

11 December 2024

Dear parents and carers

I am looking forward to publishing our Headlines at the end of next week as we break up for Christmas, to share with you all the news from this wonderful busy term. Ahead of this I have some key messages for you around **student health and well-being**, and would like to hear **your views on mobile phone use**.

Uniform

As a slight amendment to our uniform, we have agreed to accept **plain black 'leather' trainers** as an alternative to shoes. If making this choice for school footwear, be aware that the **entire trainer must be black** with no coloured or white logos or accents.

Mobile Phones

We are reviewing our Mobile Phone Policy and would really like your thoughts and opinions on this matter. **Please find the link to the [survey here](#).**

Toilets

There is ongoing misuse of our toilet facilities by a small number of students. We are still encountering issues such as students using toilets as social areas, eating in these spaces, and, on occasions, vaping. As part of our commitment to maintaining a clean, safe, and respectful environment for all students, I personally inspect these areas regularly and work closely with our site and cleaning teams to ensure they are kept to a high standard. However, we have needed to close some of the facilities at certain times of the day for cleaning or repairs, due to damage. We are aware this causes anxiety for some students who legitimately need to use the toilets, and we are striving to keep all facilities open throughout the day.

We are

- Preventing groups of students entering together to congregate and socialise in these spaces.
- Reminding students that cubicles are for single occupancy only
- Sanctioning students who do not adhere to our value of RESPECT and who may find themselves liable for damage caused.

We ask that you reinforce these expectations through discussion at home. We want every student to feel comfortable, safe and secure when using these facilities.

We are also in the process of obtaining quotes to improve our toilet facilities further. This includes plans to open two sets of single-sex toilets in Altair, designed to enhance both the quality of the facilities and our ability to supervise them effectively.

Vaping

There appear to be a growing number of young people experimenting with or regularly using vapes (e-cigarettes). While these products were initially designed to help adult smokers quit traditional cigarettes, they have unfortunately become popular among teenagers. **Please note that from 6 January 2025, we will be operating zero tolerance towards anyone who brings these items into school or who are found using them. This will incur a sanction of at least a 3-day suspension.**

Potential risks of vaping:

- Vapes contain nicotine, which is highly addictive and can harm brain development in young people, affecting attention, memory, and learning. Even "nicotine-free" vapes can contain harmful chemicals that may irritate the lungs or cause long-term health problems.
- Some vapes may be filled with a drug called THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) which is the psychoactive component of cannabis, and when consumed through vaping, the risks are heightened due to the concentration and delivery method.
- Emerging evidence links vaping to anxiety and other mental health concerns, particularly in young people.
- Regular vaping can lead to nicotine dependency, making it harder for young people to quit and increasing the likelihood of transitioning to smoking traditional cigarettes.
- It is illegal for retailers to sell vapes to anyone under 18, yet many young people still access these products. We are working closely with the police and local authorities to address this issue.
- Vaping is still relatively new, and the long-term effects are not yet fully understood. This uncertainty adds to the concern.

We will continue to educate students about the risks of vaping through our curriculum and provide support to those who may already be using these products. Please do help us to help them, and be vigilant for signs such as:

- Sudden changes in mood or behaviour
- Unexplained sleepiness or lack of motivation
- Sweet or unusual odours
- Presence of unfamiliar devices or cartridges



If you have concerns about your young person or need advice, please do not hesitate to contact us. It is really important to us that we can ensure that our young people remain safe, healthy, and informed.

I am proud to share that our school is thriving, with students achieving strong GCSE results and excelling in sports and enrichment activities, both in and out of school. Our commitment to providing a supportive and ambitious environment ensures that our school remains a place where students can flourish academically, socially, and personally.

I really do thank you for all your continued support in working with us,

Best wishes
Mrs K Oakley
Headteacher

