

January 2023

Dear Parents, carers and families

Nitrous oxide- The Dangers to Young People

As an academy which takes safeguarding very seriously, we will always pass on advice and guidance from the police and other public services in relation to drugs and alcohol.

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID) have alerted their local partners, including schools, to increasing reports of harm from nitrous oxide misuse. Nitrous oxide is an odourless and colourless gas inhaled from balloons, or – far more dangerously – directly from canisters, for its psychoactive effects.

In addition to the already widely reported risks of accidents while under the influence and of direct harm from the cold gas, there are increasing hospital reports of young people with serious nerve damage that may be lasting. This is probably associated with the increasing availability of larger canisters of gas and people using more of it, perhaps without really keeping track of just how much more they are using. Nitrous oxide inactivates vitamin B12 leading to nerve damage.

As a psychoactive drug, nitrous oxide is controlled under the Psychoactive Substances Act, meaning its possession is not an offence but supply is.

Parents and carers need to be aware of the dangers of the illegal use of nitrous oxide and, though legal to possess, people should not make the assumption that nitrous oxide is safe to use. This may be especially true when people drive and inhale the gas.

The use of nitrous oxide can cause significant impairment and users should be under no illusion that it is safe to carry out activities like driving or using machinery, following consumption. The effects on the nervous system, including drowsiness, dizziness, and confusion, mean that significant impairment can be caused and offences under the Road Traffic Act are likely to be committed.

There is information for young people and their families and carers on FRANK at www.talktofrank.com. FRANK also lists sources of help and advice, including local services.

A recent report on nitrous oxide from the European Monitoring Centre on Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) may be of interest even though we have left the EU as it includes a UK case study: [Recreational use of nitrous oxide — a growing concern for Europe | www.emcdda.europa.eu](http://www.emcdda.europa.eu)

Our Personal, Social and Health Education lessons and the science curriculum cover facts about drugs and alcohol, and this week we passed on messages to students about the dangers of nitrous oxide, but we always need your support to further alert children to the key messages about safety. I know as supportive parents and carers, you will talk and have spoken with your child/children about the dangers of drugs; however, if you require any support or have any concerns about your child in relation to the topic, please contact your child's Head of Year or our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Mrs Chaplin.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'A Lloyd', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mrs A Lloyd
Principal