

Safeguarding Newsletter

Autumn Term 1 2023



Autumn is here.....

For our new parents of students who have joined us since September, welcome to the first addition of our half termly safeguarding newsletter. Our half termly newsletter gives advice and updates on all safeguarding matters, to support keeping our whole community safe.

The Safeguarding Leadership Team.

As stated in the Summer newsletter, we now have a full time, non – teaching Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead, Mrs West. Ms Stacey, Associate Assistant Headteacher also joins the team alongside Mrs Wilkinson who remains the DSL.



Mrs Wilkinson



Ms Stacey



Mrs West

As we approach the end of October, we know that many of our students may wish to take part in the tradition of 'trick or treat'. Please ensure if your child is doing so that they are not out on their own, they stick to busier areas of your community. Traditionally, people will decorate their homes or put out a pumpkin if they are welcoming trick or treat festivities!

November brings another tradition remembering the 5th of November when Guy Fawkes attempted to ignite the house of lords with gunpowder. Luckily he was arrested just in time, and this is remembered through setting off fireworks. There are many arranged firework displays across Torbay and Devon. Please do remind your children of the dangers associated with both of these traditions and we hope they enjoy any events they attend.

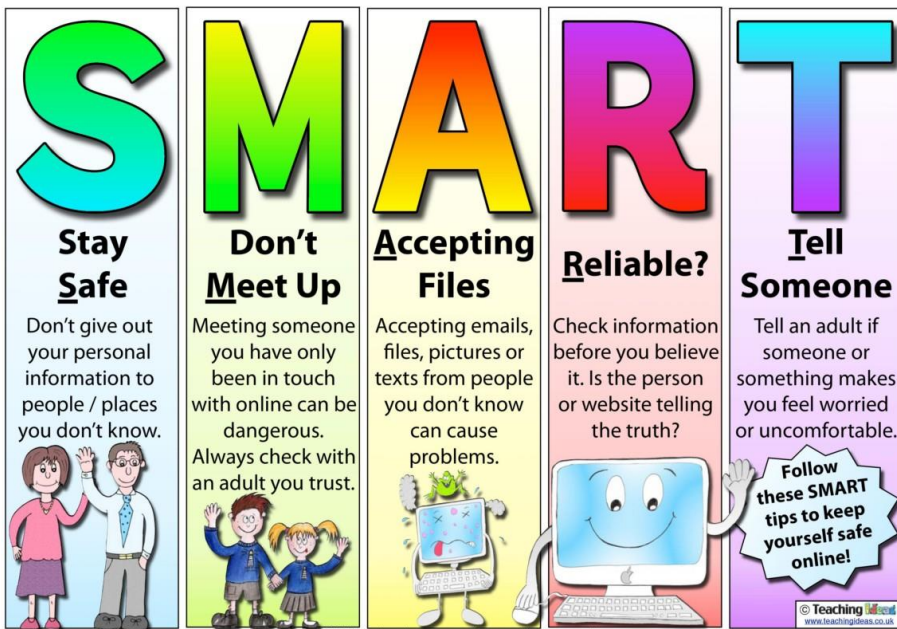


Mental Health Ambassadors

have been appointed and are now ready to support students! They have received training and been supported by Ms Oyo, Ms Malone and Mrs Wilkinson. They delivered an excellent assembly to students last week to explain how they can help them. The Ambassadors are – Kiera Lawrence, Ella Wilson, Bethany Bowes-Cavanagh, Phoebe George, Hannah Uzzell, Manna John, Angela Lahunay, Paige Irving, Ami Halliwell and Poppy Basanko.

Parental workshops

We are hoping to run some parental workshops for parents who would like some advice and support on how to help their child if they are having any mental health difficulties. Please can you email safeguarding@tqgsacademy.org if this is something you would like to take part in so we can gauge the numbers we would need to cater for.



Please encourage your children to be **SMART online**. If you have any concerns with any content your child has received you can report this through the following sites:

www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre <https://reportharmfulcontent.com/>

Online Safety

This will always feature in our safeguarding newsletter as we constantly remind our students of their digital footprint. Students are more likely to spend more time on their devices as the nights draw in. The average teenager spends up to 3 hours a day on their phone accessing social media. It is so important that parents take an active role in ensuring they are doing so safely. We have published lots of advice during this year through our website for our whole community. There is advice on our parent specific online safety page through our website [Online Safety - Parents | Torquay Girls' Grammar School \(tgsacademy.org\)](http://www.teachingideas.co.uk).

It is highly recommended that you do not allow your child to have access to their mobile phone overnight in their bedrooms.



We have been fortunate to receive some relevant information from drug sense to raise awareness of substances that could cause harm to young people. This is material shared nationally but in order to keep children safe it is essential that we share it with parents.

XANAX – (PRESCRIPTION NAME ALPROZAM)

They are usually seen in the UK in the 'white blocks' as in pic (1) below and will have the word XANAX on them so fairly easy to spot. Xanax works by increasing the amount of neurotransmitter GABA in the brain. This promotes a feeling of well being, calmness and relaxation.

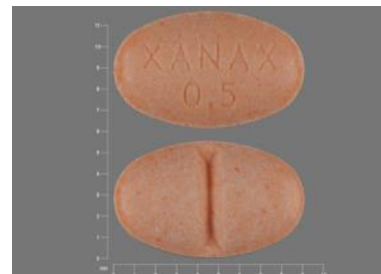
There is other colours and shapes of XANAX (see pic 2 and 3 below) but these do not seem to be reaching our shores as much as the 'white blocks'.



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3

Q. How are students getting hold of XANAX

A. XANAX is an illegal drug to possess in the UK if you do not have a prescription for these. In the UK it is only available on private prescription, and generally prescribed for things such as 'sleeping disorders', severe 'panic attacks' and 'anxiety disorders'. So students in possession of these are generally not those whom have been prescribed them and as such committing a criminal offence.

They are generally been bought on the streets (like any other drugs) dealers importing them from mainly China (which can arrive in a powder form then pressed into the pills) or in pill format. Many are being sourced on the 'dark web' and other illegal sites along with social media sites such as 'facebook', 'Instagram', 'Snapchat' and several others.



There is a concern being raised about the amount of '**counterfeit**' Xanax (see pic to the left). There has been over £1 million pounds of 'Counterfeit Xanax' seized at British airports since 2016 but the exact amount of Counterfeit Xanax in circulation I suspect far exceeds this. As you can see from the two images this particular 'fake' one actually looks 'dodgy and of poor quality'. But would a person for example be in a position to identify this if for example they have been drinking???

Note: Any coloured XANAX in block format (other than white are generally FAKE)

Signs & Symptoms of use of XANAX:

Xanax can rapidly cause physical and psychological drug dependence. This, combined with its dangerous withdrawal effects and abuse potential, make it a high-risk drug for leading to addiction.

Once physical dependence has occurred, withdrawal is often a complex matter, with many side effects of withdrawal presenting.

Where an addiction or dependence is identified, it is recommended that you DO NOT suddenly stop taking the medication. This can result in acute alprazolam withdrawal syndrome and ultimately death.

Xanax has some very **worrying side effects** that you need to be aware of before considering taking this drug. Fake Xanax is particularly unpredictable and has side effects that can cause death. Its effects cannot be predicted, as the counterfeit drug could literally contain anything.

Physical side effects of Xanax (Alprazolam) include:

- Drug dependence
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Sleepiness
- Slurred speech
- Delayed reaction times
- Appetite changes and weight changes
- Dry mouth
- Impaired cognitive ability
- Muscle weakness
- Reduced sex drive
- Water retention in feet and hands
- Nausea
- Headache
- Constipation
- Diarrhoea
- Nasal congestion
- Incontinence
- Blurred vision
- Menstrual cycle irregularities
- Tachycardia
- Tremor
- Respiratory depression
- Coma
- Seizures

Psychological side effects of Xanax (Alprazolam) include:

- Impaired memory
- Anxiety
- Impaired concentration
- False sense of wellbeing
- **Confusion**
- Irritability
- Psychological drug dependence and addiction
- Depression
- Poor decision-making skills
- **Mania**
- **Psychosis**
- Panic
- Lack of awareness
- **Suicidal ideation**

Side effects highlighted in red are considered life-threatening, and medical treatment should be sought at once. If other side effects become troublesome, patients should seek medical advice without delay.

It is important to note that abuse of Xanax increases the chances of more dangerous side effects occurring and their severity.

Warnings and precautions for Xanax:

Anyone with a history of depression or drug or **alcohol addiction** should not take Xanax, even if prescribed by a private doctor. **ALCOHOL AND XANAX CAN BE A LETHAL COMBINATION. There have been over 350 deaths linked to XANAX (including counterfeit XANAX) the majority of which was because it had been taken with Alcohol.**

Xanax is extremely addictive, and its side effects can cause huge emotional and psychological problems. This is why it is not available on the NHS in the UK.

For further information about XANAX (Alprozam) – copy and paste link below into your browser.

<https://ukhsa.blog.gov.uk/2018/07/30/alprazolam-xanax-what-are-the-facts/>

VALIUM (also known as Diazepam):



A powerful prescription drug and as with XANAX highly addictive with severe withdrawal symptoms. You tend to see a lot of 'valium abuse' with addicts on the streets but it can and does at times fall into the hands of others looking to experiment with this substance. It has various names (dependent on the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture it). But commons ones we see in the UK are with the brand name '**TEVO, MYLAN or ROCHE**'.

Again fairly easy to recognise due to the brand markings and Blue and light blue seem to be the colours doing the rounds.

A Class C drug as per the misuse of drugs act 1971 so again those in possession of this without a prescription would be breaking the law.

Very similar signs & symptoms as that with XANAX (as it is also part of the BENZO group of drugs).

Copy and paste link below for further info provided by the NHS

<https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/drugs-and-drug-use/common-drugs/benzodiazepines-benzos-diazepam-valium#:~:text=Benzodiazepines%20are%20a%20group%20of,anxiety%20or%20occasionally%20sleeping%20problems.>

PEROCOT:

With regards to **Perocot** this often gets referred to wrongly as '**OXYCODONE**' as it contains this which is the '**Opiod**' pain reliever. Much chat on various social media sites relates to **OXYCODONE (OXY'S)** and is being driven by the huge rise in use of these in **AMERICA**.



Generally prescribed for pain relief (given it contains OPIODS) and is a very powerful substance. As with XANAX and Valium it is highly addictive with severe withdrawal symptoms so Doctors have a strict regime they will apply before prescribing these. Illegal to possess without a prescription. Generally they again will have the name of the drug on the pill along with the dosage amount. **YELLOW** tablets are commonly seen but other colours and shapes do exist.

Further information about this drug in particular the **OXYCODIN** aspect can be found by copying and pasting this link into your browser:

<https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/oxycodone/common-questions-about-oxycodone/>

VAPING

Vaping continues to be a concern nationally for young people. Statistically, 16% of children have admitted that they have tried vaping. Vapes are becoming increasingly accessible to children. On the next page is some guidance for parents that may help start a conversation with your child.

We thank you for your ongoing support.

Please contact us at **safeguarding@tggsacademy.org** if you are concerned about your own child or another child at **Torquay Girls' Grammar School**

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about THE DANGERS OF VAPING

Data collected for ASH (Action on Smoking and Health) shows an increase in 11 to 17-year-olds experimenting with vaping: from 7.7% in 2022 to 11.6% in 2023. It's concerning that these age-restricted products are getting into the hands of under 18s as most contain nicotine, which can be detrimental to brain development and cause long-term addiction. Some schools have reported students having their focus in lessons affected by nicotine cravings; vaping in school toilets; and even trying vapes found in their local park. Raising awareness of the risks among young people could help to prevent these problems from escalating and reduce the number of young vapers.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

NICOTINE ADDICTION

Since they were initially developed to help people stop smoking, the vast majority of vape liquids contain nicotine. Not only is this a highly addictive stimulant, but it can also have detrimental effects on brain development in the under-25s. Nicotine can decrease the ability to pay attention, weaken impulse control, affect mood and increase the likelihood of substance addiction as an adult.

WHAT IS VAPING?

Vapes contain a liquid (vape juice/e-liquid) that is heated by a battery and evaporates, creating a chemical vapour which the user inhales. They can be **disposable** (once the liquid or battery runs out, the vape is thrown away) or **rechargeable** (the user replaces the liquid and recharges the battery on demand). Most vape liquids contain nicotine and other chemicals.

LACK OF AWARENESS

A proportion of young people tend to view vapes as harmless, mainly because of the products' appearance and the perception (often strengthened on social media) that "vaping is cool" and on trend. In many instances, young people don't fully appreciate the concept of addiction: that is, they aren't adequately aware of the risk of becoming hooked on nicotine before trying a vape.

POTENTIAL TOXICITY

Many vape liquids have been found to contain 'heavy' metals such as lead, tin, nickel and (in some cases) mercury – all of which are toxic. These metals often take the form of tiny shards inside a device's liquid tank, which are then inhaled into the body. Some media reports have suggested these metals are particularly prevalent in illegally imported vapes which don't comply with UK regulations.

UNCLEAR LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES

The liquids in vapes also contain solvents, which can create carcinogens at the point of evaporation. Vapes were only introduced into the UK in 2005 – and because of the relatively short timeframe involved, there is insufficient medical evidence to assess the long-term harms that regular inhalation of these chemical fluids might have on the human body.

ATTRACTIVE PACKAGING

The packaging of many disposable vapes is very appealing to young people, frequently echoing the colours and flavours of the sweets or fizzy drinks they're used to buying. There's a relative lack of regulation around vape marketing, and vaping is often depicted positively on social media – which can lead young people to develop favourable views of vaping and overlook the possible harms.

ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

In the UK alone, around 1.3 million disposable vapes go to landfill every week. Due to such significant numbers of these products not being recycled, their components – a lithium battery and a chemical liquid – pose a toxic risk to the environment, the ecosystem and wildlife. Vapes are also predominantly made of plastic and metal; materials that, of course, do not naturally decompose.

WIDER HEALTH CONCERNS

Studies are already showing a link between vaping and oral health problems such as tooth decay and gum disease. This is because vaping reduces the amount of saliva in the mouth, while increasing bacteria – resulting in bad breath and a build-up of plaque. There are also concerns that, in some users, vaping could lead to the development of asthma, a persistent cough and breathing difficulties.

UNREGULATED VAPING PRODUCTS

The number of retailers willing to sell vapes to under-18s is a worry, as the chance of these products being unregulated (and therefore containing illegal chemicals and higher levels of nicotine) is high. A related concern is that the mechanisms inside unregulated products are unlikely to have been tested and safety checked – presenting a possible fire risk if the liquid and battery come into contact.

SCARCE INFORMATION

The lack of information about the ingredients and potentially harmful chemicals in a vape is troubling. Some vape fluids (unregulated in the UK) contain traces of nuts, which can cause an allergic reaction or anaphylactic shock. To date, medical warnings aren't required on vape packaging – with only medical disclaimers being found on the websites of the various brands.

VAGUE INGREDIENTS LISTS

Early research has suggested that the chemicals used to produce some strawberry and banana flavour e-liquids can kill cells in the blood vessels and heart. These ingredients aren't identified on the packaging, instead falling under the umbrella term 'natural and artificial flavourings'. Such vague listings mean that consumers aren't aware of the liquid's content so can't identify potential risks.

Meet Our Expert

Run by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Healthy Schools Service (commissioned by Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council), Catch Your Breath is a school-based project aimed at young people. Its goal is to embed a proactive, coordinated approach among both primary and secondary schools in discouraging smoking and vaping behaviours.



HEALTHY SCHOOLS
CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH

The National College

Source: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-65809924>



www.thenationalcollege.co.uk



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