



Dear Parents / Carers,

As we progress through the spring term there are a number of updates that I wish to share with all parents.

Vaping Concerns

I wrote recently to all parents to share my recent concerns about young people vaping. Since I last wrote to you, we have seen a very small number of students who have required a visit to A&E having vaped on the school site or in the local community. I have outlined below the support that I need from every parent and what the school stance will be going forward.

The School Position

The school stance is designed to ensure that everyone is safe, and that resource is not taken away from the core business of the school. Learning.

1. It is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to purchase a vape. It is illegal for adults to purchase vapes for under 18s. As a council building, we are a smoke and vape free school. The school will treat the issue in accordance with the law.
2. E-cigarettes / vaping devices are not permitted on the school site. If they are found they will be confiscated and disposed of. They will not be returned to learners or their parents.
3. Students who have been found to be vaping on the school site will be suspended from school.
4. There is no reason for there to be more than one learner in a toilet cubicle. On the balance of probabilities, it can, and will, be presumed that unsafe behaviour is occurring. This will result in a suspension.
5. The school has the right to search learners where there is suspicion of students carrying vapes. Parents may be asked to attend school to support with a search.
6. The school has a strong stance on illegal substances being brought or shared on the school site. This is likely to result in permanent exclusion in line with school policy.

Parental Support

1. Please talk with your children about their vaping habits. Ensure that they are clear that accepting a vape from anyone else means that they do not know what is in it. The reality is that the contents could cause serious harm.
2. Ensure they are clear that vapes that we believe have been bought over the counter in Westhoughton have also hospitalised young people.
3. Support the school with searches and accepting that vapes confiscated in school will not be returned.

We have been very fortunate to have secured a high-level of support from the local police and other agencies. There is no place for this in our school.



School Day

You will recall that in the academic year 2022-23 I consulted with parents and other stakeholders regarding the timings of the school day. Parents were helpful in sharing a range of views for the school to consider. In the summer of 2023 there was a pause on the guidance that the school week should total 32.5 hours, and as a result plans to change the school day were also held back.



There is an expectation that all schools will offer a working week that is 32.5 hours in length for young people. Our current offer falls a little over an hour short of that at present. Over the coming weeks I will revisit the consultation feedback from last academic year and share a plan for the school day from September 2024 early in the summer term (at the latest).



Curriculum Support for Parents

Thank you to all parents who attended the Parent Forum meeting on Monday 4th March. For those who were unable to attend we spent the time looking at curriculum resources on the school website which may be useful to parents in supporting home learning and independent study. By September 2024 there will be a consistent format and design to the curriculum pages on our website, using the feedback from Parent Forum, to ensure that all information is parent friendly.



In the meantime, I would like to promote the information already shared about our curriculum which may help parents to support with independent study and revision. Please click the link below to explore what is already there.



<https://www.westhoughton-high.org/subjects/>

School Improvement Visit

In closing I would like to thank parents for their continued support and share some positive news about our improvement journey. Our school advisor visited the school last week for a bi-annual visit. I was delighted with the feedback from the visit which was headlined with “the school is better than it was before on each visit. The young people here are a credit to the school”. Whilst we are battling an issue with vaping that is a small, but concerning minority, it is nice to be reminded that we have hundreds of brilliant young people here who continue to develop and grow in our school community. It is for them that the school will hold a firm line on the others.

Yours sincerely,

Mr N. S Coe
Headteacher

