



From Head of Wellbeing: Paul Gooding

2 October 2020

Dear Parents

Sabina Gray, 3rd year Drugs and Substances Talk, Thursday 8 October

Sabina Gray will be giving her annual (online) lecture to 3rd year boys about drugs and substances on Thursday 8 October. The recent Channel 4 Dispatches documentary on County Lines highlights the significance of this issue particularly around Oxfordshire.

Sabina is a regular speaker at Abingdon as well as other schools around the country. I would like parents to be aware of this talk so that you can follow up discussions with your sons over the weekend as needed.

Here are some further links to aide further discussions with your sons around this topic. This website (<https://www.talktofrank.com/>) provides excellent information as well as this one (<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/alcohol-and-drugs-what-parents-need-to-know>). The school's policy on drugs and substances can be found on the school policies page of the website [here](#). We will be exploring drugs and substances over the course of the 3rd year in PSHCE lessons and will return to this topic again.

Here is a little more information from the speaker's webpages.

Crack and heroin addiction, crime, prison and rehab - this was Sabina's life for fifteen years. After experimenting with drugs as a fourteen year-old, she never imagined things could spiral so quickly out of control.

Her first experiences felt like harmless fun at the time. Weed, pills, LSD – these drugs were at the centre of her social life at a highly regarded public school, but she didn't know that she was developing a problem. By the age of seventeen, it was already too late – she had become a daily crack and heroin user.

For the next decade and a half, her entire existence was dedicated to the pursuit of drugs - that meant a life on the periphery of society, perpetually in and out of police stations and courtrooms, and eventually prison. She abandoned all morality, stole to feed her habit, her relationships with friends and family completely broke down, and she was eventually at death's door - she knew something had to change.

Now a drugs awareness speaker, Sabina talks to schools throughout the UK about the causes and consequences of her experience, and addresses the wider issues that lead young people into substance abuse and addiction.

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Central to her talks is the importance of self-awareness and communication. Drug awareness is nothing without that self-awareness: it allows us to better protect ourselves against the causes – the circumstances and personal issues – that allow drugs to creep into our lives. That's more important now than it has ever been. We live in an age where self-image is constantly under scrutiny on social media, and differences are seen as imperfections and publicly vilified: in this context, young people are even more vulnerable to the anxiety, self-doubt and depression that can lead to substance abuse and addiction.

Sabina talks openly and honestly and has been noted for her direct, informal and relatable style. She says the things that would have made her think twice before following the path that would lead to addiction.

As a schoolgirl, Sabina underestimated the power of drugs, and many other young people will have the same perspective. The aim of her talks is to change those perspectives, to spark debate and to help others to avoid the mistakes she made - to encourage young people to be both drug-aware and self-aware.

Thank you in anticipation of your support and if you have any questions or queries following the talk, please liaise with your son's housemaster in the first instance.

Best wishes,

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