



Onehouse Road, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 1QR

Tel: 01449 613541

Email: enquiries@stowhigh.com

Web: www.stowhigh.com

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Our Ref: SST.JCPVapingLetter

22 March 2024

Dear Families

We wish to update you about an important national issue regarding vaping amongst children and young people. 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 suspected of being in possession of a vape and/or found to be in possession of vapes on the school premises.

This issue is a societal problem that is happening on a daily basis in our communities and enters our schools as a result. It is therefore not restricted to individual schools and is not just our school problem. 'Vaping' and the rise of E-Vapes has also become a significant public health issue, particularly in light of new research that vaping causes similar changes to a person's DNA as smokers who develop cancer. We are increasingly concerned about the rise of vaping amongst young people in our school. This is particularly the case regarding the use of the following:

- Vape pens (both disposable and reusable)
- Liquids and oils
- THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) - the psychoactive compound in cannabis and is illegal in the United Kingdom.
- Spice – a synthetic drug and is also illegal in the United Kingdom.

The illegal substances can often be odourless and very difficult to detect due to the nature of chemicals used. They can also appear to be quite innocently named. One of the problems with vaping is that pupils sharing a 'vape' often have no idea what they are actually inhaling, which is potentially very dangerous.

Vape pens, liquids, oils and other such paraphernalia can be legally purchased online and can also be purchased via Amazon, Ebay and other accounts. We encourage you to monitor your child's online purchases closely as these accounts are often set as 'private' and can be hidden. If you see a change in your child's behaviour, sleep or eating patterns we would advise you to speak to your child about your concerns and to search their room for any vape pens, liquids, oils and other such paraphernalia. Vapes can come in a variety of different forms, shapes, and sizes, with styles of vapes including ones which look like a thick pen or highlighter pen.

At Stowmarket High School, we have clear sanctions in place for any vapes found in school, as per our Behaviour Policy:

"Smoking/vaping is not allowed anywhere on School premises. Students who are caught smoking/vaping and/or in possession of smoking/vaping materials will receive a C4 and issued with



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an after-school detention. Repeat offenders will face an internal or external exclusion. Smoking/vaping inside an enclosed space presents a clear threat to the safety, health and wellbeing of others. Smoking/vaping materials are confiscated and destroyed rather than returned to the student and/or parent/carer.”

Please be aware that any vapes found to have illegal substances such as THC added would lead to a long-term suspension or permanent exclusion and a referral to the police.

It is also important to be aware that we undertake bag searches of any students we suspect to be in possession of a vape or are known to vape, in accordance with our Behaviour Policy and the Department for Education guidance (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62d1643e8fa8f50bfbe55c/Searching__Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf):

“School staff can search a student for any item if the student agrees. Additionally, the Headteacher and staff authorised by them have a statutory power to search students or their possessions, without consent, where they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student may have a prohibited item (including vapes). If a student has a school locker, then it can be searched for any item with or without the student's consent.”

This will include asking students to remove any trousers that are concealing further pairs of trousers underneath.

We all recognise the importance of educating our pupils when dealing with drug-related issues and constantly adapt and review our curriculum and assembly plan and work to keep abreast of changes and issues. We have delivered assemblies and used our form time activities to raise awareness with our pupils of the dangers involved. Please encourage your child to speak to a trusted adult at school if they have any worries or concerns.

Below are some external services which may be of use if you are concerned about your child:

- Talk to Frank is an educational site for young people and their families with lots of help and advice on all topics related to illegal substances. Their website is user-friendly with advice and education to help and support. Telephone 0300 123 66 00 or visit their website: www.talktofrank.com
- DrugWise offers information on drugs, alcohol and tobacco and have an A-Z of drugs explaining what they are and how they are used: <https://www.drugwise.org.uk/>
- The Mix provides information and support for the under 25s covering a range of topics. You can use their helpline or webchat from 11am-11pm daily. Telephone: 0808 808 4994 or go to www.themix.org.uk





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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 have got to be open about the risks involved and we need to be able to talk to our children so that no topics are 'off limits' and so we encourage you to have a conversation with your child about this subject matter.

Thank you for your support in keeping our school smoke and vape free.

Yours faithfully

Stefan Stoneman

Assistant Headteacher



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