



## Alcohol Policy

*The first of all things to aim at is to love the Lord God with your whole heart and soul and strength ... Your hope of fulfilment should be centred in God alone (R.St.B. Chapter 4)*

In developing its policy towards the use and misuse of alcohol, the School takes into account the licensing laws of England, under which the School is obliged by law to operate; the social norms of our parents and families, emerging scientific information on the physical and social effects of alcohol; and the fact that there are increasing pressures on young people to experiment with alcohol, with the potential risk of damage to health. It is recognised both that alcohol has a more destructive effect on individuals and families than any other drug, and that its proper use, in moderation, is a normal and healthy part of traditional (and Catholic) culture. Downside seeks to adopt, in the first place, an educational approach to pupils on the proper use of alcohol, promoting a healthy and balanced lifestyle and emphasising the detrimental effects that alcohol misuse can have, and, in the second place, a disciplinary policy that seeks to deter alcohol abuse; to make sure that any incident of misuse is fully dealt with in terms of education and correction, properly recorded; and that parents are fully informed. It is therefore important that the School makes clear its position on alcohol so that pupils receive a consistent message from staff and parents.

### **Educational approach:**

Pupils are educated in the physical, emotional and social effects of alcohol consumption through the SMSC / Benedictine Living programme, and through occasional presentations by guest speakers, to which parents may be invited. The adverse effects on mental health are also made clear. The School aims to ensure that all pupils in the third form and above receive guidance on alcohol every year, at an appropriate level. Any pupils breaching the School's requirements on alcohol must attend the Health Centre for one-to-one guidance from a member of the nursing staff. All pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through the School's games and extra-curricular programme. Misuse of alcohol is not consistent with the principles and values which underpin Downside Sport; it is also detrimental to physical fitness. Those who seek to represent the School at a high level in sport should be aware of their responsibility to set an example to others.

### **Legal context:**

Only Sixth Formers may drink alcohol. In keeping with the Licensing Act 2003, the **only** time when a Sixth Former under the age of 18 may consume alcohol is when:

- 1) the individual is aged 16 or 17
- 2) the alcohol is beer, wine or cider
- 3) its consumption is at a table meal on relevant premises, and
- 4) the individual is accompanied at the meal by an adult

**All** of these conditions must be met. Failure to do so is an offence.

## Consumption

In order to encourage a moderate and balanced attitude to alcohol consumption, the following rules apply;

- Pupils must only be served alcohol in the context of a sit-down knife and fork meal; this must be fully observed throughout the School at all times.
- Under no circumstances are spirits or fortified wines to be consumed.
- Alcohol may be offered as a pre-dinner drink.
- Sixth Formers are limited to a maximum of 2 pints of regular-strength beer or cider, or 2 standard glasses of table wine.
- Pupils in Forms 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 are not to be given alcoholic drinks.
- Alcohol is to be served only by adults.
- Alcohol is to be locked up and strictly supervised by adult staff at organised school functions.
- Attractive soft drink alternatives and water are to be available at all events where alcohol is served.
- Members of the teaching staff are reminded that the permission of a pupil's HsM must be sought and given for any occasion on which pupils may be given alcohol, and that no pupil below the Sixth Form is ever to be served alcohol in School.
- Nobody should break the law by purchasing alcohol for under-18s in public houses or bars (except for those over 16 in the Sixth Form at a proper meal), nor should they allow under-18s to purchase their own alcohol.

The House Master / House Mistress of Upper Sixth Form pupils may grant permission for them to go to the designated local pub on a Saturday evening (7.00 p.m. -10.00 p.m.) on the premise that the conditions set out in this policy and the School Regulations are not breached.

Outside of these limited circumstances in which Sixth Formers may consume alcohol, pupils must not:

- bring alcohol, however they have acquired it, on to the School premises without the permission of the House Master / Mistress to whom it should be surrendered immediately upon entering the premises
- be impaired by alcohol while on the School premises or in the care of the School
- be in unsupervised possession of alcohol or obtain or supply alcohol to another
- bring the School into disrepute for any reason associated with alcohol, whether or not the pupil is in the care of the School at the time.

If a member of staff believes a pupil possesses alcohol, it may be appropriate for them to carry out:

- a search of the school property, e.g., pupils' lockers, cupboards or desk; and/or
- a search of personal property, e.g., bag within a locker.

Searches will be conducted in such a manner as to minimise embarrassment or distress in accordance with the School's Behaviour policy.

**Pupils found in the presence of other pupils who are drinking alcohol in contradiction of the School's Alcohol Policy will be considered to be colluding in the act and will receive the same sanction as the pupil or pupils drinking.**

### **Suspicious of Misuse**

If a member of staff has reason to suspect that a pupil has contravened the alcohol policy by the illicit or excessive consumption of alcohol, he/she must report the situation to the pupil's House Master / Mistress or directly to the Director of Pastoral Care, who will decide if further investigation is warranted.

Every complaint or statement of concern made to staff in relation to alcohol use by pupils at School will be investigated, including anywhere alcohol use by pupils has in any way brought the School into disrepute.

### **Alcohol Testing**

Pupils may be asked to undergo a breathalyser test where there is reasonable suspicion of involvement in illicit or excessive consumption of alcohol. Breathalysers have disposable mouth pieces which are discarded after use.

The relevant consent to a breathalyser test is that of the pupil rather than the parents, even if the pupil is under 16 years of age provided she/he is of sufficient maturity and understanding. Where the pupil consents, parents are not required to give consent for a breathalyser test but will normally be notified in advance of the test. As timing is of critical importance, however, this may not always be possible. Every effort will, however, be made to contact parents in advance of the test. If a pupil refuses to give consent to a breathalyser test, they will be warned that the School may proceed as if there had been a positive test.

If a test result is 'positive', thereby indicating that the pupil has been involved in the illicit or excessive consumption of alcohol, the School's disciplinary procedures will be followed.

Testing procedures will be in accordance with standard good practice and will in general be carried out by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the pupil's House Master/Mistress (or other member of boarding staff if his/her House Master/Mistress is unavailable).

This policy applies equally to any school trips, whether they are during holiday or term time, within the UK or abroad.

**Disciplinary process:** The purpose of the School's disciplinary process is to guide pupils in the right approach to alcohol, and to put down markers for them, in the form of sanctions, if they breach School regulations in relation to alcohol.

Should a pupil breach regulations, the following action will be taken:

#### **First Offence:**

The pupil's HsM will interview and advise the pupil, and parents will be informed. The pupil will be gated for two weekends, sitting a two hour Saturday evening detention on each weekend, during which time the pupil will write an account of the incident, do some work on alcohol awareness and

write a letter of apology if necessary. The pupil will be interviewed by the Director of Pastoral Care, in the presence of the pupil's HsM. The School's alcohol policy will be discussed. In some circumstances, for example drunkenness, the pupil may be sent on home leave, in order that parents and son/daughter can discuss the incident. The Director of Pastoral Care will write to parents detailing the incident and subsequent action. The pupil will be referred to the Health Centre for on-going talks on the dangers of alcohol from a member of the Health Centre staff. The pupil will be warned that a further breach of the disciplinary policy will result in a formal suspension from School.

**Second Offence:**

The pupil's HsM will interview and advise the pupil, and parents will be informed. The pupil will be referred to the Deputy Head Master and will be suspended from School for three days. The Deputy Head Master will write to the pupil's parents, detailing the incident and subsequent action. On return to School, the pupil will be required to see the Head Master and will be given on-going advice from the Health Centre.

**Any subsequent occasions will be dealt with directly by the Deputy Head Master or Head Master, who will take advice from the pupils' HsM and the Director of Pastoral Care, and who will decide whether any exclusion deemed necessary will be temporary (suspension) or permanent (expulsion or required removal).**

Policy written by AFN (Director of Pastoral Care)

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