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Success With Care.

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Ref: TBR/SDU

20th December 2017

Dear Parents, Carers and Students,

I am sorry to interrupt your preparations for the festive season but I write to inform you of an issue that poses a very significant threat to our school community and to some of our students at this time. We have received information regarding drug use within our community; this substance misuse involves adults as well as some of our young people and there is a very real danger that this illegal activity could lead to tragic consequences for some families.

It is clear that there are individuals within the town and beyond who are supplying and/or using cannabis, ecstasy (MDMA) and ketamine. As you will be fully aware from the media, the dangers and risks of even **first time use** of any of these substances but particularly ecstasy and ketamine can result in fatalities. In addition, use can lead to serious mental health or other health issues. Further, the UK is seeing an upsurge in the use of a prescription medication known as Xanax. This latter substance is being sold and used in Dronfield and elsewhere including amongst our student body. We were contacted following the hospitalisation of two students over the weekend period as a direct result of Xanax use and at this point we are investigating and working with parents in the cases of two further students. It goes without saying that any information we have or receive in the future will be shared with the police and other local agencies in order to keep our young people safe not just from their own actions but also from the predatory individuals who seek to gain from the circulation and supply of Xanax and other substances. We will also ensure that any information we receive is treated in the strictest confidence in relation to the school community; at this stage we are working very closely with the police who will act as the lead agency in this matter and we are bound to ensure that we do not hamper their work by sharing detailed information of what we know. I have attached a copy of our school Drugs and Substance Abuse Policy for your information. You will see that whilst we wish to work with families and individuals implicated in substance misuse we are also very clear as to the potential consequences for any individual supplying or using on site.

Xanax is a benzodiazepine prescribed in cases of anxiety as well as other conditions. It has a depressive effect on the central nervous system and renders the user particularly vulnerable to other substances including alcohol. It is reported that it is highly addictive.



Please be aware that we are not medically qualified and so the information that I can provide is such as I have elicited from medical sources and should not be deemed as complete or advisory. I would suggest that you complete your own search for information in order to fully ensure that you are aware of how to keep your child(ren) safe and if in any doubt contact medical professional/emergency services immediately. Symptoms of use may include difficulties in speaking or enunciating which could be mistaken for the impact of alcohol use however these can also move quickly to loss of consciousness and unresponsiveness, coma and death.

You should also be aware that drug related language may be used and the term “Red Devils” is also used to describe “bars” or tablets of Xanax which are rectangular, pressed with XANAX across them and red in colour.

You will know from working with us that we would not wish to alarm anyone unnecessarily, however, we are extremely concerned at what we have investigated and cannot nor will not take the risk that you are not fully informed especially as we are in a period of school recess and it is likely that our young people will be out and about with more money than usual in their pockets. There is no question that this is an issue which will be impacting on schools within a wider geographic area and I intend to circulate this letter to my fellow headteachers to alert them if they are not already aware as I know some are. This is a national issue and our strength lies in recognising that it can happen to us and having policies and procedures in place to respond should the need arise. There is nothing to be gained and much to lose, including our precious children, by any school denying or failing to be as informed and to inform as widely as possible.

Upon our return in January I intend to liaise with all local agencies including schools, medical practices, pharmacies and the police to instigate an area wide response to this growing problem and will also invite you as parents, carers and students to be involved. In the meantime, if you feel that you have any information that you wish to share please do not hesitate to contact the police via 101 or 999 as appropriate. In addition you may wish to contact me at:

headteacher@dronfield.derbyshire.sch.uk

but please remember that the immediate safety of our young people is of paramount importance and school is not an emergency service so use the police in the first instance.

I would urge you as strongly as I can to discuss this information with your child(ren) in order that they are fully aware of the situation. Young people don't always make the right choices as a result of their age and experience and we must work together if we are to keep our young people safe.

With many thanks for your support and cooperation.

Yours sincerely



T B Roche
Headteacher