

9th June 2023



Dear Parents and Carers

As we approach the end of the school year, I am writing with an update on a couple of up-and-coming events and an important message regarding vaping.

Good News

- We have been awarded an Attendance Certificate from the Fisher Family Trust (FFT) for being in the top 25% of FFT Secondary Schools in England.
- We won the Regional Finals of the National Schools Competition U15 Girls Handball. We got through to the National Finals which took place over the weekend, we are so proud of our teams U13 Girls came 6th, U13 boys were 5th and our U15 came 2nd in the country. This is an amazing result, all of our students have worked incredibly hard, and would like to take this opportunity congratulate them all!

Year 11

Our Year 11 students have almost come to the end of their GCSE examinations, and they have all worked so hard during this time. We are looking forward to celebrating their final days with us through our annual leaver's assembly followed by a BBQ. Their final farewell where we will celebrate their time at OAO will take place on their Prom night, Thursday 22nd June. We will look forward to seeing them all return to us on Result Day, Thursday 24th August 2023.

Prom Shop

We have been overwhelmed by the support of so many members of the community (parents, carers, staff and local businesses) to our "Prom Shop." This initiative started by Miss Skeffington has seen donations of dresses, suits, shoes and accessories. So many students have already benefitted from this with many happy tears being shed. A huge thank you to all those who have supported this amazing initiative.

Year 6

We are looking forward to welcoming our new Year 7 's on Thursday 6th July and telling them much more about our academy and the rapid journey of improvement we are on, attainment across the academy is improving and we are developing many new initiatives to provide an exciting and enriching curriculum offer. This includes our highly regarded careers programme.

Year 9 Option Process

Mr Collins has spoken to all of year 9 students in assembly regarding their Option Choices and a letter has been sent out to all parents this week. Please discuss this with your child and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the academy.

Vaping

Please see below a further reminder regarding the dangers of vapes/vaping. This information was sent out in March 2023. Any incidents involving a vape will be treated very seriously and strict sanctions will be imposed.

We would like to remind parents that the vast majority of young people do not use or have not tried vaping (ASH 2022).

The charity Action for Health and Smoking (ASH) produced a briefing for local authorities with key messages for schools and parents which can be read at ash.org.uk.

What is vaping? Vapes are electronic devices designed to allow people to inhale nicotine in a vapour. Using a vape is known as vaping. Vapes are also available without nicotine (Talk to Frank 2022). In the UK, the NHS recommends vapes for adults to use as an aid to quit smoking tobacco which carries far greater health risks.

Vaping is not recommended for non-smokers or young people. There are some concerns around certain vape products not meeting UK safety standards (ASH 2022). Vaping, though less harmful than smoking tobacco, exposes its users to some toxins that can cause unpleasant health effects, they also often contain nicotine which is an addictive substance that evidence suggests adolescents are more sensitive to (NHS, ASH 2022). It is also important to acknowledge that clinicians do not know the long-term health effects of vaping at this time.

Like cigarettes, vapes are age restricted products and therefore it is illegal for shops and other retailers to sell vaping items including vaping equipment such as liquids to people under the age of 18. It is also against the law to buy vapes on behalf of anyone under the age of 18. It is, therefore, clear that young people under the age of 18 should not be purchasing or be in possession of alternative nicotine products such as vapes. Local councils and schools will pass any reports of shops selling to underage young people, on to Trading Standards.

What are local schools doing about this? We recognise that this is not an issue specific to any individual school but rather one that exists within the community and local area impacting on all schools. We all continue to educate students regarding the health risks of vaping, the significantly greater risks of tobacco smoking and the law. We all remind students of our respective behaviour policies and the list of prohibited items. When students have been found in possession of a prohibited item such as a Vape, a strong sanction is always applied. Please note that we will report possession of any illegal substances to the police.

Vapes can come in a variety of different forms, shapes, and sizes. Some common styles of vapes include ones which look like a thick pen or highlighter pen. These devices are usually very small and can be concealed on a person or blend in with school equipment, therefore they can be easily mistaken or missed.

What can parents do?

- Know and understand the risks presented by smoking, electronic cigarettes and vapes.
- Talk to your child openly about these risks to ensure that they are well informed and have clear guidance that these products are to be avoided.

What steps can I take if my child has used electronic cigarettes/vapes? Some young people may unfortunately choose to vape, and we encourage you to talk to your GP or school if you are concerned about this. You can also find useful information and local support services listed below:

- ASH (Action on Smoking and Health): <https://ash.org.uk/fact-sheets/>
- NHS Better Health- talking to young people about vaping <https://www.nhs.uk/betterhealth/quitsmoking/vaping-to-quit-smoking/#young-people>
- Talk to Frank- Vapes <https://www.talktofrank.com/drug/vapes>
- Text for advice from a community school nurse via the ChatHealth service 07312 263194
- Get in touch with the Edge, West Berkshire drug and alcohol service for young people <https://www.wdp.org.uk/west-berkshire-help-for-young-people>

We hope that you welcome this information in the spirit with which it is intended and that you share and understand our shared concerns about this potentially harmful issue. We have got to be open about the risks involved and we need to be able to talk to our children so that no topics are 'off limits' and so we encourage you to have a conversation with your child about this subject matter. Should you have any concerns, please do contact us and we will provide you with additional support and guidance.

Upcoming Events

- Friday 16th June
- W/B Monday 19th June

- Friday 23rd June
- W/B Monday 26th June

- Thursday 6th July
- Friday 7th July
- Thursday 13th July
- Monday 17th July
- Tuesday 18th July

Spelling Bee Event

National Sports Week will take place.

Assemblies will be held this week to inform students of all the details for that week.

Staff Inset Day - School will be closed for all student

Year 7 – 10 End of Year Assessment all week

School Production (date TBC)

Transition Day for Year 6 followed by Year 6 Parents Evening

Staff Inset Day – School will be closed for all students

Year 7 Parents Evening, 3.00-6.15pm

Reward Trip for Year 7 & 10

Reward Trip for Year 8 & 9

Thank you as always for your support.

Yours sincerely



Mrs M Dillon
Principal

Principal - Marie Dillon

Hollins Road, Hollinwood, Oldham, OL8 4JZ

T. 0161 624 9630 • F. 0161 785 8765

E. info@oasisoldham.org • W. www.oasisacademyoldham.org

 @OldhamOasis  www.facebook.com/OAOldham

Creating a
community of
choices & chances



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