

Dear Parents

I am writing to make you aware of the growing concerns expressed to us by Cambridge Constabulary regarding the increase and danger of drug use in our community and the related crime associated with this increase. We are taking this message very seriously at Swavesey Village College and are making a considerable effort in school to address this through PHSE lessons and assemblies. We would also like to provide you with some advice and guidance on how you can support your child.

In short, we have been informed that Cambridge has now been named as one of the top 10 towns that is seeing a rise in county lines offences and young people from this area are being exploited. Last week we received information from the police stating there were several reported incidents of students in the Cambridgeshire area collapsing and requiring medical attention after using a vape which is now confirmed to have contained a very strong form of SCAR (Synthetic Cannabis – Spice).

Why young people might try drugs

Young people try or use drugs for various reasons including fun, curiosity, peer pressure or to cope with difficult situations, worry and/or low mood; the likelihood of this is increased if their friends or family do. Another risk to young people becoming involved in drugs is criminal exploitation. Organised drug gangs will travel into counties from major cities to 'recruit' children to sell drugs and move money for them, enticing them with a 'lucrative lifestyle' of money and expensive possessions. This issue is referred to by the Home Office as '**County Lines**' (if you would like to find out more information on criminal exploitation and county lines please visit <https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/what-we-do/crime-threats/drug-trafficking/county-lines>)

What is the law?

All illegal drugs are graded according to the risk they pose and are classified as either class A, B or C drugs. It is a criminal offence to possess, supply to others or manufacture any banned substances. Psychoactive substances, commonly termed 'Legal Highs' are synthetic forms of illegal drugs, manufactured to make the user feel the effects of the real drug and which are highly dangerous. Changes to the law in 2016 made it illegal to supply any 'legal high' for human consumption; this includes selling, or even giving, psychoactive substances to friends or anyone else for free. Please see attached further information on SPICE.

How will I know if my child is involved with drugs?

There is "no one sign" to indicate a child may be using or experimenting with drugs, there are a number of common signs that parents can be aware of which may indicate drug use, especially changes which are out of character.

- Appearance and lack of care about personal grooming
- Choice of friends
- Openness with you; being secretive and dismissive
- Mood swings
- Withdrawal from family members
- Loss of interest in hobbies, sports and other favourite activities

- Changed sleeping pattern
- Changed eating habits
- Less, or more, money and possessions
- Excessive receipt of text and phone calls

Changes can be simply related to growing up, not just displayed by young people using drugs. Vigilance on this matter is key.

What can I do to help my child?

Prevention

- Be open – talk with your child about drugs so that they can be reassured about coming to you if they are ever affected
- Encourage them to be aware and responsible to pressures associated with drug use
- Educate yourself so you are aware of drug trends, signs and laws
- Know where your child is, who they are with and what they are doing

Response

- Reassure them
- Listen to them: how they feel, what's going on in their life, be guided by how they want to tackle it and what is best for them
- Find out more about the effects of drugs
- Ensure they are aware of the choices to address their problem and that they have an understanding of the law

What will happen if your child is found misusing drugs/in possession of drugs on the school premises and where you can go for support or help...

The College does not tolerate the possession or misuse of drugs and alcohol, nor the supply of these substances on its premises. If a student is found with drugs or under their influence, then the College will inform parents and the police. Each case will be fully investigated and could result in them losing their place at Swavesey Village College.

Much of our text and information above has been taken from <https://www.safe4me.co.uk/>
Do visit this site and those listed below for further information and guidance on this matter.

<https://www.talktofrank.com/>

<https://keep-your-head.com/>

Where can I go for help and support?

Let us know in school if you or your child would like to access any additional support surrounding this matter. We can refer you to CASUS (they provide support and specialist treatment in Cambridgeshire for drug and alcohol misuse to young people under 18 and their families) or use our school support services through our well-being Hub. We are also able to complete an Early Help Assessment that can access support through our Early Help Team (school nurse services, young people's worker, family support worker). Do contact your child's Senior Tutor as they are best placed to advise on these services.