

16 February 2024

Dear Parents and Carers

We are writing to update you about an important national issue regarding drug taking amongst young people in particular. This letter is a joint letter from all the Secondary Headteachers in Hertfordshire as this issue is a societal problem that is happening on a daily basis in our communities and enters our schools as a result. It is therefore not restricted to individual schools and not just a school problem.

Whilst all our schools have long-standing rules and guidance regarding drug taking which follow DfE guidelines, the purpose of this letter is to make you aware of matters and to share information in order to do the best we can to keep children safe from drugs.

'Vaping' and the rise of E Vapes has become a significant public health issue, and we have all been working together with Hertfordshire County Council, the Police and other agencies who all remain increasingly concerned about the rise of 'vaping' amongst young people across the county and in all schools.

This is particularly the case regarding the use of the following:

- Vape pens
- Liquids and oils
- THC

Some of these are currently legal and some are illegal, and the difficulty is being able to observe and know the difference between the two. Synthetic illegal substances can often be odourless and very difficult to detect due to the nature of chemicals used. They can also appear to be quite innocently named. It seems to continue to be a fad or fashion for young people to experiment with vaping, particularly at parties and whilst in park areas with their friends.

One of the problems with vaping is that students sharing a 'vape' often have no idea what they are actually inhaling, which is potentially very dangerous in itself. To vape from someone's pen is extremely dangerous – one simply does not know the safety of what is being vaped, and it is therefore extremely risky. The risks are heightened as some of these substances can cause extreme behaviours and reactions, and the national press covers sad stories on a regular basis of young people either dying or being seriously affected by such drugs misuse.

It may be helpful for parents to know that we are told vape pens, liquids, oils and other such paraphernalia can be legally purchased online and can also be purchased via Amazon, eBay and other accounts. We encourage you to monitor your child's online purchases closely as these accounts are often set as 'private' and can be hidden. If you see a change in your child's behaviour, sleep or eating patterns we would advise you to speak to your child about your concerns and to search their room for any vape pens, liquids, oils and other such paraphernalia.

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With regard to Roundwood Park School, we have significant penalties for any vapes found in school. (Please be aware that any vapes found to have illegal substances, such as THC added (the psychoactive agent in cannabis – an illegal class B drug), would usually lead to permanent exclusion). Please take the time to visit our website and read the school's Behaviour Policy, paragraph 8 'Smoking' and paragraph 20 'Alcohol and Drug Related Offences' to fully understand the school's stance in keeping all students safe in school and whilst under the 'School's Jurisdiction' – clearly defined at the top of page 3 of the policy. Please also read our Drugs and Substance Abuse Policy. If your child has involvement or even an addiction with any substance, illegal or otherwise, please access the support agencies listed below or approach us so that we can support them and you - connecting them with professionals who can help. To summarise and put simply, if a student/family approaches us with a substance issue they will receive every support, but if we detect substance possession, use, abuse or supply whilst under the school's jurisdiction, their school career will be at great risk.

We all recognise the importance of educating our students when dealing with drugs related issues and constantly adapt and review our curriculum and assembly plan and work with external agencies to keep abreast of changes and issues.

At Roundwood Park school, this has included student assemblies by Heads of Year, a presentation by a Healthy Lifestyles Coach, a substance of abuse expert, to many year groups (all years above Year 9) and education work through the PSHCE curriculum, which starts in Year 8. We have also commissioned Dr Kathy Weston to provide an educational support guide for parents which is on the 'Tooled-up' platform, which you all have full access to via a parent log-in – a service the school buys into each year for parents. Please find attached the assembly delivered this week by Miss Jackson to Year 8 and a link to Kathy Weston's guide [here](#).

Below are some services which may be of use if you are concerned about your child.

**Talk to Frank** is an educational site for young people and their families with lots of help and advice on all topics related to illegal substances. Their website is user-friendly with advice and education to help and support. Telephone 0300 123 66 00 or visit their website: [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com).

**Drugwise** offers information on drugs, alcohol and tobacco and have an A-Z of drugs explaining what they are and how they are used: [DrugWise](#)

**The Mix** provides information and support for the under 25s covering a range of topics. You can use their helpline or webchat from 11am-11pm daily. Telephone: 0808 808 4994 or go to [www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk).

All schools in Hertfordshire are committed to working with parents and carers to ensure that our young people are making informed and safe decisions.

Yours sincerely

**Hertfordshire Association of Secondary School Headteachers**



## Vapes and E-cigarettes

A "vape" or electronic cigarette, is a device that heats up a liquid to create a vapour the user inhales.

The liquid sometimes consists of flavourings and other chemicals. At first glance this makes vaping appear less harmful than smoking.

# What is the purpose of them...?

They were designed to help people transition away from smoking cigarettes.

Vapes contain far less toxic chemicals in them compared to smoking a normal cigarette



# So what is in them ...?

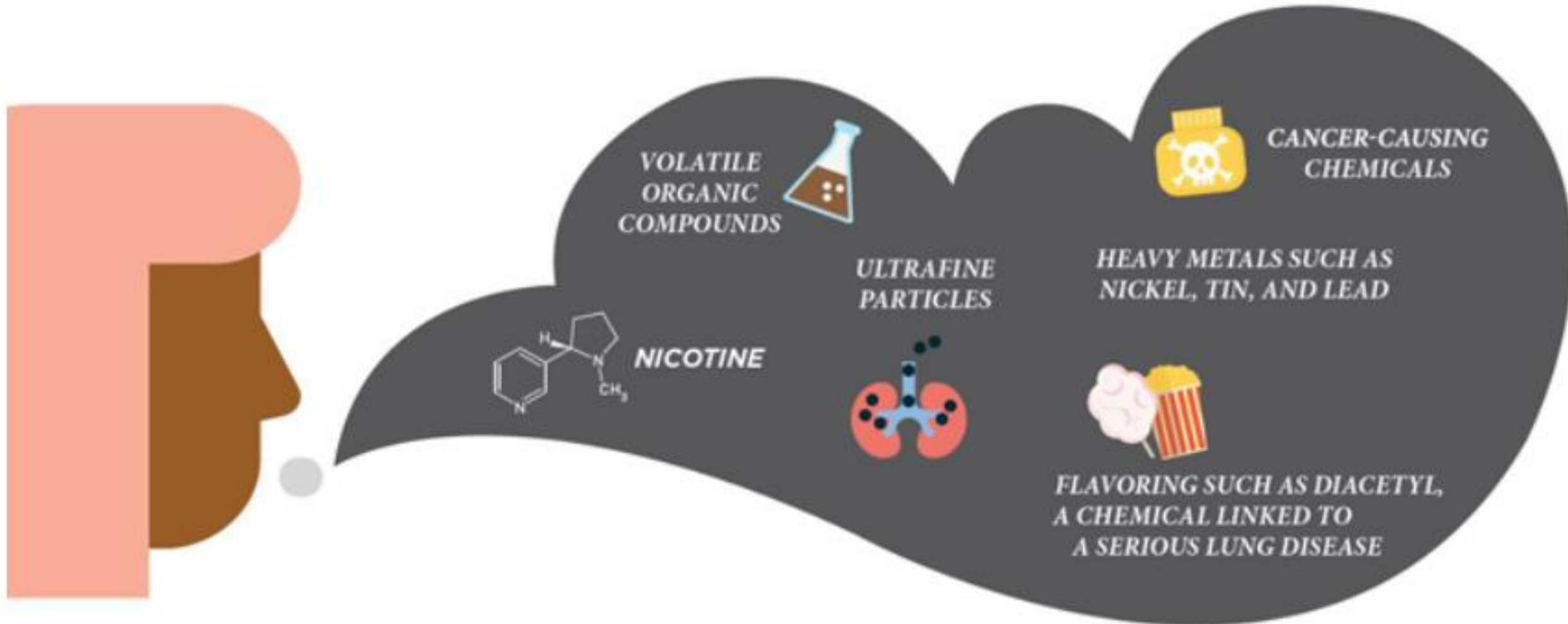
***Vaping exposes users to around 2,000 chemicals***

***Nicotine*** – highly ***addictive*** drug. It is classified as a ***stimulant***. Reaches the brain within seconds. It releases chemicals to the reward centre of your brain that can cause feelings of pleasure and regulate your mood.

Nicotine can ***harm the developing adolescent brain*** and can impact the areas that control attention, mood, learning and impulse control.

The more you smoke the more you are addicted to this feeling and it becomes entwined into daily habits.

# What else is in them ...?





Formaldehyde is a strong smelling gas used in making building materials and household cleaning products, glues and insulation. Longer exposure to formaldehyde can cause coughing and choking. Severe exposure can cause death from throat swelling or burns to the lungs



Nicotine by itself doesn't cause cancer, and vape juice doesn't contain any of the 70 known carcinogens that are present in tobacco.

But it does contain other chemicals, such as propylene glycol. When this is heated by the electric element in the e-cigarette, it can create **formaldehyde**, which is **carcinogenic (has the potential to cause cancer)**. It causes irritation to your eyes, nose and throat

The different flavour chemicals used in vape juice are all organic compounds, and these can also be altered by the heating element.



"I've been a two-pack-a-day man for fifteen years and I've found much milder Chesterfield is best for me."

*Perry Como*

## NOW...10 Months Scientific Evidence For Chesterfield

A MEDICAL SPECIALIST is making regular bi-monthly examinations of a group of people from various walks of life. 45 percent of this group have smoked Chesterfield for an average of over ten years.

After ten months, the medical specialist reports that he observed...

no adverse effects on the nose, throat and sinuses of the group from smoking Chesterfield.

**MUCH Milder**  
**CHESTERFIELD**  
**IS BEST FOR YOU**

Copyright 1955, Lorillard & Sons Tobacco Co.

First and Only Premium Quality Cigarette in Both Regular and King-Size



CONTAINS TOBACCO OF BETTER QUALITY AND HIGHER PRICE THAN ANY OTHER KING-SIZE CIGARETTE

- Smoking banned on the London Underground in 1984
- Nationwide ban on smoking in 2007 in the UK
- There was a time when nearly 50% of adults were smoking ... the science hadn't caught up with the serious side effects.
- This could be similar with Vaping / e-cigarettes.
- Lots of scientists are unsure of the long term effects of vaping

## Vaping affects your teeth and gums

- E-cigarettes contain propylene glycol – the liquid in an e-cigarette.
- It breaks down in the mouth into acids which can **permanently damage tooth enamel** and dentine by dissolving them away.
- Some potential complications of vaping and nicotine use include; **receding gums**.



DENTISTS SEEING RISE IN GUM  
DISEASE RELATED TO VAPING

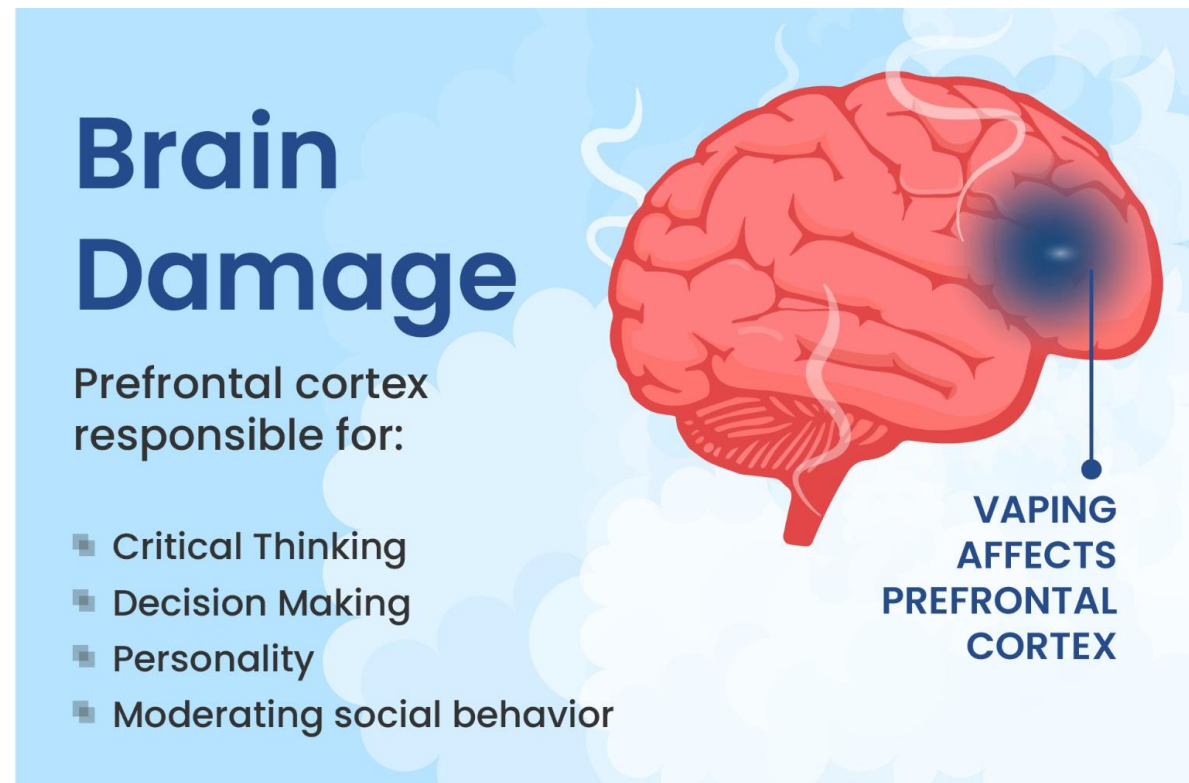
5 ON YOUR  
HEALTH

5abc  
#WCVB

# Brain risks

Nicotine affects your brain development. This can make it ***harder to learn and concentrate.***

Some of the ***brain changes are permanent*** and can affect your ***mood*** and ability to control your ***impulses*** as an adult.



# Sharing Vapes

Oral herpes is usually caused by herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1). Not everyone has symptoms, but oral herpes can cause cold sores or blisters around the mouth.

Oral herpes spreads when you come into contact with the virus that can be present in herpes lesions or saliva, or on the surfaces of the mouth. Transmission can happen during close contact, such as kissing or sharing personal items, such as lipstick or eating utensils.



# What does the law say?

You must be 18+ to purchase a vape or e-cigarette in the UK.

Vapes and e-cigarettes are not allowed in school under any circumstances.

In the UK, the government has (29th January, 2024) announced that they plan to ban the sale of disposable vapes. Further updates to follow this year.



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp8CZ4UKSM8>

# Do you need help?

- Speak to a member of the pastoral team
- Speak to your tutor
- Report it via the safeguarding tile on RM unify.

<https://teen.smokefree.gov/quit-vaping>

## Quit Vaping

Quitting can be tough, but you are tougher. Use our info and resources to quit vaping and stay vape-free.



### Build My Quit Plan

Make your personalized quit plan and get ready to quit vaping or smoking. Thinking ahead now can make things easier later.



### Vaping Reality Check

Vaping may be costing you more than you think. Knowing more can help you decide what to do about it.



### How to Quit Vaping

Quitting vapes can be easier when you prepare in advance and have a plan. Find out what you can do to get ready to quit.



# Six facts to think about ...



1. Vaping is less harmful than smoking but it is still **NOT SAFE**
2. Research suggests vaping is bad for your **HEART** and **LUNGS**
3. Electronic cigarettes are just as **ADDICTIVE** as traditional ones
4. Electronic cigarettes are promoted as an **AID** to help heavy smokers **WEAN** themselves off cigarettes (7,000 harmful chemicals)
5. A new generation is getting **HOOKED** on nicotine after decades of health education and anti-smoking campaigns/awareness
6. We are yet to know what the **LONG TERM DAMAGE** vaping does to the lungs of young people