



19<sup>th</sup> May 2011

Dear Parents

You may recall our presentation at the options evening in Year 9 about the problem of how to manage social events involving a child and groups of other youngsters of the same age. You might recall you were written to on the same subject at the time of your last Parents' Evening.

The information that filters back to school staff does nothing to allay anxieties we have about teenagers and alcohol being a bad mix. As was explained at the options evening for Year 9 parents, the most frequent reason why a child might academically fall short of expectations is where a student comes to adopt a social life more befitting someone much older, and proves unable to cope with the emotional situations this leads to.

It may be hard to say "no" to some of the choices teenagers want to make in their social life: it does, however, remain necessary. If you are thinking that the exam grades or controlled conditions marks you hear about tonight are central to your child's success in 2012, you are missing the point that it is his or her social and emotional development in the next 12 months that matters most.

If considering permitting your child to attend a party or social event organised by another student or family, be conscious that the hosting parent may take a very much more liberal view of alcohol access than you do. We would counsel that parties where "everyone is invited" and there has been no individual formal invitation as particularly high risk. On the other hand, it can be perfectly possible for parties at this age to be straightforward: but it means setting and policing clear and **age-appropriate** ground rules, not just hoping for the best. What is "reasonable" is what **you** think is reasonable as parent; not what your child thinks or claims is the norm.

Finally, both you and your child should be aware that the school discipline policy, and particularly that on illegal drugs, can extend beyond school hours to such social events. Large gatherings of young people involving alcohol are highly attractive to anyone looking to sell illegal drugs to others, or share such a substance with others for kudos or renown. Normally sensible young people may be vulnerable to such approaches if their judgement is impaired by alcohol.

It remains the case that certain times and places seem to create particular vulnerabilities: Rothamstead Park on a Friday evening seems to feature as a place where little good is likely to be going on.

The warning that appears in each child's Prep Book appears overleaf. None of us can afford to be complacent about the threat that is out there.

## **A Warning Smoking and Drugs of Abuse**

St George's School will not tolerate students smoking tobacco while they are the responsibility of the school. This includes students on the journey to and from school. Students may also not carry smoking materials. Students who repeatedly violate this rule will face sanctions up to and including exclusion from school.

Criminals in the Harpenden area see school students as an easy target for the sale of drugs such as cannabis. Students who are approached by anyone trying to supply or share drugs of abuse should report this to a member of staff, or a parent.

Students should avoid any involvement with drugs of abuse at any time. Students **MUST** recognise that involvement with drugs of abuse while at school can have very very serious consequences. This includes other times when students are under school rules, such as on the way to and from school, or on school trips. The full school policy on drugs is sent home each year. It is covered in PSHCEE lessons and assemblies. It is your responsibility as a student to know the rules and obey them. But they are really common sense. You must not:

- Bring illegal drugs or alcohol onto school premises
- Come to school under the influence of an illegal drug or alcohol
- Consume an illegal drug or alcohol
- Supply or try to supply a drug of any sort to someone else. Sharing a drug counts as supplying someone else. Helping someone else to get hold of a drug counts as supply.

If your friends or acquaintances are involved in any of the above, you must have nothing to do with it or them. If you give other people encouragement by being with them while they do such things, you should expect to be in trouble too.

If you have *anything* to do with drugs while under school rules, you should expect to be excluded from school. You should not be surprised if this is a PERMANENT exclusion. You should expect to be reported to the police for further action."

We hope you might take some time during your evening to talk over these issues with your son or daughter.

Yours sincerely

P. Storrie  
Deputy Head

A. Barton  
Head of Watts

J. Day  
Head of Goddard

A. Robertson  
Head of Monk

A. Muriss  
Head of Grant