

5th December 2024

Dear Parent / Carer

Safeguarding Update for Parents & Carers-

Please note these are generic update for Tyne & Wear, rather than specific to Studio West. We know that it is powerful to share this with you so we can all be informed and vigilant.

Concerns Around Vapes

- It is illegal to use or sell a vape to anyone under the age of 18
- It is illegal for adults to buy vapes for anyone under 18
- Vaping can make children feel dizzy, cause headaches or leave them feeling sick
- Vaping increases blood pressure and heart rates
- The effects of vaping are felt around 5 to 10 minutes after the first puff and last for 2 to 3 hours after the last puff
- Most vapes contain nicotine which is addictive, making it difficult to stop

Links between Vaping and Exploitation

The sale of illegal vapes is linked with organised crime, drug dealing and money laundering and worrying trends show significant numbers of children smoking vapes, with vape addiction leading children into the criminal world.

- Illegal vapes, often given to children by gangs and drug dealers, are then being sold on school playgrounds by children exploited used as vape mules.
- The term County Lines refers to illegal drugs being transported from one area to another, often across police and local authority boundaries (although not exclusively), usually by children or vulnerable people who are coerced into it by gangs. There are links between vaping and county lines in the Northeast
- If you are worried about a child or a young person report it. Remember, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Northumbria Police are aware of recent incidents of vapes being in circulation that contain Spice (SCRA) or THC (sometimes referred to as Mazza).

We seek your help in preventing misuse of these vapes, and to increase awareness of the dangers of vapes and substance misuse generally amongst your children in an effort to prevent any serious or life-threatening illness.

Artificial Intelligence and CSAM

Child sexual abuse material (CSAM) is any sexually explicit conduct involving a child (including images or videos of children in sexual activities or poses).

Globally, 33% students possess, share and or request nude images. The average age of children doing this is 11 - 13. In the UK, 20% of issues are linked to children age 8 – 10 years.

AI enabled CSAM is a growing risk. This is AI being used to create CSAM content and **deep fakes** (where aspects of a person's image has been digitally altered so they appear to be someone else). For example, one issue that is arising in some schools is the fact that there is technology/ apps that can 'nudify' people e.g. take a picture of someone and then adapt it to make it look as if they are naked.

We would deal with concerns about AI generated images in the same way as other nudes in terms of our safeguarding approach within school.

Those students who are at most risk are those who are isolated, lonely, persistent absentees from school, vulnerable students and those who are constantly online.

There is information on the safeguarding page of our website about agencies who can help you if you have concerns about online content and want to report it.

Reminders

There are several ways to report any concerns about a child or to seek support:

- Speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who is **Laura Bell**
- Speak to reception staff who will give you a paper form on which you can write your concerns
- Email address on the **Safeguarding** page of the school's website
- Contact children's social services: 0191 2772500

If a child needs support, they can speak to any member of staff in school- as all staff complete annual safeguarding training- or they can ask to speak to the DSL, Mrs Bell, or Deputy Safeguarding Leads who are: Mr Bouleau or Mr Brown. They can also use the paper form or email address if they do not feel confident enough to speak to an adult themselves.

If you would like to discuss this further, please contact Mrs Bell.

Mrs Roderick

Trust Safeguarding Lead

Safeguarding Team

You have the right to feel safe and it is our job to make sure that is true.

If you feel unsafe, or you are worried about someone being upset, abused, or neglected, it is important to tell us so that we can help you.

Our Designated Safeguarding Staff



Ms Bell



Mr Bouleau



Mr Brown