



MILLFIELD

Alcohol Policy

1. Rationale:

The educational, physical, mental, social and moral welfare of all pupils 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 lead to health problems later in life. The disinhibiting effects of alcohol can lead to other problems such as unwanted / unprotected sexual activity. 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 pupils 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 Millfield's Alcohol Policy is to encourage a mature approach by young adults 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 pupils in years 9 - 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.

2. 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 by 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.

3. Rules:

- a) Pupils must not be in possession of alcohol or engage in unsupervised drinking whilst at school. The only exceptions are that pupils over the age of 18 may drink in local public houses between 8.00 p.m. and 10.00 p.m. on Saturday evenings with houseparents' permission. Meal Chits are available through Houseparents and at their discretion. These chits allow sixth form pupils to use a local restaurant for a meal and to consume alcohol in moderation in the company of over 18s. The chit system will be monitored by Deputy Head (Housing).
- b) Houseparents may take sixth formers out for a meal and drink on other occasions. Otherwise no pupil may enter a public house, wine bar etc., without permission from a member of staff. Parents who take pupils out for a meal during term time should ensure that consumption of alcohol is supervised and in moderation, under no circumstances should those who are under age be allowed to consume alcohol.
- c) Sixth Form Club is licensed, enabling sixth formers over the age of 18 to purchase alcohol and those over 16 to consume alcohol with a meal. It opens at the Headmaster's discretion.
- d) Houseparents and other staff may offer beer or wine at their discretion to Sixth Form pupils under their personal supervision e.g. at the Christmas meal or to celebrate special events.
- e) 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. Alcohol will be served in small measures (e.g. ½ pint glasses) to discourage over-consumption. Attractive options of non-alcoholic drinks will always be available at such events.
- f) The purchase or supply of drink to other pupils is most likely to be illegal and is expressly forbidden.
- g) Specified and monitored consumption of beer, cider or wine, but not spirits, may be offered to 6th form pupils on a school trip. Parents will have been informed.
- h) Rules on alcohol apply to pupils 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. 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.

In order to reinforce our message on the use of alcohol and excessive consumption will also be punished in accordance with the disciplinary sanctions, (7), listed below.

4. Education:

Alcohol education is part of the PSE programme in a manner appropriate to the pupil's level of understanding:

- To enable pupils 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 pupils develop an understanding for those experiencing or likely to experience alcohol misuse.

Houseparents will vigorously reinforce this process. Heads of Year will issue reminders of the rules and the reasons for them at moments of most obvious temptation. Individual support is available; we encourage pupils to discuss in confidence any anxieties they may have about use of alcohol with a member of staff or the school counsellor.

Sixth form social events (e.g. the Headmaster's Party and House Christmas Dinners) are designed so that older pupils may be introduced to alcohol in a structured social setting.

5. Welfare

If a pupil is found under the influence of alcohol the initial priority is the well-being of the individual. If the pupil is totally incapacitated the member of staff should make sure the pupil is on his/her side so that any vomit is not inhaled. Help should be sought from the Medical Centre and the pupil's Houseparent should be informed. If the pupil appears to be intoxicated to some degree but is able to walk, he/she should be escorted to his/her House and placed in the care of the House Staff who will decide if the situation requires medical involvement.

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. In severe cases the pupil will be admitted to the Medical Centre and supervision provided by nursing staff. If a pupil is seriously ill then House Staff should inform parents as soon as possible. The pupil may 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. The pupil will later be asked to explain how they came to be in the condition.

6. 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 denies consuming alcohol, but there is reasonable cause to suspect otherwise (smell, behaviour, intelligence etc.) then it might be suggested to the pupil that an alcohol test be conducted. Consent is given by the pupil. A written record will be kept when a pupil is asked to take a test and its outcome will also be recorded. The School will treat a positive test, although not infallible, as evidence that the pupil has consumed alcohol. Breathalysers are issued to all Houseparents, the Senior Master and Senior Mistress and Heads of Year. If a pupil refuses to comply with a breath test: they will be asked to say why they have refused. The School will be entitled to draw inferences from the response and general demeanour; his/her parents will be informed and a meeting will be arranged with the Head or a Deputy.

If a pupil is suspected of being in possession of alcohol a search may be conducted according to our guidance on searches.

7. 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 afterwards by their Head of Year or other senior member of staff who will discuss appropriate action with the Houseparent.

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

- The level of consumption as indicated by evidence of consumption, visible intoxication and /or breath test.
- 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.

Typically:

Head of Year Gating

- A Sixth Form pupil who has overindulged with alcohol served at a school function.
- A Sixth form pupil found in possession of a small quantity of alcohol (e.g. a can of beer).

School Gating

- A Y9-11 pupil with a group who are drinking alcohol but who has not consumed or had just a taste (less than a unit).
- A Sixth Form pupil who is possession of a quantity of alcohol or consumes alcohol against school rules or who has overindulged whilst drinking under the terms of rule 1a.

Suspension

- Any Y9-11 pupil who is known to have consumed an amount of alcohol (more than a unit) or is in any way affected by alcohol.
- A Sixth Former who is seriously affected by the consumption of alcohol (i.e. stupor or coma) or who has previously been school gated for alcohol consumption.
- Any pupil who supplies alcohol to others.

At each stage, a letter will be sent home outlining the offence and the likely outcome of any further transgressions.