



16th February 2017

Dear parents/carers of students in Years 9 to 13,

It is always good to see you in or out of school and to discuss our young people with you. Recently a number of you in talking to me have raised concerns about **drug misuse** by teenagers in our community. Some local health professionals have also added to the discussion.

The concern is not about misuse occurring in school. We have strict sanctions for any possession of drugs (including cigarettes, alcohol and any illegal substances) in school. Of course there can be an impact, if drugs are misused outside school, on students' capacity to study effectively. I am also concerned about the significant (potentially fatal) health risks caused by misuse of drugs.

I would be very grateful if you could talk to your child about these issues. We know that across the country young people are using drugs (including alcohol and cigarettes) less than in previous years but that also national evidence does not necessarily reflect a local picture. Each child is different and your circumstances are different, so these issues may not be relevant. However, you may want to address the following - all of which have been raised by Hackney parents, young people or health professionals:

- Pressure on or aspiration of young people to attend parties/uncertainty re behaviours at parties/ pressure on parents to hold parties
- Where boundaries re party supervision and alcohol/illegal drug use are set by parents/carers (*NB legally parents/carers have responsibility for any under 16 year olds in their house*)
- Drugs and impact on health/Mixing of different drugs and particular health impact/availability of MDMA (ecstasy)
- Recent increased availability (including via the internet) of prescription drugs for non-medical use
- Cannabis use in public areas e.g Clissold Park (*NB Possession of cannabis – a class B drug - is a criminal offence*)
- Effects of festival going and associated misuse of drugs on health, including inducing psychotic episodes
- If any drugs are available, someone is supplying them (*supply is a criminal offence*)

In having this discussion, you may find the following websites useful:

- www.familylives.org.uk
- www.talkitoutnc.org/starting-the-conversation/
- www.drinkaware.co.uk
- www.drugwise.org.uk

Please do note that there is a parents' forum and PTA social event on Wednesday 1 March. There will be an opportunity to talk further about these issues if useful. We are also planning to run further advice sessions over the coming year.

Do contact me if you have any school related concerns – or concerns which school can help with. Thank you very much for your ongoing support.

Best wishes,

Annie Gammon

Headteacher