



# Safe At Summerhill

**At Summerhill School we are committed to Safeguarding our children and young people as well as promoting positive well-being for all.**

This Safeguarding newsletter, aims to help staff, parents and students alike to be aware of the safeguarding and mental health issues, giving you useful links and resources to use if you have concerns. If you have concerns or ideas for future topics please do not hesitate to contact us on the main school number 01384 816165 or via email on [studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk](mailto:studentssupport@summerhill.dudley.sch.uk)

## UK to reveal social media ban plans for under-16s within weeks

The UK government is reportedly set to unveil plans to ban children under the age of 16 from accessing social media platforms within weeks. Downing Street is said to be revealing the proposals for stricter age restrictions on apps like Instagram, Facebook and Snapchat as part of a consultation aimed at safeguarding children online within weeks, according to The Sunday Times. The consultation will seek input from parents regarding the appropriate age at which children should be allowed to access social media, with the proposed range set between 13 and 16 years old. Currently, many platforms permit membership for children as young as 13, including Meta, which recently lowered the minimum age for Whatsapp usage in Europe to 13. If you would like to read more, please follow this link <https://uk.finance.yahoo.com/news/uk-reveal-social-media-ban->

## Free online safety virtual workshop

NSPCC has a new Keeping Children Safe Online workshop provides parents and carers with information about how to support their child in their online world. The 40-minute pre-recorded presentation covers topics such as online bullying, mental health, and social media, as well as signposting to resources and organisations for help and support. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/free-online-safety-group-workshops/>

## What parents need to know about Energy Drinks

Close to a third of children in the UK consume energy drinks at least once every week. While these high-caffeine beverages might be touted as a shortcut to a boost in focus and productivity, even a moderate intake can lead to significant impacts on the heart, sleeping patterns and mental wellbeing. While the short-term benefits of energy drinks can be attractive, it's not wise to ignore the potential health risks. Consuming these beverages regularly can have negative effects on the heart and blood pressure, and even cause dependency on these products to keep users' energy at a 'normal' level. Factoring in that many shops have issued a voluntary ban on selling these drinks to under-16s, the rise in children and young people using energy drinks is a cause for concern. This marked increase in young people using highly caffeinated drinks to supplement their energy has heightened the risk of these health issues arising in children – at a time in their lives where such impacts can have greater, longer-lasting consequences. Our guide addresses these possible hazards, letting you know how to minimise them for children and young people who like the occasional can.



**Mrs Sprouting**  
Designated  
Safeguarding  
Lead



**Mr Randle**  
Deputy  
Safeguarding  
Lead



**Ms Gordon**  
Deputy  
Safeguarding  
Lead



**Mr Quirke**  
Deputy  
Safeguarding  
Lead



**Mr Cresswell**  
Deputy  
Safeguarding  
Lead

# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about ENERGY DRINKS

Energy drinks are highly caffeinated beverages often consumed for a quick energy boost. However, excessive intake can lead to health risks like increased heart rate and sleep disturbances. Statistics underline these products' popularity among young people – many of whom consume them regularly. Here's our expert's advice on addressing the concerns surrounding energy drink consumption in adolescents.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

### HIGH CAFFEINE CONTENT

Most energy drinks contain high levels of caffeine: often much more than a typical cup of coffee or fizzy drink. Excessive caffeine consumption can lead to increased heart rate, high blood pressure, anxiety, insomnia, digestive issues and – in extreme cases – even more severe conditions. For children and adolescents, whose bodies are still developing, excessive caffeine intake can be particularly harmful.

### INCREASED RISK OF HEART PROBLEMS

The combination of high caffeine levels and the other stimulants found in energy drinks can put extra strain on the cardiovascular system. Potentially, this could lead to irregular heart rhythms, palpitations and increased future risk of heart attack – especially in individuals who have an underlying heart condition.

### IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

The significant levels of caffeine and sugar in energy drinks can exacerbate anxiety, nervousness and even – in susceptible individuals – contribute to panic attacks. Additionally, the crash that often follows the initial energy boost can actually make mood swings worse and possibly lead to feelings of depression and irritability.

### DISRUPTED SLEEP PATTERNS

Consuming energy drinks, especially during the afternoon or evening, can disrupt normal sleep patterns. The stimulating effects of caffeine can make it difficult for children and young adults to fall asleep – leading to insufficient rest and its associated health risks, including impaired cognitive function, mood disturbances and decreased academic performance.

### LINKS TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Some research has suggested a correlation between energy drink consumption and higher rates of alcohol and drug use among young adults. Young people may mix energy drinks with alcohol, mistakenly believing that the energy drinks' stimulant effects will counteract the sedative nature of alcohol. This combination, however, can be dangerous and increase the risk of accidents, injuries and alcohol poisoning.

### POTENTIAL FOR DEPENDENCY

Frequent consumption of energy drinks can lead to tolerance – meaning that individuals may need to consume increasing amounts to continue achieving the desired effects. This can potentially lead to dependency and addiction, especially in younger individuals who may be more vulnerable to addictive behaviours.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### LIMIT CONSUMPTION

It's wise to educate young people about the potential risks related to energy drinks, emphasising the consequences of excessive caffeine consumption. Encourage healthier alternatives like water, herbal teas or natural fruit juices. You can model healthy behaviours by restricting your own consumption of energy drinks and creating a supportive environment for informed choices.

### PROMOTE HEALTHIER HABITS

Schools can help with this issue by including discussions about the possible dangers of energy drink consumption into their health education curriculum. Encourage children and young adults to critically evaluate the marketing messages they see and make informed choices about their health. Teachers could also provide resources and support for children to identify healthier alternatives.

### Meet Our Expert

Dr Jason O'Rourke, Headteacher of Washingborough Academy, champions food education and sustainability – and his school holds the Soil Association's prestigious Gold Catering Mark. Jason has spoken about food education at Westminster briefings and overseas. A member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on School Food, he co-founded TastEd, a sensory food education charity.



### ADVOCATE FOR REGULATION

If this is something you're particularly passionate about, you could work with local health organisations and policymakers to advocate for regulations on energy drink sales to children and young people. Raise awareness among parents, educators and community members about the potential health risks associated with energy drinks and support initiatives promoting healthier options in schools and communities.

### SET A POSITIVE EXAMPLE

Adults can model healthy behaviours by visibly choosing alternative beverages instead of energy drinks. Maintain open communication with children and young adults about the reasons for limiting energy drink consumption – underlining the importance of balanced nutrition, adequate hydration and sufficient sleep for overall wellbeing and academic success.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at [nationalcollege.com/guides/energy-drinks](https://nationalcollege.com/guides/energy-drinks)