

10th October 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

Guidance and Behaviour Policy - Vaping

As you may be aware, there has been a rise in vaping across society, and particularly amongst young people. The latest data from the ASH-Youth survey of 11 to 17-year olds in England, show that in March/April 2023, the proportion of children experimenting with vaping had grown by 50% year on year, from one in thirteen to one in nine. The survey also reports that young students regularly vaping has tripled since 2021. Our experience at Ridgewood High School, like many schools, certainly reflects this pattern although we do know that we are dealing with a minority of students in our school. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the issue, confirm our policy around this issue and searching, and to provide some useful guidance about this modern trend.

Vaping is the act of inhaling a vapour produced by an electronic vaporiser (vape) or e-cigarette. The vapour may contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development, affect memory, concentration, learning, self-control, attention, and mood. It may also contain other harmful substances besides nicotine. There is not much information yet on what the long-term effects of using vapes will be, so this means young people really should avoid them. Like cigarettes, shops and other retailers cannot sell vaping items to people under the age of 18. This includes the sale of vaping equipment, including liquids and devices. It is, therefore, clear that young people under the age of 18 should not be purchasing, or be in possession of, alternative nicotine products such as vapes.

Firstly, I would like to confirm that vapes and e-cigarettes are not permitted on our school site in the same way that tobacco or any smoking paraphernalia is not permitted on the school site. We have a duty of care to ensure the safety of all our students. If any student is suspected of vaping or carrying a vape, we do have the legal powers to search the bag and outer layers of clothing in order to remove and confiscate this item. In order to ensure the safety and health of our students, we have decided to introduce the use of metal detector wands to help with the search for vaping products. Please be assured that this measure will only be used when we have reason to believe that a student may be carrying vaping products, and metal detector wands will be used discreetly and respectfully.

If a student is found to have these items in their possession, they will receive one school day in Supervised Learning with pastoral education. If any students are found in possession of these items for a second time in the same term, they will receive a one-day Fixed-Term-Suspension.

Any student who is caught vaping on the school premises, or on their way to or from school will receive a one-day Fixed-Term-Suspension and pastoral education.



RIDGEWOOD
HIGH SCHOOL

Whilst the sale of these items is illegal to people under the age of 18, students have reported to us that they are able to acquire devices online or from older siblings, friends and unfortunately in some instances even parents/carers. I am sure that you will agree that the possession and use of vapes on school premises is something that we simply cannot tolerate.

We do, however, recognise that a small number of students may have developed an addiction to nicotine and may see the use of a vape as an alternative to smoking cigarettes. They may also have succumbed to peer pressure or simply be curious and want to try vaping. If this is the case, we would like to guide you to the following website, which provide helpful information to support you as parents/carers in raising this important issue with your child/children:

<https://ash.org.uk/resources/publications/fact-sheets>

Please also see the attached parent guide produced by Dudley MBC.

We hope that you welcome this letter in the spirit with which it is intended and that you share and understand our concerns about this potentially harmful and disruptive issue. We always aim to work in partnership with parents/carers to help support our students in making positive decisions for themselves and their future. We encourage you to have a conversation with your child/children about this topic if you feel it necessary. Naturally, we will also continue our work in our school to educate students regarding the dangers of vaping and the legality surrounding this. I will be doing assemblies on 'Vaping' to all students, week commencing 9th October. I would like to thank you in advance for your support in this matter and ask that we work together to ensure that our young people are protected.

Yours faithfully,

Mr C Ewing

Assistant Headteacher – Pastoral Support and Primary Transition
Ridgewood High School

