



Blundell's

ALCOHOL POLICY

2017/18

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1. INTRODUCTION

Looking after the well-being of Blundell's pupils is the primary focus of this policy. Alcohol consumption by young people is widely accepted in society and pupils are often under pressure to drink, sometimes to excess. As a school we feel strongly that pupils should receive a clear and coherent message about alcohol consumption and that the culture we create at Blundell's will lead to pupils having a healthy attitude towards alcohol, by which, as adults, they are able to enjoy drinking in moderation whilst being aware of the risks associated with drinking excessively.

This policy draws upon the advice given by the **Drinkaware Trust** (www.drinkaware.co.uk), an independent alcohol education charity. Research indicates that there are numerous risks associated with excessive drinking. These may include:

- **Health Risks**

Drinking alcohol can increase the risk of developing liver disease and young people who drink regularly are also at risk and start to damage their livers without realising.

Anyone who drinks a lot in a short space of time can suffer alcohol poisoning. The level of alcohol gets so high that it can seriously affect the parts of the brain that control balance and speech, as well as affect the nerves that control your breathing and heartbeat and lower your body temperature, which can lead to hypothermia. It can also cancel your gag reflex, putting you at serious risk of choking to death, especially if you vomit.

- **Accidents and injuries**

Drinking alcohol can reduce a child's mental and physical abilities at the time, affecting judgment and co-ordination – which can lead to mishaps and sometimes accidents and injuries. Due to a young person's lower body weight and limited ability to metabolise alcohol, acute intoxication can occur rapidly in children and young people. Research shows adolescents who tested positive for alcohol were more likely to get injured or have accidents than non-drinkers.

- **Brain Development**

During childhood and teenage years, the brain is still developing. Alcohol can affect memory function, reactions, learning ability and attention span – all especially important during school years.

- **Mental Health**

Excessive drinking can be both a cause and a symptom of mental health matters. Young people may drink in order to cope with life circumstances rather than address them in a more constructive manner. Evidence also suggests that alcohol can lead to mental health problems later in life.

- **Vulnerability**

The teenage years are often a very tricky time for young people – both emotionally and physically. Their natural tendency can be to experiment and take risks is increased. Drinking alcohol can put

them in vulnerable or dangerous situations. Under the influence of alcohol, judgement is impaired and they can find themselves in dangerous situations. Young people are more vulnerable to experimenting with drugs and other substances and are more likely to engage in unprotected or unwanted sexual activity.

The aim of this Alcohol Policy is to encourage a mature approach by young people 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 (See Appendix 1), the policy also makes a clear distinction between alcohol consumption by Sixth-Formers and by pupils in lower years.

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.

2. STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PUPILS

Blundell's undertakes to support pupils who may have questions regarding alcohol, who are concerned about alcohol use or abuse, or who may need support in any other way. There are a number of ways in which the school aims to educate and support pupils as they learn to deal with alcohol.

The aim is to enable pupils to make healthy, informed decisions by increasing knowledge and understanding. To challenge preconceived attitudes and to develop positive communication and social skills, and to provide accurate and appropriate information.

- **PSHE**

In the first instance, we aim to educate and inform pupils so that they have the facts and information required to develop an understanding of the dangers associated with alcohol and how alcohol can be consumed responsibly and sensibly. The PSHE syllabus deals with the matter in an age-appropriate manner and different points in the curriculum. As part of the PSHE programme, speakers come in to address pupils on a variety of matters including alcohol and alcohol abuse.

- **Sanatorium**

The medical team in the sanatorium are well placed to advise pupils and to support pupils who have questions or who want further support.

- **School Counsellor**

The school counsellor is available to pupils and can be contacted directly.

- **House Parents and Tutors**

House Parents and Tutors will constantly advise and support pupils through the normal day-to-day Blundell's routines. They will be vigilant of matters that arise amongst pupils and will address them in house or in tutor groups as they arise. Where matters arise within houses the House Parent is expected to communicate concerns with the Second Master.

3. RULES

- a. Pupils must not be in possession of alcohol or engage in unsupervised drinking whilst in school.
- b. Pupils in the Upper Sixth may request a 'Pub Leave' that may be given at the House Parents' discretion. In such instances pupils should be mindful of their responsibilities as members of the school in the local community. Drinking should be moderate and only with a meal.

- c. House Parents, or staff acting on behalf and with the knowledge of, the House Parent, may offer beer or wine with a meal at their discretion to Sixth Form pupils under their personal supervision.
- d. Sixth Formers may be allowed specified and monitored consumption of alcohol at certain, formal school functions where a meal is served. Permission for alcohol to be served at these events must be sought from the Head or Second Master. If these events happen on a school night it is unlikely that permission will be given. Attractive options of non-alcoholic drinks will always be available at such events. If alcohol is served House Parents are duly informed.
- e. The purchase or supply of alcohol to other pupils is considered a serious offence. Any pupil found to have supplied alcohol in Houses or in the school as a whole are likely to receive a serious sanction from the School.
- f. Specified and monitored low level consumption of alcohol may be offered with a meal to Sixth Form pupils on a school trip. Parents will have been informed.
- g. Pupils who arrive at a school function having consumed alcohol prior to the function may not be allowed to attend the function and are likely to be sent back to house or their parents will be asked to collect them.
- h. Rules on alcohol apply to pupils on and off the school premises during term time (whilst in the care of the school), 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.

Pupils must not 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. The School may use a formal sanction to reinforce the message with regards to excessive and irresponsible consumption of alcohol.

4. WELFARE

If a pupil is found under the influence of alcohol the initial priority is the well-being of the individual. Help should be sought from the Medical Centre and the pupil's House Parent should be informed. Subsequent action will be determined and agreed by the Medical Centre and the House staff.

It may be necessary to monitor the pupil until the effects of the alcohol wear off and in some cases the pupil may be admitted to the Medical Centre and supervision provided by nursing staff. Day pupils' parents will be contacted and asked to collect their child when it is safe to do so.

If a pupil is seriously ill then House Staff should inform parents as soon as possible. The pupil will only be allowed to return to his/her house on the advice and direction of the Medical Centre staff.

Pastoral support will be offered after the incident with the possible referral to the School Counsellor or further support may be accessed through the Medical Centre.

5. SUSPICION OF ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

If a member of staff considers it likely that a pupil has consumed alcohol in breach of the rules the pupil will be challenged. If the pupil admits to the offence then the normal disciplinary procedure will be followed. If the pupil denies consuming alcohol, but there is reasonable cause to suspect otherwise (smell, behaviour, etc.) then an investigation will be conducted by the House Parent to determine a 'balance of probability'. Such an investigation will follow the steps as set out in the Disciplinary Policy.

For any drinking offence parents will be informed and if the situation requires it, parents may be invited to a meeting with the Head or the Second Master. If a pupil is suspected of being in possession of alcohol a search may be conducted according to the School's guidance on searches.

6. DISCIPLINARY SANCTIONS

Pupils who break the rules on alcohol as set out above, or who are found to be aiding and abetting the consumption of alcohol, will be interviewed by their House Parent or the Second Master who will discuss appropriate action.

In considering the appropriate punishment the following may be taken into account:

- The level of consumption as indicated by evidence of consumption or visible intoxication.
- The Year group of the pupil involved (Y9-11 pupils will typically receive a tougher sanction than Sixth Formers for low level consumption).
- Whether the pupil has purchased or supplied drink to other pupils.
- Whether the pupil has overindulged with alcohol at a school function.
- The record of the pupil – particularly with regard to alcohol.

Alcohol consumption or the buying and/or supplying of alcohol is a Serious Offence.

For example, a low level drinking offence in the Sixth Form may draw a Minor Gating for a first offence whereas a junior pupil with a history of alcohol related offences or one who has supplied alcohol may receive an External Suspension. Sanctions can therefore draw on the full range of available punishments.

Parents will always be contacted if their son/daughter is found guilty of an alcohol related offence.

All alcohol related offences will be recorded in the Second Master's Sanctions Register.

BWI August 2017

APPENDIX 1: UNDERAGE DRINKING AND THE LAW

If a person is under 18 and drinking alcohol in public, they can be stopped, fined or arrested by police.

UNDER 18

It is against the law:

- For someone to sell you alcohol
- To buy or try to buy alcohol
- For an adult to buy or try to buy alcohol for you
- To drink alcohol in licensed premises (eg a pub or restaurant)

However if someone is **16 or 17** and accompanied by an adult, they can drink (but not buy) beer, wine or cider with a meal.

16 OR UNDER

They may be able to go to a pub (or premises primarily used to sell alcohol) if they are accompanied by an adult. However, this is not always the case. It can also depend on:

- The specific conditions for that premises
- The licensable activities taking place there

It is not illegal for a child aged five to 16 to drink alcohol at home or on other private premises.

It is illegal to give alcohol to children under 5.

The UK Chief Medical Officers (CMO) recommend that parents should not allow their children to drink alcohol at home under the age of 15.

Children and their parents and carers are advised that an alcohol-free childhood is the healthiest and best option. However, if children drink alcohol, it should not be until at least the age of 15 years.

If young people aged 15 to 17 years consume alcohol it should always be with the guidance of a parent or carer or in a supervised environment.

Parents and young people should be aware that drinking, even at age 15 or older, can be hazardous to health and that not drinking is the healthiest option for young people. If 15 to 17 year-olds do consume alcohol they should do so infrequently and certainly on no more than one day a week. Young people aged 15 to 17 years should never exceed recommended Government guidelines.