

24 May 2023

Dear Parent / Carer

Re: Safeguarding / Vaping

We are writing to ask for your support in keeping our young people safe and healthy.

Over recent months we have witnessed an apparent increase in young people using vapes. This is in keeping with a national trend in which brightly coloured, highly flavoured and easy to use disposable vapes are gaining popularity. Although vapes cannot legally be sold in the UK to anyone under the age of 18, recent research indicates a sharp increase in vaping among children and the Government has opened a consultation on youth vaping:

[Youth vaping: call for evidence](#)

As you would expect, vapes are not permitted in our school. However, a small number of our pupils have been found in possession of and/or using vapes on the school premises. This presents a number of issues; as well as the potential health/addiction risks to the vape-users themselves, our pupils report feeling uncomfortable when they see others using vapes, and the sensitive fire-alarm sensors in the school buildings can be affected by vape fumes. It is also always of concern to us when young people obtain items illegally as this action can expose them to other risks. A BBC report published yesterday highlights some of the harmful metals and other chemicals that can be found in vapes:

[BBC: High lead and nickel levels found in illegal vapes](#)

Safeguarding our pupils is of paramount importance to us and we will continue to teach our pupils how to stay safe and look after themselves and part of our curriculum and 'ready, respectful, safe' expectations. Where a pupil's conduct does not meet these expectations, we will apply the school's behaviour policy, which includes the option of searching for and confiscating prohibited items, including vapes.

To support school staff to conduct such a search quickly and easily, **the Governing Body has recently approved the use of a 'vape-wand' in school.** This is effectively a small hand-held metal detector that can detect the metal components within a vape. The school intends to pilot the use of this 'vape-wand' after half-term. Other schools that have introduced the use of 'vape-wands' have found them to be a helpful deterrent.



Parents / Carers should be reassured that, as is the case with searches now, this measure would only be used in circumstances where staff have reasonable grounds to suspect that a pupil is concealing a prohibited item such as a vape on their person. The school has a clear, safeguarded procedure for conducting searches, which invites pupils to hand over any prohibited item and requests the pupil's consent. This procedure is in keeping with Government advice for schools on searching, screening and confiscation, which references the use of devices such as hand-held metal detectors. It is quite rare for searches to be required in school. For more detailed information on this, please refer to the documents linked below.

[DfE: Searching, Screening and Confiscation - July 2022](#)
[Springfield School Behaviour Policy \(Appendices\): Searching, Screening and Confiscation](#)

We would be very grateful if parents / carers would support us by discussing this letter and the risks of vaping with their child. There is lots of information available on-line for families regarding the health risks from vaping, including ['Talk to Frank'](#). Please make clear to your child that it is not legal for children to buy vapes in the UK and that vapes are not allowed on the school premises.

We thank you for your support with respect to this matter.

Yours sincerely

Ms S F Spivey
Headteacher

Mr A Cufley
Chair of Governors

