

PS185/23-24/SLI/KLA

Wednesday 3 January 2024

Dear parents/carers,

### **Increase in Vaping among young people - advice and guidance**

I am writing to provide information and guidance regarding the use of e-cigarettes (vaping), the way which it is currently impacting on young people and the wider school community and how we are responding to it as a school.

#### **How widespread is vaping?**

The most recent government data (from 2021) suggested that 9% of people aged 11-18 considered themselves to be 'occasional or regular vapers'. This was up from 4.9% in 2020 and the current figures are therefore likely to be far higher than 9%. The rapid rise in vape shops and widespread availability of vapes online appears to have brought vaping into the mainstream over the last few years.

#### **What does the law say about vaping?**

It is against the law to **buy or possess** a vape in the UK unless you are aged 18 years or over. There are further restrictions on the amount of nicotine which vapes can contain (20mg per ml) and on the use of young (under 25 years old) models in adverts for vapes. It is illegal to promote vaping products in ways which may appeal to children.

A young person found in possession of a vape is very unlikely to be criminalised by the Police but someone (of any age) who shares, sells or distributes vapes to people under 18 may be prosecuted under the Children and Families Act 2014 and can be fined up to £2500 or sent to prison (if the offence is repeated). It is illegal for anyone to supply a minor with a vape, even if no money is exchanged; this includes adults providing vapes for their school aged children.

#### **What are the health implications of vaping?**

The following information is from [Cancer Research UK](#): *"E-cigarettes are not risk-free. They can cause side effects such as throat and mouth irritation, headache, cough and feeling sick. These side effects tend to reduce over time with continued use. **We don't know yet what effects they might have in the long term.**"*

*E-cigarettes should only be used to help you stop smoking, or to stop you going back to tobacco. Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine, which is addictive. If you have never smoked, you shouldn't use e-cigarettes."*

#### **What is the school doing about vaping?**

Firstly and most importantly we are teaching students about the dangers of nicotine, whether in tobacco products or vapes. We provide students with information about the health effects so that they can make informed choices when they are older. We also teach them about the law as it relates to cigarettes and e-cigarettes. We maintain a zero tolerance approach to vapes and tobacco products in school.

If we suspect that a student is smoking or vaping in school (or in school uniform when travelling to or from school) we will carry out a bag and blazer search. If they are found in possession of smoking/vaping materials they receive debits and detentions. In line with the law, the materials are seized, recorded, reported to the Police and destroyed. If a student refuses to be searched they will be suspended from school and a meeting with parents/carers will be called for the following day. Daily bag searches may be insisted upon as a condition of their return to school.

If we believe that a student is supplying tobacco products or vapes to others; the student will be suspended from school whilst we investigate. We then work with the Police and the child's parents to reach a resolution which ensures there are no further incidents. In the event that a child is deemed to have supplied such materials again (after their suspension) they are at serious risk of permanent exclusion from the school.

**For clarity:** Sharing a vape with a friend or friends is considered to be supplying a minor and will be sanctioned as such.

### **What can you do to support us?**

The most important thing which we ask of parents/carers is that you have open conversations with your children about their understanding of vaping; what it is, what the law says about it and what the consequences of vaping could be. [There is some excellent advice from the NHS here.](#)

Secondly, if you suspect that your child is vaping please speak to them openly about this. If they are vaping please remind them of the school's approach and ensure that they do not bring vapes onto the school site.

Thirdly, whilst it may be very obvious to state, please do not supply vapes to your children if they are under 18 years of age. By doing so you would be committing a criminal offence which could lead to a fine and/or criminal record. It is also deeply problematic for school staff who are maintaining a zero tolerance approach at school.

As always our aim is to work together with you to keep your children safe from harm. However, if this letter raises any concerns or questions please do not hesitate to contact us through the usual channels.

Kind regards,

Simon Liley, Headteacher



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Ambition  
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