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**Ursuline**  
High School  
WIMBLEDON

Voluntary Aided 11-18 Roman Catholic School for Girls

Headteacher: Mr Eoin Kelly

Crescent Road, Wimbledon, London SW20 8HA  
020 8255 2688 / [www.ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk](http://www.ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk)

Dear parents/carers

## Re.: Vaping

Adolescence (up to mid-20s) is a critical period for brain development and exposure to nicotine and other harmful drugs and chemicals can have long-term health consequences, impacting memory, attention, and learning.

Even though it is illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to buy/use vapes, according to the 2023 [Response to Youth Vaping report](#) from the Children's Commissioner, Dame Rachel de Souza, the number of children and young people doing so is increasing at an alarming rate. It is becoming an epidemic. With cases of 'popcorn lung' on the rise, it is clearer than ever before that vaping is not safe, healthy, or wise and we don't want our kids to be doing it. The [Report](#) also shares insight into the impact of vaping on schools and the education of our children.

There are very real concerns about vaping (both legal and illegal), its impact on health and wellbeing, not least because they are often highly addictive. Whilst we don't yet know the true impact on young people's lungs, hearts, and brains, what we do know is that electronic cigarettes (vapes) contain high levels of nicotine, and other chemicals and toxins such as formaldehyde, heavy metals (lead, nickel, chromium), particulate matter, and flavouring chemicals, at levels that have the potential to cause adverse health effects. The Cali Pen (a disposable vape pen containing CBD (Cannabidiol), popular earlier in 2024, was causing children to collapse.

Thanks to sophisticated marketing schemes (vapes are available in different flavours, colours, and designs), young people are being manipulated into thinking that vaping is harmless, child friendly and easily disguised, rather than what it was designed for: For adults overcoming nicotine addiction, vapes represent a lower-risk alternative to smoking cigarettes. However, the risk calculation for children is not the same: Children who are addicted to vaping have never smoked tobacco, with vaping acting as a gateway rather than a quitting strategy.

## Smoking and the use of vapes at Ursuline High School

Smoking, including the use of electronic cigarettes (vaping) has always been prohibited on all school premises. Smoking/vaping is also prohibited at all public transport stops and stations, on transport to and from school and at any other time when in school uniform.

Anyone found to be vaping in school uniform both in and out of school will be at risk of fixed term suspension or exclusion.





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Vaping with prohibited substances will be treated with the most serious of sanction and will result in a permanent exclusion. Details of school behaviour policy can be found on the school website.

### How can we help?

We will continue to educate students about the harmful effects of these products via dedicated workshops, assemblies etc. In addition, there are ways parents and carers can help protect your children. These include:

- Educating adults/carers within the family (see resources below) and learning about the different types of e-cigarettes available and the risks associated with using these products.
- Having ongoing conversations with your child about why smoking/vaping is harmful, and how to manage peer pressure.
- Reporting those who are selling cigarettes and e-cigarettes to minors.

### Resources for parents and teens

- Read the full [Response to Youth Vaping report](#) from The Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza. The report draws together findings from her recent nationally representative survey of children aged 8-17 and their parents, as well as qualitative findings from The Big Ask, the largest ever survey of children in England.
- [BBC Panorama – Teenage Vaping: What's the harm?](#)
- [Vaping in children and teens: smoke without fire?](#)
- [Protect Kids from Vapes, doctors urge government](#)
- [Ask Lisa Podcast: Episode 103 'How do I talk my teen out of vaping'](#). In this podcast Dr Lisa Damour discusses peer pressure, how the industry is manipulating our young people, strategies that can keep kids from experimenting, or help them stop once they've started.
- Happy Families podcast: Episode 498 'Children and Vaping'.
- [Better Health - One You Merton Quit Vaping | Smokefree Teen](#)

If you have any questions or concerns, or have any information which may help the police in their investigation to remove such vapes from circulation, please contact your child's Head of Year or our school police liaison officer, PC Gunn ([geoff.gunn@ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk](mailto:geoff.gunn@ursulinehigh.merton.sch.uk)).

Yours faithfully,

Ms Rachael Gilmore  
Assistant Headteacher, Safeguarding

