Drugs and Substance Misuse Policy

Meole Brace School

Approved by:	Local Governing Body
Last reviewed on:	September 2026
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Policy Owner:	Headteacher

Meole Brace School

DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

including smoking, vaping and alcohol

2026–2027

Approved by	Local Governing Body	**Approval date**	[insert date]
Policy owner	Headteacher / designated senior leader	**Last reviewed**	September 2026
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At Meole Brace School, we are ready to learn, respectful of all and take responsibility for our actions, so that everyone succeeds.

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Values statement

Our approach to drugs and substance misuse is rooted in the Meole Brace Way and our commitment to an inclusive, safe environment in which pupils can learn, make progress and thrive.

Value	What this means in this policy
LEARNING	Pupils receive accurate, age-appropriate education that builds knowledge, risk awareness, decision-making and help-seeking skills.
RESPECT	Incidents are handled calmly, fairly and without stigma; the safety, dignity and individual needs of pupils are considered.
SUCCESS	The school combines clear boundaries and proportionate consequences with education, early help and support so pupils can make safer choices.

The possession, use, supply or production of illegal drugs, or the unauthorised possession, use or supply of any other substance capable of causing intoxication or harm, is prohibited. Smoking and vaping are prohibited across the school site and wherever the school has responsibility for pupils.

1. Purpose and aims

This policy sets out the school's approach to drugs education, prevention, safeguarding, incident management, searching, confiscation, disposal and support. It aims to:

- protect the health, safety and welfare of pupils, staff and visitors;
- provide consistent, lawful and proportionate responses to concerns and incidents;
- make clear the school's expectations to pupils, parents/carers, staff and partners;
- equip pupils with knowledge and skills to make informed, healthy and lawful choices;
- identify vulnerability, exploitation, dependency and safeguarding need at the earliest opportunity;
- support pupils affected by their own or another person's substance use; and
- contribute to local and national work to reduce drug-related harm.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils, staff, governors, volunteers, visitors, contractors, lettings users and partner professionals. It applies:

- on the school site, including grounds and vehicles;
- during the school day and at school-organised activities, educational visits, residentials and transport;
- when pupils are travelling to or from school, wearing school uniform or otherwise identifiable as members of the school community; and
- to conduct outside school that could affect the orderly running or reputation of the school, threaten another pupil or member of staff, or have repercussions for the school community.

The school's jurisdiction and any behaviour response will be considered in accordance with the Behaviour and Attitudes Policy and current DfE guidance.

3. Definitions

For this policy, "drug" means a substance that changes the way a person feels, thinks or behaves. The term includes:

Category	Examples / policy position

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Controlled drugs	Substances controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, including cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy/MDMA and heroin. Unauthorised possession, use, supply or production is prohibited.
Psychoactive substances	Substances intended to produce a psychoactive effect, including so-called “legal highs”. Unauthorised possession, use or supply is prohibited.
Alcohol	Possession, consumption, supply or being under the influence is prohibited unless expressly authorised for an adult-only school function.
Tobacco and nicotine products	Cigarettes, tobacco, nicotine pouches, e-cigarettes, disposable or refillable vapes and associated liquids/components. Possession or use by pupils is prohibited.
Volatile substances	Solvents, aerosols, gases and other products used for intoxication. Misuse, possession for misuse or supply is prohibited.
Medicines	Prescription and non-prescription medicines. Legitimate use must follow the school’s Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions arrangements; misuse or unauthorised supply is prohibited.
Other substances	Any substance used, possessed or supplied with the intention of causing intoxication, stimulation, sedation or hallucination, including misuse of caffeine products or household items.

“Supply” includes selling, giving, sharing, passing, distributing or offering to supply, whether or not money changes hands. “Drug paraphernalia” includes equipment, packaging or materials associated with use, preparation, concealment or supply.

4. Legal and guidance framework

This policy has regard to current legislation and guidance, including:

- DfE and ACPO, Drugs: advice for schools (2012);
- DfE, Searching, screening and confiscation: guidance for schools (2022, updated 2023);
- DfE, Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff;
- DfE, Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance (2026);
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 and Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001;
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016;
- Health Act 2006 and Smoke-free (Premises and Enforcement) Regulations 2006;
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- Education and Inspections Act 2006;
- Equality Act 2010; and
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

This policy should be read alongside the school’s Behaviour and Attitudes, Safeguarding and Child Protection, Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, Health and Safety, Educational Visits, SEND, Anti-bullying and Online Safety policies.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Key responsibilities

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Local Governing Body	Approves and reviews the policy; assures itself that arrangements are effective, lawful and consistent with safeguarding and equality duties.
Headteacher	Has overall responsibility for implementation, authorises appropriately trained staff to search, decides behaviour consequences, liaises with governors and external agencies, and ensures suitable training and resources.
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Leads safeguarding assessment and referrals; considers exploitation, county lines, neglect, domestic abuse, mental health, criminalisation and risk to siblings/peers; ensures appropriate records and information sharing.
Senior/pastoral leaders	Coordinate incident response, investigation, parent contact, education and support; ensure consistency with related policies.
PSHE/Science leaders	Plan and quality-assure age-appropriate drugs education, including evaluation and adaptation for need.
All staff	Remain alert, safeguard first, follow the immediate response, report concerns promptly, preserve evidence and maintain appropriate confidentiality.
Site/operations staff	Undertake safe site checks, manage sharps or hazardous finds under risk-assessed procedures, maintain signage and support secure storage arrangements.
Pupils	Follow school rules, do not possess/use/supply prohibited items, report concerns and engage with education or support offered.
Parents/carers	Reinforce expectations, share relevant health or safeguarding information, collect a pupil when required and work with the school and support services.

6. Drugs education

Drugs education forms part of a planned, sequenced personal development curriculum and is reinforced through Science, assemblies and targeted interventions. Teaching will be factual, non-sensational, inclusive and appropriate to pupils' age, maturity, prior knowledge and local context.

The curriculum will enable pupils to:

- understand legal and illegal drugs, medicines, alcohol, tobacco, vaping, volatile substances and psychoactive substances;
- recognise short- and long-term physical, mental, social and legal risks, including dependency and overdose;
- understand risks created by unknown strength, contamination, mixing substances and sharing devices;
- recognise grooming, coercion, debt bondage, county lines and exploitation linked to drugs;
- challenge myths, social norms and online marketing;
- practise refusal, risk-reduction, emergency and help-seeking skills; and
- know how to obtain confidential, reliable advice and support.

External contributors must be approved, appropriately briefed and used to enhance—not replace—teacher-led learning. Their content will be checked for suitability, accuracy, safeguarding and commercial neutrality.

7. Medicines and legitimate substances

Prescription and non-prescription medicines will be managed under the school's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions arrangements. Pupils must not carry, use or share medicines unless this has been agreed in an individual healthcare plan or school procedure. Emergency medication must remain readily accessible as agreed.

A pupil lawfully prescribed a controlled drug may possess it where this is permitted by the school's medicines arrangements; otherwise it will be held securely and administered in accordance with the prescription. Misuse, diversion or sharing will be treated as a drug-related incident and a safeguarding concern.

The school will make reasonable arrangements for pupils whose treatment includes a cannabis-based product prescribed by an appropriate specialist clinician. Recreational cannabis and non-prescribed cannabis-derived products remain prohibited.

8. Prevention and early help

The school uses education, clear routines, trusted relationships, pastoral systems and partnership work to reduce risk. A concern does not need to meet a criminal threshold before support is offered.

Where substance use or exposure is suspected, staff will consider:

- the pupil's immediate health and safety;
- frequency, quantity, context and apparent function of use;
- access to substances and the influence of adults or peers;
- possible exploitation, trafficking, coercion, debt or violence;
- mental health, self-harm or suicide risk;
- SEND, communication needs, trauma and other vulnerabilities;
- risk to other pupils and family members; and
- the need for early help, health input, children's social care or police involvement.

9. Responding to drug-related incidents

A drug-related incident may include a substance or paraphernalia found on site; suspected possession, use, supply or production; a pupil appearing intoxicated or unwell; a disclosure; credible intelligence; or drug-related activity near the school.

9.1 Immediate safety and medical response

1. Stay calm, summon a first aider and inform a senior leader/DSL.
2. If there is collapse, breathing difficulty, seizure, severe agitation, chest pain, loss of consciousness, suspected overdose or other serious concern, call 999 immediately. Do not wait for a parent.
3. Do not leave the pupil alone. Move other pupils away and preserve dignity and privacy.
4. Place an unconscious but breathing pupil in the recovery position if trained; follow emergency operator instructions. Do not induce vomiting or give food/drink unless directed.
5. Where safe, retain packaging or information about what may have been taken for ambulance staff. Do not taste or closely smell an unknown substance.
6. Contact parents/carers as soon as practicable unless doing so could increase risk or prejudice a safeguarding/police response.

9.2 Initial management and investigation

7. Separate involved pupils where appropriate, supervise them and avoid accusatory or leading questioning.

8. Record observations and the pupil's own words. Establish only what is needed for safety and immediate decision-making.
9. Notify the Headteacher or nominated senior leader and the DSL.
10. Secure any substance or paraphernalia using the procedures in section 10.
11. Assess safeguarding, medical and wider-community risks before deciding next steps.
12. Where a crime may have occurred, agree with police how the school's fact-finding can proceed without compromising a criminal investigation.

Staff must not attempt to diagnose intoxication from appearance alone. Signs may have medical, emotional or developmental explanations.

10. Searching, confiscation and disposal

10.1 General principles

Searching is an intrusive power and will be used lawfully, proportionately and with regard to safeguarding, dignity, SEND and the pupil's welfare. The authorised member of staff will consider the reason for the search, urgency, location, who should be present and any additional vulnerability before proceeding.

Where practicable, the pupil will first be asked to hand over the item voluntarily. Consent is not required where the statutory power to search for a prohibited item applies. Controlled drugs are prohibited items for which an authorised member of staff may search without consent when there are reasonable grounds for suspicion.

10.2 Conduct of a search

- Only the Headteacher or a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher may conduct a statutory search.
- The searcher and witness should normally be of the same sex as the pupil, subject to the limited urgent exception in statutory guidance.
- A search without consent may involve outer clothing, pockets, possessions, lockers or other school property. Staff must not conduct an intimate or strip search.
- Any search exposing more than outer clothing must be carried out only by police and in accordance with statutory safeguards. The DSL must be informed and the pupil's welfare kept central.
- Force must never be used solely to conduct a search for an item banned only under school rules. Any use of reasonable force must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and consistent with school policy.
- Searches, outcomes, items seized, witnesses, reasons and parent contact must be recorded. Parents will be informed in accordance with DfE guidance and safeguarding considerations.

10.3 Confiscation, storage and disposal

Where a suspected controlled drug is found, staff will:

- have a second adult witness the seizure and handling;
- avoid unnecessary handling; place the item in suitable packaging, seal it and label it with the date, time, place, finder/seizing staff and witness—without writing a pupil's name on the outer package where this creates avoidable disclosure;
- record the chain of custody and store it in the designated secure location with restricted access; and
- deliver it to the police as soon as possible, unless there is a good reason not to, following locally agreed arrangements.

Staff may retain or dispose of alcohol, tobacco, cigarette papers and vapes as permitted by current guidance and school policy. Disposal must be safe, environmentally responsible and recorded.

Unknown powders, liquids, pressurised containers, batteries, contaminated items and volatile substances must be risk assessed; specialist or police advice will be sought where appropriate.

Needles and sharps must not be touched by hand. The area will be secured and trained staff will use approved equipment and a sharps container. A needlestick or contamination injury requires immediate first aid and urgent medical advice under the school's exposure procedure.

11. Police, parents and external agencies

There is no automatic requirement to report every drug incident to police. The Headteacher or nominated senior leader will decide, normally in consultation with the DSL, taking account of the substance, quantity, apparent intent, safeguarding risk, supply, exploitation, violence, repeat behaviour and local partnership arrangements. Suspected supply, serious harm, organised exploitation, weapons, threats or significant quantities are likely to require police contact.

The school will normally involve parents/carers at the earliest appropriate point. Contact may be delayed or withheld where there is reason to believe this would place the pupil or another person at increased risk, and safeguarding advice will be sought.

Support or referral may involve the school nurse, GP, local young people's substance service, early help, children's social care, mental health services, police or other appropriate agencies. Consent and information sharing will be handled in line with safeguarding duties; safeguarding information may be shared without consent where necessary and lawful to protect a child.

12. Recording, confidentiality and information sharing

All concerns and incidents will be recorded promptly, factually and securely on the appropriate school system. Records will distinguish observed facts, reported information, professional judgement and decisions. Any seized item will have a separate chain-of-custody record.

Staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality. Pupils should be told, in age-appropriate language, what information must be shared, with whom and why. Information will be limited to those who need it for safeguarding, health, behaviour management or legal purposes and retained in line with the school's data protection and retention arrangements.

Anonymous information and rumours will be recorded and assessed rather than treated as fact. Corroboration will be sought through lawful and proportionate means. Staff must report patterns or low-level indicators to the DSL or senior leader because combined information may reveal significant harm.

13. Behaviour consequences and safeguarding support

Drug-related behaviour is serious. Responses will be consistent with the Behaviour and Attitudes Policy, but no outcome is automatic. Each case will be decided on the civil standard of proof—the balance of probabilities—after a fair investigation and consideration of individual circumstances.

Possible responses include education, restorative or pastoral work, confiscation, loss of privileges, internal removal, suspension or permanent exclusion. Supply of controlled drugs, possession with intent to supply, serious or repeated possession/use, or conduct creating significant danger may meet the threshold for permanent exclusion. Only the Headteacher can suspend or permanently exclude, and the current statutory guidance must be followed.

Decision-makers will consider:

- the type and apparent quantity of substance and the level of harm;
- possession, use, supply, coercion or exploitation;
- intent, evidence, age and maturity;
- impact on others and the school community;
- previous incidents and response to support;

- SEND, disability and whether reasonable adjustments are required;
- whether the pupil is a victim of criminal exploitation or other abuse; and
- aggravating and mitigating circumstances.

A behaviour consequence does not replace safeguarding support. Where a pupil remains at or returns to school, an individual support and risk-management plan may include parent meetings, curriculum work, check-ins, mentoring, referral, safety planning, peer separation, monitoring and a review date.

14. Smoking, vaping and alcohol

Meole Brace School is a smoke-free and vape-free site. Smoking or vaping is not permitted in buildings, grounds, entrances, car parks, playing fields, school vehicles or at school activities. This applies to pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors, contractors and lettings users. Staff and accompanying adults must not smoke or vape in front of pupils during educational visits.

Pupils must not possess cigarettes, tobacco, cigarette papers, lighters, vapes, e-liquids, nicotine pouches or alcohol at school or wherever this policy applies. Vapes may contain unknown or harmful substances; a suspected controlled-drug vape will be handled as suspected controlled drugs, not routine vaping equipment.

Pupil incidents will result in parent/carer contact, recording, a proportionate behaviour response and education/support. Repeated incidents, supply, tampering, use in high-risk areas or substances believed to contain controlled drugs will receive an escalated response. The school recognises nicotine dependence and will support referral to appropriate stop-smoking or health services.

15. Staff, visitors, contractors and lettings

Staff must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs where this could impair safety, judgement or performance. Prescribed medication that may affect work should be discussed confidentially with the appropriate manager/occupational health in accordance with employment procedures. Staff concerns will be managed under safeguarding, health and safety and disciplinary procedures as appropriate.

Visitors, contractors and users of the premises will be informed of the smoke-free, vape-free and drug-free expectations. A breach may result in the person being asked to stop, leave the site, and/or the matter being reported to their employer, hirer or police.

16. Equality, SEND and vulnerability

The school will apply this policy fairly and without unlawful discrimination. Communication, questioning, searching, curriculum access, consequences and support will be adjusted where required for disability, SEND, language, trauma, religious or cultural needs, age and maturity.

Pupils with SEND may be particularly vulnerable to coercion, misunderstanding, impulsive risk, dependency or exploitation. Staff will seek relevant specialist advice, consider the pupil's ability to understand expectations and provide an appropriate adult or communication support where this helps safeguard the pupil. Reasonable adjustments do not remove clear safety boundaries.

17. Training, monitoring and review

Staff will receive role-appropriate training on recognition, emergency response, safeguarding, recording and referral. Staff authorised to search will be trained in current law and school procedures. Relevant staff will be familiar with safe seizure, storage, sharps and exposure arrangements.

The Headteacher and designated policy lead will monitor incidents, emerging substances, locations, pupil groups, curriculum feedback, consequences, referrals and repeat concerns. Data will be considered through safeguarding and equality lenses and used to improve prevention and support. Governors will receive proportionate, anonymised assurance information.

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, local arrangements, incident learning or emerging risk makes this necessary.

Appendix A – Immediate response guide

Situation	Immediate action	Escalation / follow-up
Pupil unwell or suspected overdose	Call first aider; call 999 for serious symptoms; do not leave alone; preserve packaging/information.	Senior leader and DSL; parent/carer when safe; record; safeguarding assessment.
Suspected possession	Supervise calmly; ask for voluntary handover; contact authorised senior staff.	Consider lawful search; seize/secure; record; parent; behaviour and safeguarding response.
Suspected supply or exploitation	Separate and safeguard; preserve evidence; avoid detailed investigative questioning.	Headteacher/DSL; police and children's social care as appropriate; safety plan for affected pupils.
Substance or paraphernalia found	Do not taste/smell; restrict area; use safe handling and witness.	Secure, label and record; police/specialist disposal depending on item.
Needle or sharp found	Secure area; do not touch by hand; trained staff use approved equipment.	Sharps disposal; exposure procedure if injury; record and site review.
Disclosure or rumour	Listen; do not promise confidentiality; record exact words and source.	DSL/senior leader assesses credibility, risk and next steps.

Emergency principle: medical and safeguarding needs come before investigation or discipline.

Appendix B – Indicators and paraphernalia

No single sign proves drug use. Staff should notice change, pattern, context and combinations of indicators, and avoid assumptions.

Area	Possible indicators
Presentation/health	Unexplained drowsiness or agitation; unusual pupil size; slurred speech; poor coordination; nausea; burns or sores; strong masking scents; unexplained decline in self-care.
Behaviour/learning	Marked mood change; sudden attendance or attainment decline; leaving lessons; secrecy; unusual need for money; theft; new peer/adult associations; repeated contact at site boundaries.
Safeguarding/exploitation	Unexplained cash, phones, travel or gifts; missing episodes; debt; threats; violence; older associates; carrying packages; fear of particular people or places.
Objects	Small bags/wraps, foil, grinders, pipes, scales, empty capsules, syringes/needles, burnt spoons, unfamiliar tablets/powders, aerosols/gas canisters, multiple phones, vapes or unlabelled liquids.

Many indicators have innocent explanations or may reflect illness, disability, distress or ordinary adolescence. Report concerns; do not diagnose.

Appendix C – Search and seizure checklist

- ☐ Reasonable grounds and item sought recorded.
- ☐ Headteacher authorisation/authorised searcher confirmed.
- ☐ Safeguarding, SEND, communication and urgency considered.
- ☐ Location offers privacy and safety.
- ☐ Searcher and witness requirements met.
- ☐ Pupil informed of reason and process; voluntary handover sought where practicable.
- ☐ Search limited to what is lawful and necessary; no intimate/strip search by staff.
- ☐ Item handled safely with second adult witness.
- ☐ Packaging, label, secure storage and chain of custody completed.
- ☐ Outcome, pupil response, staff present and any force used recorded.
- ☐ DSL/senior leader informed; parent/carer informed as required.
- ☐ Police/disposal decision and rationale recorded.
- ☐ Post-search welfare conversation and support completed.

Appendix D – Incident record prompts

Record	Details required
Core details	Date/time; location; pupils/adults involved; reporting person; staff attending.
Concern	Exact allegation/disclosure; source; observed signs; substance/item description; photographs only if authorised and necessary.
Safety	Symptoms; first aid; 999/111/medical advice; supervision; parent contact; risk to others.
Search/seizure	Grounds; authorisation; consent/voluntary handover; searcher/witness; scope; result; item packaging; storage; chain of custody.
Safeguarding	DSL assessment; exploitation/coercion; mental health; SEND; sibling/peer risk; referrals and information shared.
Decision	Facts relied upon; balance-of-probabilities finding; behaviour response; police decision; reasons; reasonable adjustments.
Follow-up	Support plan; education; agency work; review date; responsible lead; outcome.

Appendix E – Sources of advice and support

Service	Purpose / contact
Emergency services	999 for an immediate threat to life or serious medical emergency.
NHS	111 for urgent medical advice when it is not a 999 emergency; nhs.uk for health information.
FRANK	Confidential information about drugs: talktofrank.com; 0300 123 6600; text 82111.
Drinkline	Free alcohol helpline: 0300 123 1110.
NHS Better Health – Quit Smoking	Evidence-based stop-smoking information and routes to local support: nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking.

Service	Purpose / contact
Adfam	Support and information for families affected by drugs or alcohol: adfam.org.uk.
Local services	The DSL/pastoral team will maintain current contact details for Shropshire young people's substance misuse, early help, safeguarding and health services.

Websites and contact details should be checked at each policy review because services may change.

Appendix F – Reference framework

- Department for Education, Drugs: advice for schools (DFE-00001-2012).
- Department for Education, Searching, screening and confiscation: guidance for schools.
- Department for Education, Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff.
- Department for Education, Suspension and permanent exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement (2026).
- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Misuse of Drugs Act 1971; Misuse of Drugs Regulations 2001.
- Psychoactive Substances Act 2016.
- Health Act 2006 and related smoke-free regulations.
- Equality Act 2010; Children Acts 1989 and 2004; Education and Inspections Act 2006; Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

This document adapts the structure and practical emphasis of the supplied 2023 reference policy, updated for Meole Brace School and the legal/guidance position current at September 2026.