

by biologists, health education teachers, physical education teachers, and mathematicians, since the results provide a ready source of material for statistical analysis. The computer programme is being designed to allow children to make their own tests accurately and reliably, to set up their own data base, and to analyse

the results. Again, however, further development is hamstrung by lack of funds. In the meantime, the writer will be pleased to hear from any schools interested in arranging a visit. Please write to: Dr Peter Travers, School of Education, University of Exeter, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU (0392 53937).

So what is your school's smoking policy?

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A survey of 650 class teachers in Cumbria and Tyne & Wear attempted to identify the policy towards smoking by staff and pupils within 65 educational establishments ranging from primary schools to F.E. colleges. It was shown that the staff within many of these schools did not agree on what the 'policy' was, and it is suggested that this lack of consistency must prove confusing to the pupils.

This short article makes no pretensions to being a definitive paper on the effects of school policy on children's smoking habits! It describes an attempt to find out whether or not the action taken by a school affects the prevalence of smoking in its pupils, but it would be meaningless to draw any firm conclusions on the basis of what was found. In order to help future researchers working in this field, I have described the findings with regard to *policy*, but have purposely made no attempt to link these to smoking prevalence figures for reasons which will become obvious.

The background

It was suggested, in the report on the recent national survey of smoking among secondary school children,¹ that considerable differences in smoking prevalence might exist between individual schools.

Further evidence of school variation was found in the large survey funded by the Cancer Research Campaign, carried out in northern England in December 1982. The prevalence of regular smoking ranged from 0% to 18% in whole primary schools, and from 13% to 25% in whole

secondary schools, excluding sixth forms. When those who had tried smoking were added, to form an 'ever smoked' category, the range was from 0% to 71% in the primary schools, and from 50% to 67% in the secondary schools.

The onset and continuation of children's smoking are affected by many factors, influences from inside and outside school playing a part.² Home influences must not be underestimated. In the present study, in the three primary schools with the *lowest* smoking prevalence, 75% of the children had no smoking parents — in one school no parents at all smoked. By contrast, the proportion of pupils with no smoking parents in the three primary schools with the *highest* smoking prevalence was only 36%. Similarly, though less markedly, in the three secondary schools with the lowest and highest smoking prevalence the proportions of pupils with no smoking parents were 40% and 24% respectively. It appears, therefore, that parental influence is very strong, especially in primary-school children.

School influence

Nevertheless, school differences cannot be discounted. Although comparatively little research has, as yet, been carried out on these aspects of smoking, a link has been shown between teacher smoking and permissiveness, and a higher incidence of pupil smoking,³ and a correlation has been found between greater school strictness and lower smoking rates in 'old boys'.⁴

If a certain set of standards related to smoking in a school could be of real value in preventing the uptake of smoking by children, it would clearly be to our advantage to know of them so that their fostering can be encouraged. This paper presents some of the results of a teachers' questionnaire, and it attempts to indicate the confusion which exists in schools over what should be, and what is being, done about smoking.

The survey was carried out in December 1982, concurrently with the Cancer Research Campaign survey on children's

smoking in Cumbria and Tyne & Wear. Each class teacher who supervised a class during the administration of the questionnaire was asked to complete a teacher's questionnaire at the same time. The overall response rate from the class teachers was 78%, calculated on the basis of one teacher per class, the highest response being from primary schools and the lowest from further education colleges.

Altogether, 650 responses from teachers were received and analysed. These came from 46 state primary schools, 2 independent schools, 14 state secondary schools and 3 further education colleges.

Teachers' smoking

A paper giving details of the teachers' own smoking habits has been published elsewhere,¹ the overall rate of cigarette smoking for the men being 17% and for the women 19%. The highest proportion of men teachers who smoked cigarettes was in the further education colleges (19%) and the lowest in the primary schools (10%). For women this situation was reversed, with the highest proportion of cigarette smokers (24%) in the primary schools and the lowest (16%) in the further education colleges. However, Table 1 emphasises the high prevalence of pipe and cigar smoking among the men teachers.

Policies towards smoking by members of staff varied considerably, and within certain schools there was some confusion about the policy.

Within the primary schools surveyed, the picture was as follows:

- In five schools (11%), teachers were not allowed to smoke in school at all.
- In 33 schools (72%), smoking was limited to the staff-room.
- In two schools (4%), teachers could smoke elsewhere than in the staff-room.
- In the other six schools (13%), the teachers' opinions on where smoking was allowed varied.

Within the secondary schools, independent schools, and F.E. colleges, the majority of teachers replied that smoking

| Smoking habit | Type of school or college | | | | | | | | Whole sample | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------|----|-----------|-----|-------------|----|-------|----|--------------|------|
| | Primary | | Secondary | | Independent | | F. E. | | | |
| Cigarettes only | 4 | 24 | 11 | 19 | 9 | 20 | 11 | 16 | 9.9 | 19.3 |
| Cigarettes & pipe/cigars | 6 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 6.6 | 0.4 |
| Pipe only | 4 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3.3 | 0.0 |
| Cigars only | 8 | 2 | 7 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 7.4 | 0.4 |
| Pipe & cigars | 2 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 3.6 | 0.0 |
| Do not smoke at present | 77 | 73 | 68 | 79 | 74 | 30 | 62 | 84 | 68.5 | 78.9 |
| No information | 0 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0.8 | 1.1 |
| Total | 53 | 51 | 207 | 168 | 34 | 5 | 71 | 61 | 365 | 285 |

was confined to the staff-room. However in all the 14 state secondary schools there was a proportion of teachers who said that this rule was not the case. This proportion ranged from 5% to 31% between schools.

Pupils' smoking in school

None of the 46 primary schools allowed pupils to smoke in school.

In nine of the secondary schools, all the teachers agreed that no pupils were allowed to smoke in school. In five of the secondary schools, some teachers — 78%, 53%, 5%, 4%, and 3% respectively — said that senior pupils were allowed to smoke in clearly defined areas.

Three teachers admitted that they did not know their school's policy on pupil smoking.

Students in the F.E. colleges were permitted to smoke in certain areas, although most teachers agreed that students were not allowed to smoke in class.

Punishment for pupils who smoke in school

In nine of the primary schools, some or all of the responding teachers said that

Table 1. The smoking habits of 650 school staff, as a percentage of the total (left column male, right column female).

they punish children for smoking. In the majority of the others, however, the problems of smoking had not been seen at all, or was of such a low level that no policy on punishment had been formulated or even felt to be needed.

In those which *did* punish smoking, most of the teachers would give a verbal reprimand, extra work, or loss of privileges.

In all the responding state and independent secondary schools, some teachers would punish pupils for smoking, although again they were not always unanimous in this opinion. Between 82% and 100% of the responding teachers respectively in each individual secondary school would punish smoking.

Even in those few secondary schools where the teachers were unanimous in their opinion that they would punish smoking, they were rarely in agreement as to what the punishment would be. There was, however, always a majority decision for a particular punishment or group of punishments, suggesting the

existence of overall school policies which were not always familiar to, or accepted by, all the staff.

In three schools, most of the teachers gave detentions for smoking.

In two, most gave verbal reprimands or extra work.

In one, a letter was sent to parents.

In one other, pupils caught smoking were "put on report".

In the other seven, other more severe punishments were given – usually involving corporal punishment.

The independent schools often used extra activities, "a positive approach", or fining – in aid of cancer research – as punishments for smoking.

As Table 2 shows, only 2% of the teachers in F.E. colleges would punish a student for smoking. The nature of the punishment largely depended on the particular circumstances.

Where teachers specified punishments which they would give for smoking and for other misdemeanours, those for smoking were almost always the more severe ones. Table 2 shows the emphasis on punishment for smoking, which seemed to be general in secondary schools, but was suddenly relaxed in further education colleges.

Although some of the teachers were cigarette smokers and some were not, no significant differences were found in their reactions to pupils' smoking. All were equally likely to reprimand pupils in school. Approximately 85% said they would reprimand a pupil in their own class, or from another class, for smoking in school, whilst 50% would reprimand a child from their own class if they caught them smoking out of school.

Where do we go from here?

No significant differences were found

between pupil smoking and any of the factors discussed above. However, the picture of what was happening within each school was so unclear, that any analysis of this kind would be virtually meaningless. I would suggest from these findings several points for further consideration.

Consistency between schools. There appears to be a lack of consistency in the reaction of schools in general to the question of smoking, which is almost certainly due to the lack of a clear directive as to what is best. Is punishment more effective than permissiveness in discouraging smoking? There are, as mentioned earlier, indications that it might be; but there is also the question of general school type, its catchment area, its ethos, the smoking habits and attitudes of the parents and many other variables to be taken into account. What works with one type of school could be anathema, or at the very least counterproductive, in another. We need more research on this vital topic so that headteachers can be given definite advice on this important matter.

Staff uncertainty. Not only is there lack of consistency between schools, but also within schools. Except in the very small primary schools, there were few in which all the teachers reacted in the same way to smoking. In many of the schools, not only was there lack of agreement between the teachers themselves as to whether pupils in their school were punished for smoking, and what the punishment would be, but there also sometimes appeared to

Table 2. The percentage of teachers who consider that their school policy is to punish these different offences (total number in parentheses).

| Offence | Primary | Secondary | Independent | F. E. |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------|------------|
| Misdemeanours (e.g. lateness) | 63.3 (98) | 87.8 (369) | 91.9 (37) | 45.5 (123) |
| Smoking | 21.8 (78) | 92.6 (367) | 84.0 (38) | 2.4 (126) |

be uncertainty as to whether or not seniors were actually allowed to smoke in certain parts of the school! Perhaps even more importantly, there was even lack of agreement in some cases as to where (if anywhere in the school) teachers were allowed to smoke. Since teachers' smoking has been shown to influence pupil smoking,^{6,7} it is vital that this question should be resolved.

The pupils' view. The lack of consistency in policy within a school can be extremely confusing to the pupils. Depending on which teacher catches them smoking, the consequences can range from no punishment at all – perhaps even being sent to the senior smoking area – to corporal punishment. It could lead to a very bewildering view of the status of smoking in the real world.

In the same way, the transition at the age of 16 from a secondary school in which smoking was severely punished to a further education college where not only is it not punished but is accepted as a social habit can also be confusing and could perhaps exacerbate the sudden increase in smoking which appears to occur after school-leaving age.^{1,8}

In conclusion, much more research is needed on school policy. Not only do we need to learn from the headteacher what the professed school policy is, but also we must find out from the individual teachers what they understand to be the policy, and how they are interpreting it. With findings of this sort, controlled for all possible background factors, we might hope in time to be able to make definite

recommendations for school policies.

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