

QMX ACADEMY

DRUGS AND SUBSTANCE MISUSE POLICY

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Contents Page

1. Policy Statement
2. Purpose and Scope
3. Definitions
4. Aims and Objectives
5. Prevention and Education
6. Prohibited Substances
7. Identifying and Responding to Concerns
8. Managing Incidents
9. Supporting Students
10. Staff Guidance
11. Confidentiality and Safeguarding
12. Roles and Responsibilities
13. Monitoring and Review
14. Contact Information



1. Policy Statement

QMX Academy is committed to safeguarding the health, safety, and wellbeing of all learners and staff. We take a firm and proactive stance on the misuse of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and other harmful substances. This policy outlines our procedures for prevention, education, and response to incidents involving drugs or substance misuse.

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff, visitors, and contractors within the QMX Academy setting, and to any activities taking place under the Academy's responsibility, including off-site trips and events.

3. Definitions

- **Drugs:** All illegal substances, legal highs, prescription or over-the-counter medication used improperly, solvents, tobacco, vapes, and alcohol.
- **Substance Misuse:** The use of any of the above substances in a way that is harmful or not intended by the manufacturer or prescriber.

4. Aims and Objectives

- To ensure a drug-free, safe, and healthy environment.
- To educate students on the risks and consequences of substance misuse.
- To support early identification and intervention where issues are identified.
- To work with parents, carers, and external agencies in managing substance-related incidents.

5. Prevention and Education

- QMX Academy delivers drug education through PSHE lessons, workshops, and invited professionals (e.g. NHS, local police).
- Students are taught the legal, health, and social implications of drug misuse, and are encouraged to develop refusal and coping strategies.
- The curriculum is tailored to the needs and understanding levels of KS3 and KS4 learners.

6. Prohibited Substances

The following are strictly prohibited on all QMX Academy premises and during any school-related activities:

- Illegal drugs (e.g. cannabis, cocaine, ecstasy)
- Alcohol
- Tobacco and vaping products
- Psychoactive substances (“legal highs”)
- Solvents and aerosols used to get high
- Misused prescription or over-the-counter medicines

7. Identifying and Responding to Concerns

- Staff are trained to recognise signs of misuse and report concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Searches may be conducted in line with the Academy’s **Search and Confiscation Policy** if there is reasonable suspicion that a learner is in possession of prohibited substances.
- Substances found will be safely confiscated and, if required, handed to the police.

If the police do not request collection:

- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or a **senior staff member** should **securely store the substance** in a labelled, tamper-proof container (e.g. a sealable bag or evidence envelope), clearly marked with:
 - Date and time of confiscation

- Name of the learner
 - Description of the substance
 - Names of staff present
- Store it in a **locked, restricted-access cupboard** designated for safeguarding matters.
- If the substance is deemed **legal but not permitted on site** (e.g. tobacco, vapes):
 - It may be **destroyed on site** following internal procedures and **with a witness present**.
 - Parents/carers may be offered the chance to collect it **at the discretion of SLT and commissioners** , but not returned directly to the learner.
- If the substance is **suspected illegal** and police **decline collection**:
 - QMX Academy should **consult the police in writing (email or record of call)** confirming that they do not require it.
 - Then it may be **safely disposed of** under the direction of SLT and DSL, with a record kept of disposal (how, when, and by whom).

8. Managing Incidents

If a student is found in possession of or under the influence of prohibited substances:

- The incident will be recorded and investigated thoroughly by senior staff and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- Parents/carers and commissioners will be informed as soon as possible and no later than the end of the school day.
- The student may be subject to internal consequences (e.g. exclusion, restorative actions) depending on the nature and severity of the incident.
- A risk assessment will be carried out to determine the impact on safety and wellbeing, and a reintegration plan will be developed where appropriate.
- In conjunction with the commissioner, referrals to external agencies will be considered to support the learner's needs. This may include:
 - **CGL Jigsaw** (Nottingham's young person drug and alcohol service)

- **CAMHS** (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services)
- **Police** (if criminal activity is suspected or required)
- **Early Help or Children's Social Care**, via submission of a **MARF (Multi-Agency Referral Form)** by the DSL

All referrals will be documented and follow local safeguarding partnership guidance.

9. Supporting Students

QMX Academy recognises that substance misuse can be a symptom of deeper issues. We aim to:

- Provide a supportive environment where students feel able to talk openly.
- Refer students for early help or counselling services.
- Monitor behaviour and wellbeing through pastoral staff and intervention teams.

10. Staff Guidance

- Staff should not attempt to diagnose or counsel students but refer concerns to the DSL.
- Any medication brought in by students must be declared and stored appropriately with parental consent.

11. Confidentiality and Safeguarding

- Any disclosures will be handled with sensitivity and confidentiality, but safeguarding takes priority.
- Staff must follow the **Safeguarding Policy** and report to the DSL.

12. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Director / SLT**: Ensure a safe learning environment and approve policy implementation.

- **DSL:** Oversee all incidents and concerns relating to drugs and misuse.
- **Staff:** Remain vigilant, report concerns, and engage in drug education delivery.

13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or in response to legislation or local safeguarding concerns.

14. Contact Information

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

QMX Academy

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