



KINGSMEAD SAFE

NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2025

STAYING SAFE ONLINE

SUPPORTING OUR STUDENTS IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Why Online Safety Matters

As technology continues to play a central role in our young people's lives, it is vital that we work together to ensure our students are safe, responsible, and confident online. Social media, gaming platforms, and instant messaging apps can be fantastic tools for connection and creativity, but they also present risks such as:

- **Cyberbullying**
- **Exposure to inappropriate content**
- **Online grooming**

Our goal is to help students enjoy the benefits of the digital world while staying protected. This is particularly prevalent over the school holidays when increased exposure to being online can increase the risks.

How Parents Can Support Their Children

Parents play a key role in guiding safe and healthy online habits. You can support your child by:

- **Encouraging open conversations** about what they do online and who they interact with.
- **Setting boundaries** around screen time and device use, especially before bedtime.
- **Monitoring privacy settings** on apps and social media accounts to limit exposure to strangers.
- **Promoting critical thinking** so students can spot misinformation and avoid oversharing personal details.
- **Modelling good digital habits**, children often mirror the online behaviour they see at home.



We also remind families that our school has clear policies on online conduct, and any concerns can be raised confidentially with our safeguarding team.

Conduct

Conduct means the way people behave online. Some online behaviour can increase the likelihood, or even cause, harm - for example, online bullying. Conduct also includes things like sharing or receiving nudes and semi-nude images and viewing or sending pornography.

Contact

Contact is about the risk of harm young people may face when interacting with other users online. This includes things like peer-to-peer pressure or seeing inappropriate commercial advertising. Sometimes adults pose as children or young adults with the intention of grooming or exploiting a child or young person for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.



You can read more about the risks of being online and how to protect your child here:

NSPCC Website - Keeping Children Safe Online

NSPCC Learning - The 4 Cs of online safety: online safety risk for children

Commerce

Commerce is about the risk from things like online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing or financial scams. Children and young people may be exposed to these risks directly. Schools should also consider how the risk from commerce applies to staff.

Addressing Online Sexualised Activity

Unfortunately, online sexualised activity among young people has increased. Many do not fully understand the risks, consequences, and long-term impact of sharing sexual content of themselves.

What is 'sexting'?

Sexting refers to the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images or messages, often through mobile picture messages, webcams, or social media. Young people may see this as harmless fun or flirting, but it carries serious risks including loss of privacy, emotional harm, and potential legal consequences.

How to Protect Your Child

Here are practical steps parents can take:

- Talk to your child: Ensure they understand the risks of sexting. Reassure them they can come to you if something makes them feel uncomfortable or worried. The NSPCC provides guidance for parents on how to approach these conversations.
- Learn together: CEOP has produced excellent resources available on the Thinkuknow website.
- Reassure your child: Let them know you are always there to support them if they feel pressured or if a situation gets out of hand.
- Take control: Set up parental controls and safety apps on your child's devices. While trust is important, knowing how to block access to certain sites or monitor activity can provide an extra layer of protection.

VAPING AND SUBSTANCE USE

There has been a rapid increase nationally in the use of vapes amongst young people. This has led to an increase in risk of physical/mental health consequences and an increase in the number of young people becoming addicted to the use of vapes. This has resulted in the government putting in restrictions to combat this issue.

The Law

- Vapes are legal but restricted. This means they cannot be sold to anyone under the age of 18.
- Disposable vapes with more than 600 puffs are illegal in the UK.
- you may see vapes with 30mg and 50mg nicotine levels being sold, but these are illegal as they are above the 20mg limit and can cause serious health issues.



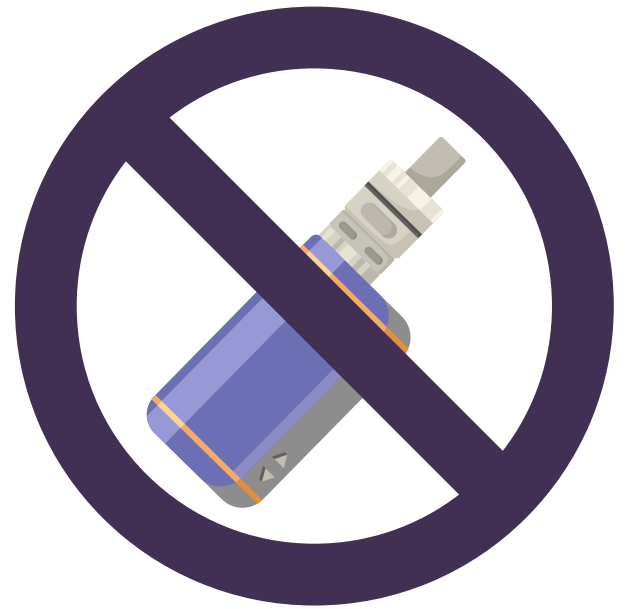
Five facts about vaping

1. If you are underage, or you are buying vapes with a nicotine level of more than 20mg or with more than 600 puffs, these vapes are illegal and unregulated. This means they may be contaminated with other ingredients or have unsafe heating elements.
2. At the moment, many manufacturers try to make vapes appealing to young people. Packets are often brightly coloured and can show cartoon pictures. Many flavours are named after fizzy drinks, sweets or ice-cream. The government wants to change this.
3. Nicotine is addictive. People can become physically or psychologically dependent on it. This means your body or your mind keep telling you that you need to vape.
4. Nicotine can make anxiety and depression worse. It also affects memory, concentration, self-control, and attention, especially in developing brains.
5. Vaping is less harmful than smoking, but it's still not safe. It can cause side effects like throat and mouth irritation, headache, cough, feeling sick or dental problems. We don't know yet what long-term effects it has.

The risks of vaping can affect both the physical and mental health of a young person.

Risks

- You may become dependent on nicotine and feel unable to control your vape use.
- Vaping when you are under 18 means you can't get hold of vapes legally. There will not be proper safety checks on illegal vapes or on places and people selling them. Vapes bought this way could be contaminated. People supplying vapes to young people could be trying to groom and exploit them.
- Some people have tried vaping other substances such as THC, the active ingredient in cannabis. This can be dangerous as you do not know 100% what the substance is or how strong it is.



THC Vaping

There has been an increase in young people using vapes and in particular experimenting with THC vaping. THC is the chemical that gives the 'high' effect in cannabis.

THC is a chemical substance in the cannabis plant that causes you to get high. It stands for tetrahydrocannabinol, which is a type of cannabinoid.

THC affects everyone differently, but due to its chemical makeup, the high from smoking THC is often more intense than from smoking cannabis. The latest reports show that this has led to some young people overdosing on THC, causing them to become unwell and needing medical attention.

Is THC legal?

Like cannabis, THC is a Class B drug. It is illegal to buy or sell it in the UK without a prescription. You can be arrested and charged for having THC oil in your possession. You could get an unlimited fine, be sentenced to up to five years in prison, or both. If you give THC to someone else, you could get up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine, or both.

The risks of cannabis vaping

There are multiple unpleasant side effects to vaping THC. For example:

It can irritate your airways and cause coughing and wheezing.

It can cause your blood pressure to drop.

It can increase your risk of lung and mouth cancers.

You can get cravings and withdrawal symptoms. These symptoms include feeling irritable and sick, trouble with your sleep and diet, sweating, shaking and diarrhoea.

Talking to a young person about Cannabis/ THC Vapes



Context

Some young people in our area have become unwell after vaping. They thought the vape liquid had THC (a drug found in cannabis), but it actually contained a more **harmful synthetic drug** known as **Spice**.

We want to help you talk to your child about this. Knowing the risks can help keep them safe.

What is Spice?

Spice is a man-made drug, made using chemicals – it is known as a Synthetic Cannabinoid. **Synthetic Cannabinoids** are Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. It is not real cannabis, but it tries to mimic the desired effects of cannabis. Spice is much stronger than cannabis and produces more frequent negative side effects.

Why is Spice Risky?

- It can make people feel very anxious or worsen mental health problems.
- It can cause bad side effects that may need hospital treatment.
- People who use Spice often can become addicted and feel sick when they stop.

Vaping Products

Some vaping products say they have cannabis or THC in them. These are illegal drugs called Class B drugs.

Because they are illegal:

- No one checks what's inside them.
- They can be very strong and dangerous.
- They might even contain Spice, which is harmful.



These products can be bought online or through encrypted messaging apps like Telegram or Snapchat.

The best way to avoid any risk of harm is to **avoid using illicit vaping products**.

Please note that Consumer CBD (cannabidiol) products derived from cannabis are legal. These are sold for their potential to produce 'wellbeing' benefits, including reducing anxiety and relieving pain.

Overdose

Spice strength can vary a lot, which makes it easy to take too much by accident.

People might not know what drug they've taken. That's why it's best to treat the person's symptoms, not just the drug. If you think someone has taken too much Spice, **call an ambulance immediately**.

General symptoms include:

- Loss of consciousness
- Breathing difficulties
- Seizures
- High temperature (more than 38.5°C)
- Severe chest pains
- Vomiting

Spice overdoses have been known to cause Serotonin Syndrome, where symptoms can also include:

- Twitching or jerking movements
- Fully dilated pupils
- Shivering

Top Tips for Speaking to Young People about Drugs

- It helps to **be as factual as possible**. This makes your message more credible and makes sense to the young person.
- Try to speak with care and kindness. Let the young person know you want them to be safe and well and to have a space for discussion.
- Listen to the young person **so they feel heard**, it can help you both feel calmer and open to talking and be reassuring to you.
- Talk to Frank has some more advice on how to talk to your child www.talktofrank.com

Remember:

- Most young people do not vape.
- Young people in your care may not be interested in cannabis-based vape products.
- Most young people who have tried vaping have only used nicotine-based or flavoured nicotine-free vape products (it is illegal to sell nicotine vaping products to anyone under 18).
- Only a small number of young people who vape use cannabis / THC products

More Information or Help

For non-judgemental help and support for parents, carers or young people, contact STaRS for free and confidential advice, including:

- Advice for parents and carers of young people using drugs and/or alcohol.
- Hidden Harm, support for children affected by other people's drug and/or alcohol use.
- Help for individuals wanting to make changes to their own drug/alcohol use.

For more information on Spice and other substances visit www.talktofrank.com

THC can affect your mental health.

THC can affect your mood and emotional wellbeing in many ways, especially if you are taking a lot of it. It can contribute to:

- Memory and concentration problems.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Depression.
- Anxiety, paranoia, confusion and panic attacks.
- Making psychotic illnesses like schizophrenia worse, or leading to new ones



How Do I Know My Child is Vaping THC?

Vaping THC will have similar effects to using cannabis. Vaping THC as opposed to smoking cannabis allows a larger amount of THC to be inhaled very quickly, potentially causing overdosing. The effects of vaping THC depends on the amount of THC/CBD in the vape, your child's mood, the environment and how often it is used. The short term effects are listed below and can be signs your child has vaped THC oil.



Will my child get in trouble for using THC Vapes?

Cannabis is an illegal Class B drug. There are consequences for the illegal possession, supply and production of cannabis.

Possession – having (possessing) cannabis in any form including edibles can get you up to 5 years in prison, unlimited fine or both.

Supply - supplying cannabis which includes giving it to your friends for free or sharing it with them can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. Dealing - selling cannabis for any sized financial gain can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Trafficking - moving it around the country on transport or through private vehicle etc. can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both.

Production - producing cannabis whether growing for self-consumption or to be sold can get you up to 14 years in prison, an unlimited fine or both. Young people who use cannabis are at increased risk of child criminal exploitation (CCE), and to be groomed into County Lines operations, see below for more information.

In school, if a child is found with THC/ a THC vape in their possession and/or there is found to be an intent to supply, there is a risk of exclusion in accordance with the school's **Rewards and Sanctions policy** (listed on our website).



HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT VAPING

- Find a good time to start a conversation. It might be as you walk past a vape shop or see someone using a vape.
- Ask your child what they know about vaping. You can ask them if they know of people who use them and why they use them. You might ask them if they've ever tried it.
- Listen to your child, their experience and their point of view. Show you are interested in what they have to say.
- Then you can gently and calmly give them some facts about vaping. Ask them what they think about the facts.
- If your child is already using a vape, then have the same conversation with them and ask them what they like about it. You are not saying it's okay for them to do it by being interested. You can still be clear about how you feel.
- If they feel pressured into vaping by friends, you can teach them helpful skills of being confident in saying 'no thanks, it's not for me.'

How to keep your child safe

- Have regular, healthy communication with your child (see above)
- Listen to their voice – it is important they feel heard
- Check your child's mobile phone device regularly – organised crime gangs will often use social media apps like Snapchat to advertise and message the selling of THC and Spice
- Monitor your child's whereabouts – a popular location for drug dealers to sell THC/Spice to young people is in public places like train stations.
- Talk about who they are meeting, where they are going – build trust through communication and honesty
- Set clear boundaries for your child
- Share with them information from this newsletter about the impact vaping and THC can have.



If you believe your child is using THC/illegal substances

Support your child to do two things:



Book an appointment with the GP. Share your concerns and explain the detrimental impact this is having on your child.

Visit the Stars website for information on how you can support your child. Staffordshire Stars are the Staffordshire Treatment and Recovery Service for substance misuse. Click 'make a referral' to support your child in receiving the specialist help and support to treat addictions/support in recovery.

Sometimes it can be difficult to know how to support your child. In the first instance, speak to members of staff at school who already work with your child.



Below are national services you can also access to find more information and support:

- Childline - 0800 1111 
- Frank - talktofrank.com 0300 123 6600
frank@talktofrank.com text - 82111 
- youngminds - youngminds.org.uk

YOUNGMINDS

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD THROUGH FRIENDSHIPS AND CONFLICT

Navigating Friendships and Difficult Moments

As teachers, we spend a lot of time supporting young people through the ups and downs of their friendships. Between the ages of 11 and 18, friendships can feel incredibly important to them – sometimes wonderfully uplifting, and sometimes completely overwhelming.

Parents often tell us they're unsure when to step in, what to say, or how to help. Here are some thoughts from a school perspective that may support you at home. Parenting in the tween and teen years is about far more than lifts to activities or checking homework. It's about being a steady presence as your child navigates the challenges of friendship, conflict, shifting emotions, and growing independence. Here's how you can support your child through these crucial years.

Why Friendships Matter (and Why They Shift)

During adolescence, friendships become more complex. Young people place high value on loyalty, shared interests, and a sense of belonging. Peer relationships at this stage can have a powerful influence on self-esteem, behaviour, and moods. When friendships go well, they're a source of joy and confidence. But when they falter, the impact can be tough. It's also common for friendships to shift: groups change, new friends emerge, fallouts happen, and old friends drift apart. For many 11-18s, this means uncertainty – and more opportunities for conflict.



Common Conflicts	How to Respond
Exclusion / Being Left Out. Your child may feel pushed out of a friendship group.	Listen and acknowledge their feelings. Encourage them to think about who truly values them and help them find new connections through clubs or shared interests.
Arguments / Misunderstandings. Disagreements are normal; social media or gossip can make things worse.	Encourage calm conversation. Ask what really upset them. Help them practise "I feel..." statements and talk about choosing how to react.
Bullying or Unkind Behaviour. This may be subtle (exclusion, nasty comments, online cruelty) or obvious.	Validate their feelings ("That sounds really hard"). Suggest they talk to a trusted adult at school or elsewhere. Remind them they're not at fault for others' bad behaviour.
Parent/Friend Boundary Conflict. As your child matures, they often want more autonomy – you may hear, "You don't understand" or "You're bossing me around".	Respect their increasing independence. Set clear boundaries, but involve them in discussions about limits. Ask for their view, and balance guidance with respect for their emerging self.



How to Coach Friendship Skills

- Model Good Communication – Show how you handle disagreements, apologise when needed, and speak respectfully.
- Teach Empathy – Ask your child to imagine how the other person might feel. If they're upset, help them pause and reflect.
- Encourage Inclusivity – Talk about including others and noticing if someone is left out.
- Help Manage Social Media & Online Time – Discuss how digital conflict can escalate. Encourage healthy breaks and real-life connections.
- Support Self-Worth Beyond Friendships – Remind your child that their value isn't defined by their friend group. Encourage hobbies, volunteering, and skills that build a sense of self beyond peers.

When the Conflict Feels Bigger than “Just a Friend Issue”

Sometimes, what looks like a friendship problem may be a sign of deeper struggles: ongoing unhappiness, or mental health concerns. Be on the lookout for:

- **Withdrawal from friends or usual interests**
- **Changes in mood, sleep, or appetite**
- **Self-blame or saying “nobody cares”**
- **Fear of going to school.**

If you notice these signs, talk gently to your child about how things are at school and how they're feeling. If there's any suggestion of emotional, physical, or controlling behaviour at school, don't wait – seek support now.

Quick Checklist for Parents

- Create space for open conversation: “How are your friends? What's going on?”
- Listen more than you lecture
- Respect their feelings, even if you disagree
- Support them to think, not just tell them what to do
- Encourage new connections and opportunities
- Be alert to signs of distress, online harm, or instability at school
- Know where to turn for professional support

Supporting your child through friendships and conflict is challenging, but your steady presence, open ears, and encouragement can make all the difference. Remember, you're not alone – and help is always available if you need it.

Final Thoughts

As a parent of a child aged 11-18, you are uniquely positioned to help them navigate one of life's most turbulent periods. Your role isn't to fix every friendship or prevent every conflict – but to be the anchor they can return to. To listen, guide, empower. And to ensure that if things go beyond normal teenage turbulence – whether in friendships or at home – you know where to turn, and they feel safe to ask for help.

Don't underestimate the consistency of your presence: knowing you care, you're available, you believe them and you trust them can make all the difference.

**Useful numbers:
ChildLine: 0800 1111**

Action for Children/Sidekick: text – 07888 868 059 or email - help@sidekick.actionforchildren.org.uk

If you don't feel safe or at risk of violence – use the helpline 0808 2000 247 or contact the police in emergencies. Police: 999

Working Together

As teachers, we know that the most important thing for a young person is having trustworthy adults around them – both at school and at home. If you ever feel unsure about how to handle a conflict or you're worried about your child's wellbeing, please speak to your child's Progress lead. We can work together to support them.

SUPPORTING OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER MENTAL HEALTH AT CHRISTMAS



By Joy Killian

As the Christmas season approaches, many families and students look forward to the traditions that make this time of year feel so special. The lights, the music, the sense of celebration and the moments spent together can bring warmth, comfort and joy. Christmas often encourages kindness and generosity, reminding us of the importance of connection and the simple pleasure of being with the people we care about.

But it is equally important to acknowledge that Christmas is not easy for everyone. For some, this time of year can bring added stress, pressure or feelings of loneliness. Financial worries may feel heavier, family tensions can resurface, and the absence of loved ones is felt more deeply. For students, the break from school routines can be unsettling, and for parents or carers, the demands of creating a “perfect” holiday can feel overwhelming. Beneath the sparkle, many people quietly carry their own challenges.

This is why taking care of our mental health—while also looking out for those around us—is so important.

Despite the difficulties some may experience, Christmas still offers many uplifting opportunities. Taking part in familiar traditions such as decorating the house, baking together or watching favourite films can provide comfort and a sense of stability. Spending time with friends and family, whether in person or online, helps strengthen feelings of belonging.

Alongside these positive experiences, it's essential to recognise our own needs. Maintaining some routine—such as regular sleep, meals and moments of calm—can support wellbeing, especially for young people. It helps to set realistic expectations too; Christmas does not need to be flawless to be meaningful.

Allowing ourselves time to pause, breathe and enjoy quiet moments can reduce stress. Most importantly, talking openly about how we feel helps us process emotions, whether they are joyful, anxious or somewhere in the middle. Reaching out for support from trusted adults, school staff or health professionals is always a sign of strength, not weakness.

Supporting others at Christmas can be just as valuable. Checking in on friends, neighbours or classmates who may be struggling can make a significant difference. Sometimes the smallest gestures—a friendly message, a smile or an invitation to join in—are enough to help someone feel noticed and included. Choosing patience and kindness, especially when others seem stressed or withdrawn, creates an environment where people feel safe to share how they're feeling.

Christmas ultimately reminds us that hope, and light can shine even during challenging times. Whether this season brings joy, pressure or a mixture of both, no one has to face it alone. By showing understanding to ourselves and compassion to others, we can help make the holidays a supportive and meaningful time for everyone.

Wishing all parents, carers and students a gentle and hopeful Christmas season, with the reassurance that help is always available and brighter moments are always possible.



MOVEMBER AT KINGSMEAD



This November, our school proudly took part in Movember, the global campaign raising awareness of men's health issues, including mental health, suicide prevention, prostate cancer, and testicular cancer. Staff members joined in by growing moustaches, while students engaged in themed assemblies and fundraising activities.

It was inspiring to see our community come together to support such an important cause. Beyond the fun, Movember gave us a valuable opportunity to talk openly about wellbeing and encourage everyone—students and parents alike—to check in on themselves and those around them. Congratulations to Mr Shakespeare who won our Mophy for the best moustache!



FINNING TRIP – YEAR 10

Our Year 10 students recently enjoyed an inspiring trip to Finning UK in Cannock, where they explored a wide range of career opportunities within the engineering and machinery sector. During the visit, students learned about the different apprenticeship pathways available and gained valuable insights into how these roles can shape their future. The day included a guided tour of the site, giving pupils a first-hand look at the scale and innovation behind Finning's operations. To round off the experience, students took part in a team-building activity that encouraged collaboration, problem-solving, and communication—skills that will serve them well both in school and beyond.





ASSISTANT TO THE SAFEGUARDING LEAD
MISS L JONES



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MR T TRUBY



DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD
MRS E BRACEBRIDGE



SENCO
DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD
MISS N BANNISTER



DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD
MRS R DUCKETT



DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD
MR J MORETON



DEPUTY DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING LEAD
MR M ORDIDGE



YEAR 7 PROGRESS LEADER
MISS C HINTON



YEAR 8 PROGRESS LEADER
MRS G TAYLOR



YEAR 9 PROGRESS LEADER
MRS T MILNER



YEAR 10 PROGRESS LEADER
MR P LAIRD



YEAR 11 PROGRESS LEADER
MR J TAYLOR