



Ref:EEM/safety/lw  
Sept 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

I am writing to share with you some recent concerns I have for the safety and wellbeing of our young people and would encourage you to read this letter in full. Over recent months, in the media there has been increasing concern about young people and the use of e-cigarettes (vapes). As a Biology Teacher myself I know that there is very little knowledge of the long-term effects of vaping and it concerns me that some young people are engaging in this worrying trend. Whilst this is an issue that you may believe does not affect your child directly, I want to share some information that will hopefully highlight the dangers for everyone and enable me to galvanise your support in moving forward. Vapes have very quickly become part of youth culture, and whilst the proportion of our learners who are known to vape is very small, there is a risk for all. You might be of the belief that these are better than smoking normal cigarettes, however, this is not the case. There are increasing numbers of vapes from the illegal market and these are often initially cheaper than high street prices but can be laced with illegal drugs including LSD, GHB, MDMA (ecstasy), ketamine, kratom and opioids including fentanyl and marijuana (THC/CBD).

It is alarming how many people appear confident about what is contained in their e-cigarettes whilst in reality they have no certainty at all. The negative effects of vaping could easily be felt by any of our learners, even if it is their first experience. Regular vapes, even those that are not laced with noxious drugs can have the effect of altering the mood of someone who becomes addicted, making them more anxious and perhaps irritable, ultimately impacting on their mental health and wellbeing. In school we will do all we can to educate our young people and to ensure that they are able to make healthy choices, but the work needs to be done in partnership with home and the wider community.

One concern we have in school is how a very small minority of our learners use the toilet facilities. It is impossible to police what happens inside a toilet cubicle, and whilst all toilet blocks are staffed at the door during social times and monitored carefully, the challenge is significant. Toilet blocks cannot be staffed constantly during lesson time; this is one reason that we discourage leaving lessons to visit the toilet (unless the learner has a medical need for a toilet pass). Myself and the Senior Leadership Team have discussed at length, ways to discourage antisocial behaviour in our toilets and in order to keep our school community safe, I wanted to reiterate the rules below, which our learners are very well aware of:

1. There is a strict one person per cubicle rule. If any learner is seen to leave a toilet cubicle with another learner/s there will be a sanction and their property will be searched. A first incident will result in 1 day in SE. A second incident will result in a Managed SE to another Academy. Further incidents will lead to suspension.
2. Toilet use during lessons is restricted to emergencies only. Learners using toilets during lesson time is tracked on Classcharts to look for patterns and abuse of the system. Those with toilet passes are provided with a physical pass to ensure that they can access the facilities when they need to.
3. Key Stage 3 (Years 7 – 9) are now allocated toilets by PE changing room/offices and Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11) allocated toilets in B Block next to the main hall.

In the corridor, outside the toilets, we have CCTV in operation. If any damage, graffiti or vape use is suspected, the learner will be sanctioned and expected to pay for any damage caused.

We ask for your support in this matter. Please talk to your child about the content of this letter. Please also regularly check their bags and pockets for e-cigarettes. When there is a genuine risk to safety this must be a priority for us all. Please see link with more information <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/vapes>

Yours faithfully

Mrs Edwards-Morgan  
Principal

