

May 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have recently been made aware of an increase in the number of incidents in our local community where children and young people are being exposed to potentially harmful substances using vapes.

The purpose of this letter is to raise awareness of the key issues, provide you with useful resources and to alert you to the consequences should your child be found to be in possession of vapes on school/college premises.

What is vaping and the context?

Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapour produced by an electronic vaporiser (vape) or e-cigarette. The vapour can contain nicotine and other substances. There have also been reports around the country of children and young people experimenting with THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) vaping. THC is the psychoactive compound in cannabis and is illegal in the United Kingdom.

We are aware that there have been reports of young people becoming unwell and needing medical attention after using vapes. Vapes can come in a variety of different forms, shapes, and sizes. Some common styles of vapes include ones which look like a thick pen or highlighter pen. These devices are usually very small and can be concealed on a person or blend in with school/college equipment, therefore they can be easily mistaken or missed.

There is a growing body of clinical evidence that vaping at a young age may affect the development of the lungs and may lead to respiratory conditions later in life. Research this week from The Inter Scientific laboratory, testing vapes at Baxter College in Kidderminster, found that children could be inhaling more than twice the daily safe amount of lead, and nine times the safe amount of nickel.

Like cigarettes, shops and other retailers cannot sell vaping items to people under the age of 18. This includes the sale of vaping equipment, including liquids and devices. It is, therefore, clear that young people under the age of 18 should not be purchasing or be in possession of alternative nicotine products such as vapes. Whilst the sale of items as detailed above is illegal, students have reported to us that they are able to acquire devices online through social networking apps.

What are local schools/colleges doing about this?

We recognise that this is not an issue specific to any one school/college but rather a risk that exists within the community and local area impacting on all schools/colleges. We all continue to educate students regarding the dangers of vaping and the legality surrounding this. We all remind students of our respective behaviour policies and when students have been found in possession of a prohibited item, a strong sanction is always applied, including the risk of suspension.

What can parents do?

- Understand the risks presented by vapes and that the availability of these products has grown significantly in a short period of time. This is an issue within our local area.
- Talk to your child openly about these risks to ensure that they are well informed and have clear guidance that these products are to be avoided.
- Get in touch with your GP if you require medical guidance regarding your child.

- Get in touch with your child's school/college and let them know if you have concerns.

What steps can I take if my child has used electronic cigarettes/vapes?

Sadly, we must recognise that some young people may develop an addiction to nicotine and may see the use of a vape as being a safer alternative to smoking cigarettes. They may also have succumbed to peer pressure or simply be curious and want to try vaping. If this is the case, we would like to guide you to the following websites which provide helpful information to support you to raise this important issue with your child:

- ASH (Action on Smoking and Health): <https://ash.org.uk/fact-sheets/>
- Kids Health: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/e-cigarettes.html>
- West Yorkshire Health and Care Partnership
[https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/application/files/7616/7888/2607/NEW2_Vaping_and_e-cigs - the facts for parents and carers leaflet print.pdf](https://www.wypartnership.co.uk/application/files/7616/7888/2607/NEW2_Vaping_and_e-cigs_-_the_facts_for_parents_and_carers_leaflet_print.pdf)

How are schools/colleges responding beyond raising awareness of the dangers of vaping?

We are sure that you agree that the possession and use of vapes on any school/college premises is something that we simply cannot tolerate. Any student found in possession of a vape will be subject to a serious school/college sanction, including the risk of suspension. Please note that we will report possession of any illegal substances to the police.

We hope that you welcome this letter in the spirit with which it is intended and that you share and understand our shared concerns about this potentially harmful issue. We want to be open about the risks involved and we encourage you to have a conversation with your child about this subject matter. Should you have any concerns, please do contact your child's school/college and they will be more than willing to provide you with additional support and guidance. We have decided to come together as a group of Headteachers as we feel it will take a community response to keep all our children safe from harm.

This letter has been endorsed by:

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[Handwritten signature]

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