

11 July 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

We have recently been made aware about an increase in the number of incidents in our local community where children and young people are being exposed to potentially harmful substances through the use of electronic cigarettes and/or vapes. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the issue, provide you with access to helpful resources if you feel that your child is involved in this kind of behaviour, as well as to alert you to the potential consequences should your child/children be found to be in possession or use of electronic cigarettes/vapes on the academy premises.

Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapour produced by an electric vaporiser (vape) or e-cigarette. The vapour can contain nicotine and other substances which, as I am sure you will appreciate, is very concerning. There have also been reports in other Local Authority areas of children and young people experimenting with THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) vaping. THC is the psychoactive compound in cannabis and is illegal in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, 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 normal school equipment, as a consequence they can be easily mistaken or missed.

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 or from older siblings, friends and unfortunately in some instances even parents/carers.

We do, however, recognise that a small number of students may have developed 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 as parents/carers in raising this important issue with your child/children:

- ASH (Action on Smoking and Health): <https://ash.org.uk/fact-sheets/>
- Know the Risks: <https://ash.org.uk/fact-sheets/>
- Kids Health: <https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/e-cigarettes.html>

Naturally, we will also continue our work in school to educate students regarding the dangers of vaping and the legality surrounding this and will be hosting another assembly about the risks.

I am sure that you will agree that the possession and use of vapes on the academy premises is something that we simply cannot tolerate, consequently, we will view this in the same way as incidents of smoking or possession of smoking paraphernalia. As detailed in our Behaviour Policy, which has also been shared and explained to students and is available in student planners, anyone who is found to be in the possession of paraphernalia linked to smoking or vaping will have said items confiscated and will be issued with a sanction. Incidents of students smoking/vaping will be addressed with a more severe sanction.

I hope that you welcome this letter in the spirit with which it is intended and that you share and understand our concerns about this potential harmful issue. We always aim to work in partnership with parents/carers to help support our students in making positive decisions for themselves and their future. We encourage you to have a conversation with your child/children about this topic. Should you have any further concerns, please do contact your child's Learning Manager at the academy who will be more than willing and able to provide you with additional support and guidance.

Yours faithfully

Chelsea Allen
Assistant Principal