

Drug and Substance Misuse Policy

Policy owner	Equip Education and Support Services
Review cycle	October 2026 - October 2027, or earlier where legislation, guidance or provision changes
Document scope	Alternative provision service / provider

1. Aim and scope

Equip works to prevent substance-related harm while maintaining safe learning, safeguarding and access to appropriate support. This policy covers alcohol, illegal drugs, volatile substances, vaping/nicotine, misused prescribed/over-the-counter medicine and suspected supply or exploitation connected to Equip activities.

2. Education, prevention and early support

Learners receive developmentally appropriate health and safety information through PSHE, including peer pressure, dependency, consent, consequences, exploitation, criminal involvement and routes for help. Staff use a respectful, clear and consistent approach and avoid language that stigmatises learners or families.

3. Suspected intoxication or acute illness

Where a pupil appears unwell or under the influence, staff address immediate medical risk and supervision first; call emergency services if needed. Notify a manager and the DSL, document objective observations, and involve parents/carers and the referring school as appropriate and safe. Do not attempt informal medical diagnosis or confront a pupil in a way that increases risk.

4. Possession, search and confiscation

Equip expects prohibited substances not to be brought into the provision. The response to a found item or suspected possession must comply with the legal powers applicable to Equip's provider status, safeguarding arrangements, staff training and agreed searches policy. Do not automatically import statutory school-search powers. Staff must not physically confront a suspected supplier or use unsafe search practices.

Where illicit substances, weapons or evidence are identified, protect staff and learners, seek management and police guidance where appropriate, limit handling and maintain a factual record of decisions and actions.

5. Suspected supply, exploitation and safeguarding

Concerns about repeated supply, coercion, debt, grooming or criminal exploitation trigger safeguarding assessment, including consideration of county lines and risks beyond the premises. The DSL determines referrals and safe information-sharing, involving the referring school and statutory services when needed. A behaviour sanction alone is not an adequate response to exploitation.

6. Proportionate responses and intervention

Responses may include pupil conversation, parent/referrer contact, targeted education, agreed behaviour and risk plans, relevant support referrals and review. SEND, disability, trauma, peer pressure, exploitation and medical information are taken into account. Any change or pause to placement is managed under the Behaviour and Placement Suspension Policy and commissioner arrangements; responsibility for education and safety remains clear.

7. Recording and monitoring

Record what was seen, said, found, actions taken, who was informed, external advice, safeguarding decisions and follow-up. Records remain confidential and are shared only as necessary. Management periodically reviews incidents and PSHE provision to identify emerging risks.