



22nd January 2024

Dear Parent or Carer

Shorter read

- There has been a national increase in the number of young people vaping, with serious incidents recently being reported locally.
- We educate young people about the dangers of vaping through our **LIFE** curriculum and one-to-one Safeguarding conversations.
- Our school policy is clear: students will be suspended if they are found vaping - or with a vape - in school.
- Students will not be permitted to loiter in toilet areas and may face sanctions for this behaviour.
- Any student bringing any illegal substances onto our school site will be permanently excluded.
- We want to support students and their families where vaping has become - or is becoming - an addiction, and have signposted support below.

Longer read

I am writing to you to address a national increase in young people vaping which also impacts young people at Stokesley School. It has been widely reported that there is a [national trend](#) that shows an increase in the number of young people using vapes and e-cigarettes and that these are frequently being brought into schools.

Even more concerning are national and now [local reports](#) of the devices being brought into school containing substances other than nicotine. Very recently a child was hospitalised following use of a vape that contained drugs in a local Middlesbrough school. This follows reports of a similar incident in a North Yorkshire school earlier this year, and it is important to understand these types of incidents could happen in any school.

Whilst we continue to educate all of our young people on the dangers of vaping through **LIFE** lessons, through one to one conversations with our Safeguarding team, and through our broader school curriculum, we are - understandably - concerned about the potential of similar incidents occurring in our school.

Our positive conduct policy is very clear: students will be suspended if they are found in possession of a vape, or using one, in school. Unfortunately, a small group of young people continue to bring these devices into school and so I would like to explain our approach to dealing with this issue which applies equally to students in the main school and sixth form.

We understand that vaping can become a serious addiction, and know it is an important part of our role as a school to inform and support young people to avoid their reliance on these devices (see support below).

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This approach of support, however, is finely balanced with our need to ensure that students are not exposed to the risks associated with vaping. Many young people buy vapes online or through unauthorised sellers and therefore cannot be sure what is contained within the devices. As such, we feel that our obligation to safeguard *all* students outweighs the support for the individual bringing these devices into school or using them. **Stokesley School does not permit the use of or presence of such devices on the school site**, therefore we will be increasing the length of suspensions for students who repeatedly bring vapes on to the school site and those using them. Failure to respond to repeated suspensions for vaping may lead to permanent exclusion. We will also be conducting randomised checks of those involved, those we suspect are involved, or on the periphery of their use, to ensure these devices are not on our site.

Where we have reason to suspect a vape contains any form of illegal drug we will also be sending some of these confiscated devices to be tested. On this point I must be very clear: **any student bringing any illegal substances onto our school site will face permanent exclusion.**

To support the efforts to reduce vaping on our site we are also asking students not to loiter in our toilet areas. Students have indoor spaces available at break time in the canteen and life hub with the addition of the main hall at lunch time. There is no reason to stand in groups within the toilet foyer unless a student is waiting to use them. By ensuring students are not loitering we can allow more students to use the facilities appropriately at break times, reducing the need for these to be used during lessons. This benefits younger students in particular who find it intimidating to use the facilities when groups of older students are present. Where repeated offences occur will be dealt with in line with the school's positive conduct policy.

If you are a parent of a child who uses a vape it is important that you engage with the school to address this issue. We do appreciate that vaping can be an addiction and our starting point is always to offer support to address this. If it has become an addiction we would recommend speaking to your GP who can offer support for cessation of vaping and smoking.

Below you will find some links which may provide useful starting points for you in either understanding the issue better, or supporting your child with the next steps.

- This [factsheet](#) from the National College is useful for you to understand more about vapes and vaping
- [Talk To Frank](#) is useful, factual and informative and is a good place to signpost your teenager if they're looking for more information for themselves
- The [NHS page for drug addiction](#) is a good starting point if you're looking for services to support your teenager
- [This website](#) helps teens to come up with a plan to quit vaping, including some apps that you can get to track your progress
- Apps like [KWIT](#) help people to track their progress when trying to quit smoking or vaping





- [A Parent's Guide to Vaping](#) - a guide designed to support parents in helping them to understand what vaping is and why young people do it
- [I'm worried about my child vaping](#) - a website which offers guidance on how to open a dialogue with your child about vaping
- [What's In Your Vape](#) - a website which explains the increasingly harmful substances found in vapes
- [Healthier Together Middlesbrough](#) - a local support service which will provide a good starting point for seeking support
- [Growing Healthy North Yorkshire](#) - an additional local support service which signposts other local services, depending on your home postcode
- [People's Information Network Redcar & Cleveland](#) - support within Redcar and Cleveland area to help start you to get some support

We want to do everything we can to avoid the possibility of a young person being hospitalised, or worse, from the use of vape. I know that the overwhelming majority of parents/carers will be in agreement with our stance and are - quite rightly - concerned about this issue too. Children engaging in this type of behaviour form an exceptionally small minority of our student population and it is important that parents and carers work with us to address these behaviours.

As a school, we would encourage all parents and carers to have an open and honest discussion about the dangers of vaping, to report any additional concerns to us through your child's Head of Year, and to seek support for your child if they are currently using a vape.

We hope to avoid escalating sanctions for young people by ensuring honest, open dialogue between home and school. I hope that you take reassurance from our stance, which is designed to ensure our school community is at less risk from the adverse and potentially serious consequences of vaping in schools. I know that most parents and carers will be exceptionally supportive of efforts to safeguard our students, and will be understanding of the need to escalate our response to these issues. We hope that parents and carers requiring support on this matter seek that support from our school or from the services outlined in this letter.

Yours faithfully

Mr M Fenwick
Headteacher

