
- ✓ Information about alcohol including the rules of law.
- ✓ Personal, social, financial, biological and psychological effects of alcohol **misuse**.
- ✓ Patterns of alcohol misuse locally and nationally and the impact on the community and wider society.
- ✓ The services provided by local and national advice and support agencies.

Sixth Form

The points above will be re-visited and reinforced, as appropriate.

Skills (at relevant levels for each Key Stage)

- Identifying and assessing risks.
- Communication with peers, parents and professionals.
- Decision-making and assertiveness in situations relating to alcohol use and misuse

- Managing conflict and aggressive behaviour.
- Communicating alcohol information and advice to other students.
- Giving and securing help in a variety of situations which might be encountered.

Attitudes

- Developing an awareness of the social and cultural influences faced by young people.
- Developing a sense of responsibility for actions taken.
- Developing mature and informed attitudes towards alcohol use and misuse and the law.

Related Policies and Documents

- Policy Statement on Behaviour and Discipline
- Policy Statement on Drugs Education and Practice
- Policy Statement on Anti-Smoking
- Wellbeing Scheme of Work