



ST MARY'S  
CE HIGH SCHOOL

## **An Important Message sent from the Broxbourne Association of Secondary School Head Teachers**

November 2018

Dear Parents/Carers

We are writing this letter jointly as the head teachers of the local Secondary Schools, as we are very concerned about the rise in the use of drugs by young people in **Broxbourne and the surrounding area**. East Herts is well served by the A10 and with its proximity to London may well be contributing to the increased availability and use of drugs. Peer pressure is usually the main reason that young people get involved in drug use and, after alcohol, cannabis in its various forms, including the vaping of THC (the active chemical component of cannabis oil) is the main drug used, though it often serves as an entry-level drug, providing a gateway to other, more dangerous drugs, over time. Additionally, there has been an alarming growth in the use of other drugs by young people including Ketamine and Cocaine.

Across Hertfordshire, the local Police are increasing the patrol of areas known to be used by young people for anti-social behaviour and also for the purpose of selling or consuming drugs. Police are also targeting the people involved in dealing drugs and have identified areas of high risk as well as working to monitor persons of interest.

The Police have provided us with the following information, which you might find helpful:

### **Drug classifications**

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971, illegal drugs are placed into one of three classes - A, B or C. This is broadly based on the harm they cause, either to the user, or to society when they are misused. The class into which a drug is placed affects the maximum penalty for an offence involving the drug. For example, Class A drugs attract the most severe penalty as they are considered likely to cause the most serious harm. Drugs controlled under the Misuse of Drugs Act are illegal to possess, produce, sell or give away.

### **What is THC?**

Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) is the main psychoactive compound in marijuana/cannabis and is a class B drug.

### **Why is THC so dangerous?**

THC bought illegally is always unsafe, especially because it can also have unknown additives within the vape chemical. Some of these are capable of inducing extreme suicidal actions and psychotic episodes, even after just a few puffs. Some of the additives have been shown to induce psychotic episodes in up to 85% of those who took the substance.

**How THC is taken?** Using a cartridge in a vape pen. This is becoming commonplace with young people.

### **Why is THC popular?**

It is almost odourless and gives an instant high lasting for several minutes. THC oil is illegal and, therefore, cannot be used legally in e-cigarettes. Its use can result in a criminal record.

## **Ketamine**

A powder used as an hallucinogen, taken by sniffing (snorting), swallowed in a cigarette paper parcel (bombing), rubbed under the tongue (dabbing) or by injecting into the bloodstream.

Having experienced cannabis for the first time, 32% of people between the age of 16 and 24 become frequent users. The maximum prison sentence for possession of a class B drug is five years. Giving or supplying drugs to someone else, even friends, can get result in a 14 year prison sentence and/or an unlimited fine.

**Is your child regularly asking for money?** An indication of current street prices for some drugs:

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Common street price</b>
Cannabis eighth (approx. 3.5g)	£20
Ecstasy per pill	£5 - £15
Crack per rock	£10 - £20
Ketamine per gram	£30
Cocaine per gram	£40
Heroin per bag (0.1g)	£10

A major opportunity for drug supply and experimentation is at private parties. Music Festivals are increasingly seen as a dangerous place for young people, when it comes to exposure to drugs, which is now commonplace at such events. Nitrous oxide (laughing gas) is also increasingly used in canister form and has been widely available at summer festivals and seen in local parks. When mixed with alcohol it is extremely dangerous. Crime at festivals is now a major problem for Police and parents/carers need to think hard about the age at which they allow their children to attend festivals. If you do allow your children to go, we'd urge you to have a frank and open conversation about drugs and the likelihood of crime scenarios.

## **Alcohol supply**

It is an offence to supply alcohol to someone under 18. The exception to this is if they are aged 16 or over; are dining on licensed premises and are accompanied by an adult. This still only permits the consumption of beer, cider or wine. Anyone found guilty of alcohol supply may face a court appearance, a fine of up to £5000 or six months' imprisonment. Giving alcohol to your children's friends (who are under the age of 18) in your house, is an offence, as is buying alcohol for your own child, if they are aged under 18.

**Who are the main offenders of supplying alcohol to under 18's?** Parents/carers are now the main providers of alcohol for this age group (60%).

All of the Secondary Schools in Broxbourne take a zero tolerance approach to drug misuse and parents/carers are asked to keep in close touch with the respective school if they have any concerns of this sort. We need to work together to educate young people to resist and not become caught up in this insidious problem. Given the Police advice and guidance about what would appear to be an increasingly worrying national picture, we feel it would be useful if all parents/carers were to sit down with their children and discuss these issues relating to drugs. We hope we can work together to fight this tide of increased drugs use. A useful reference for parents/carers and young people is FRANK which can be found using the website <https://www.talktofrank.com/>

Thank you in anticipation of your support.

Yours faithfully

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Mr Ben Pearce,	Head Teacher,	Goffs Academy
Mr Tom Sparks,	Head Teacher,	Goffs Churchgate
Mr Robin Newman,	Head Teacher,	Haileybury Turnford School
Mrs Heather Boardman,	Head Teacher,	Hailey Hall School
Mr Jeremy Scott,	Head Teacher,	The John Warner School
Mrs Janet Bourne,	Head Teacher,	Rivers Education Support Centre
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