

Drug and alcohol prevention

4 questions to ask as school governors

1. How does our PSHE provision match up to Ofsted's standards?
2. How does our curriculum prepare pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life? Are pupils learning how to make good decisions when faced with risky situations?
3. Are drug-related incidents managed with confidence and consistency, and in the best interests of those involved?
4. What arrangements are there to identify and safeguard the wellbeing of pupils who need help because of their own, or someone else's, drug and alcohol use?

Key points from the DfE Governors' Handbook

The curriculum and PSHE education

The law demands (for maintained schools) that the curriculum should be “balanced and broadly based” and should “promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society; and prepare pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life.”

A school with a strong PSHE curriculum, including drug and alcohol education, would be meeting this obligation.

Promoting the general wellbeing of pupils

Governors are advised that they have a duty towards promoting the wellbeing of their pupils, set out in law as:

- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing;
- protection from harm and neglect;
- education, training and recreation;
- the contribution children make to society; and
- social and economic wellbeing.

A school drug and alcohol policy which sets out clearly how the school will manage incidents, support pupils and take a proactive approach to prevention can help demonstrate that a school is contributing to the protection of pupils from harm as well as developing social wellbeing.

Behaviour policy and exclusions

Governors must ensure the school has a behaviour policy based on regularly reviewed principles which must be the subject of consultation if they are to be changed. Governors also have a number of roles in relation to exclusion including holding headteachers to account for the lawful use of exclusion.

Governors are reminded that exclusions must be for disciplinary reasons and carried out in line with legal requirements. The DfE say:

“Where a pupil is removed from the school premises without being excluded there needs to be a lawful basis for this decision, for example, under the powers of a maintained school to direct a pupil offsite to improve their behaviour.”

It is worth noting that when Ofsted assess pupils' behaviour and safety they take into account their ability to understand and respond to risk.

Supporting pupils in school with additional health needs

The DfE recognise that some pupils will have additional health needs, which may include the need for medicines. They say that governors should ensure that there is a policy for this eventuality. It should:

“address emergency procedures, training, supervision, record-keeping, including storage and disposal. It should also set up a named staff member to coordinate health care needs and to link with parents.”

Useful documents

Governors' Handbook (DfE, 2013) bit.ly/17ok8yl

Drug advice for schools (DfE, 2012) bit.ly/14ex9d1

‘Outstanding’: A school drug policy supporting pupils' wellbeing, behaviour and safety.

Presentation for school governors (Mentor, 2013) bit.ly/18khA7R

Reviewing your drug and alcohol policy: a toolkit for schools (Mentor, 2013) bit.ly/18khHQZ

The Framework for School Inspection (Ofsted, 2013) bit.ly/18kj6He

Ritalin in Schools (DrugScope, 2005) bit.ly/17okrtE

About ADEPIS The Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Information Service is run by Mentor, the drug and alcohol protection charity, in conjunction with DrugScope and Adfam and is funded by the Department for Education. <http://mentor-adepis.org>