

Parent Council News - Monday 30th April 2018

Sue Hewson (Deputy Headteacher) attended the meeting to brief parents on the school's approach to sex and relationships education and drugs and alcohol education which the school delivers via several different channels as it does not have dedicated PSHE lessons. The school employs a school nurse (two days a week), an education welfare officer (shared with feeder primary schools) and a counsellor (one day a week). The school nurse delivers sex and relationships education and drugs and alcohol programmes which are taught in form groups. The nurse is qualified in the delivery of these aspects of the curriculum and the programmed delivered is planned with Sue Hewson. Additionally the school arranges for external agency involvement such as drama performances, plays etc. and safeguarding assemblies are held regularly as are internet safety presentations.

In Year 7, students are taught about different types of drugs (mainly nicotine and alcohol) and their effects on the body from a scientific point of view. At GCSE students look at different types of drugs from a biological point of view.

Regarding sex and relationships education this is delivered in form groups and can be summarised as follows:

Year 7 the basics with a focus on keeping safe from harm and abuse in line with the NSPCC PANTS campaign

Year 8 focuses more on sexual exploitation and changes in/pressures on teenagers

Year 9 focuses on contraception

Year 10 on good sexual health, STIs and available support

Year 11 on the effects of negative relationships, how to avoid them and how to escape them

One parent felt that the school does not devote enough time to this, particularly the relationship side of sexual relationships. It was agreed that it would be desirable to have a longer period devoted to this but the school has only limited time to spare from the curriculum and ever dwindling financial resources. Its capacity to deliver on these subjects is constrained by these limits.

The mix of parents attending the meeting was diverse; firm views were held on the subject with different starting points and expectations of what the school's role should be which highlighted the complexity of the issues facing the school. All, however, were in agreement that parents have a vital role in educating their children and ensuring that they are well-informed about possible dangers and how they can keep themselves safe.

A discussion ensued about external agencies who visit the school such as theatre companies and one parent suggested the school give a broader range of information to parents before

any productions and also make it clear early on which subjects are covered by each year group so that parents can discuss with/prepare their children. Sue Hewson is going to look into this. Sue informed parents that a letter always goes out to parents with the option for their children to opt out of any sessions but to date no one has ever done so.

One parent commented that the school has “a well thought out and progressive programme which it runs on a shoe string.” Another was not satisfied that the emotional element of sexual relationships was covered in enough depth but it was pointed out that there is only so much a school can do and we also have to be aware of the sensibilities of the differing viewpoints held by families. As a school teachers model behaviour to their students on a daily basis and teach them the values of respect, friendship, tolerance, kindness and honesty all of which are vital foundations for the formation of any kind of relationship. All students are told that there are people in school that they can talk to if they have any worries or concerns. Additionally the school works with a large number of external agencies who help those children in need of extra support such as SAFER, Bluebell, MyTime (Barnardos), CAMHS, the Birchall Trust, Targetted Youth Support, CADAS, the police, GPs, FGH to name but some.

This was an interesting and fruitful discussion but being such a complex issue it would be difficult for all to share a common viewpoint or position on these matters. It was agreed, however, that such discussions are a useful platform for parents to air their views and for the school to consider how future provision could be improved.