

I HAVE recently completed a survey at my school on pupil and staff perceptions of their health education programme. We have also been involved in producing various Health Policy documents (sex, drugs, alcohol, and smoking), using the results of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire survey carried out last year as part of our evaluation of pupils' needs.

The survey was carried out to examine the following points:

To find out if pupils were aware of the meaning of the term 'health education'.

To establish the depth of their understanding. For example, did they include mental health as well as physical well-being in a concept of health?

To determine the requirements of the different age groups for knowledge.

To find out if points of view were different between boys and girls.

To see if pupils' experience in school had affected their outlook.

Welfare

Our Alcohol Education Policy, which is part of our Drug Education Policy, puts the welfare of the young person first. Education at all stages of school life within the pastoral programme and appropriate subject areas is designed first of all to give information, but also to provide the social skills which give the confidence and self-esteem to be able to resist pressures.

This education is most effective:

- As part of a personal and social education programme, not in isolation from education about other drugs and pressures.
- Initially at a sufficiently early age before pressure from friends, media, and external events become too great and experimentation begins.
- If links between pupils, parents, and school activities in this field are seen to be vital.
- If teaching strategies can reduce the status that alcohol consumption is supposed to give.

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An 'alcohol policy' for a secondary school



- If the hidden curriculum reflects and reinforces overt comments on alcohol consumption, e.g., comments made by pupils about drinking experience or prowess should not be ignored by teachers but discussed. Alcohol consumption should not be 'advertised'.

Pupils and staff are aware that alcohol may not be brought into school premises or consumed at school. Pupils who come to school functions under the influence of alcohol are denied access to them at that time and

may be deemed unsuitable to attend future events. This code also applies to school visits and holidays outside school premises.

Informed

Parents or guardians will be informed and consulted on all occasions where there is cause for concern about a pupil's consumption of alcohol. Realistic appraisal of a pupil's problems, further consultation, and further action by the school may be necessary.

Positive messages about responsible attitudes to alcohol should be reinforced not only by all staff but in all aspects of school life. Education takes place and is reinforced in many different ways. Factual information about the social and physical effects is more effective if it is backed up by active pupil participation by means of discussion and role play. Activities which develop confidence and self-esteem make individual choice easier.

Alcohol-free

Alcoholic drinks are not sold during school time. Soft drinks are always provided as an alternative at functions. At Sixth Form social events the ticket includes refreshments, food, and a maximum of two glasses of wine or non-alcoholic beverages. Alcoholic drinks may not be purchased by pupils, and they may not win al-

coholic drinks in raffles or competitions.

Discussions on alcohol and safety and drinking and driving give opportunities to present the alcohol-free way of life.

It should be pointed out that there are alternative methods of relaxation. In school, relaxation by means of sport, aerobics, music and relaxation classes is available to pupils and staff.

All staff and pupils should be aware of the school's alcohol policy.

Areas where Alcohol Education currently takes place in school are as follows:

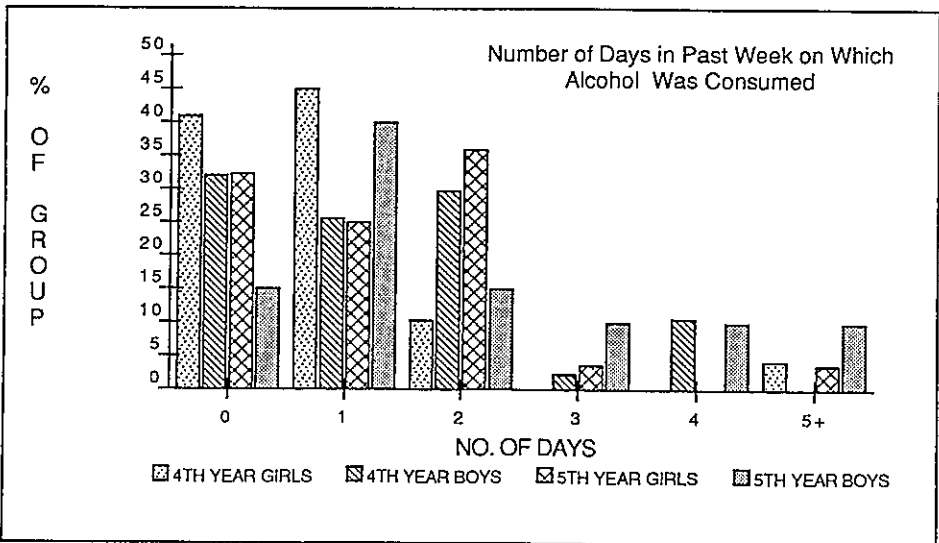
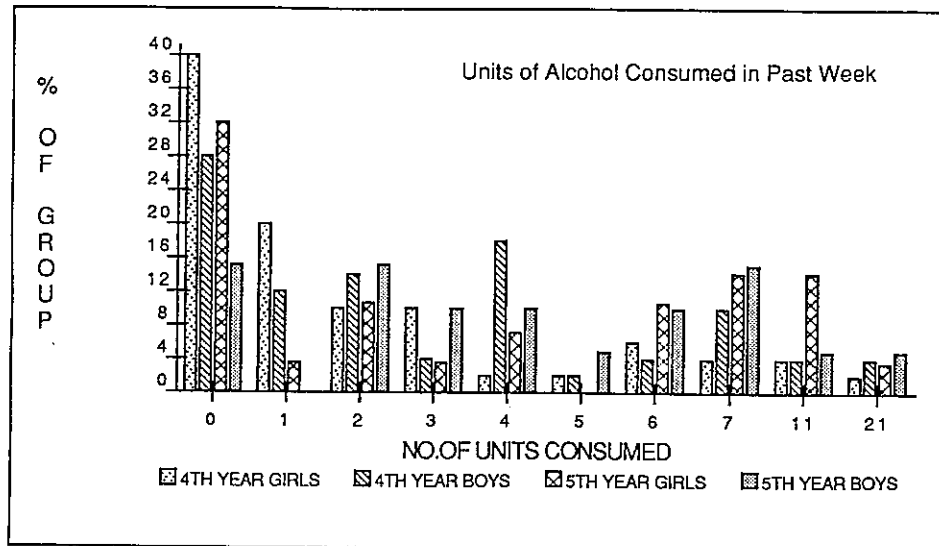
- 2nd Year Tutorial work.
- 3rd Year Science, RE (briefly).
- 4th Year RSE (1 term of Drugs & Medicines course), Science.
- 5th Year Science.
- 6th Form Tutorial work, Drinking and driving, Health Studies course.

Drinking: the nationwide picture

To discover the levels of alcohol consumption by our pupils, we ran John Balding's Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire. However, it was also necessary to set these results in a national context, and to do this I also obtained the Unit's nationwide results for surveys run in 1984, 1985 and 1986.

Values of units of alcohol consumed during the 7 days prior to the questionnaire were very consistent across the years (11+ to 15+) in all these surveys. Girls consume less alcohol than do boys. The use of shandy as a drink decreases, consumption of other alcoholic drinks increases, beer, wine, and spirits increasing most.

The units of alcohol (one glass of wine equivalent) consumed increase from 3 (boys) and 2 (girls) per week in the 1st year to 10 (boys) and 6 (girls) in the 5th year. Cider drinking decreases with age but consumption tends to be regional. The use of wine by girls seems to be increasing in all age groups and during the three years of the survey (sample size greater than 46,000).



Histograms from the school's alcohol policy leaflet, showing results from two questions in their Health Related Behaviour survey.

Home was the major source of alcohol especially for 13-14 year olds, the pub acts as more of a source for 15+ year olds. The use of supermarkets and off-licenses as sources is noticeable at all ages with boys more than girls. One-fifth of 5th-year boys used an off-licence as a source during the week.

The presence of alcohol at discos and parties is commonplace. Alcohol is usually consumed in social situations, and there is a greater tendency for those who drink to smoke as well. There is a positive correlation between the number of units of alcohol consumed in the last week and money spent on alcohol. The money

often comes from part-time jobs. There is a link between alcohol and diet: girls eating less food, or none, for breakfast; boys paying little attention to weight control.

Social pressure

School courses and home training policies tend to assume, realistically perhaps, that the young person will come under pressure to drink alcohol at some time during their life.

Information on the long and short-term effects of alcohol is included in Science and Personal & Social Education courses. An integral part of pastoral work and PSE courses involves self-esteem activities necessary to

give the confidence to make personal choices. Making an informed choice on the use of alcohol is probably one of the most difficult due to the variety of pressures involved.

Our own pupils' survey

Compared with the national results, 4th-year girls at this school are more likely to consume alcohol on one day in the previous week than are boys (45% of girls compared with 25.5% of boys). 5th-year girls are also more likely to consume alcoholic drink than boys on two days in the preceding week, but overall the percentage of days on which alcohol is consumed is higher in boys than in girls. Overall the percentages consuming any alcoholic drink were in tune with the results of the questionnaires nationally.

The units of alcohol drunk in the week preceding the questionnaire were greater in the 5th year than the 4th year, with 40% of 4th-year females and 28% of 4th-year males not consuming any alcohol but 32% of 5th-year females and only 15% of 5th-year males who did not drink alcohol. The consumption of most pupils was low, most drinking between 1 and 4 units of alcohol in the week preceding the questionnaire.

Very few were drinking 11-21 units per week, the maximum being 4 in the 4th year and 5% in the 5th year (males) and 2% in the 4th year and 3.6% in the 5th year (females).

These percentages of units of alcohol drunk (i.e., 1 glass of wine or half a pint of beer) are less than those shown in the national results. There is still the increasing trend of greater consumption and frequency of consumption from 4th to 5th years. Does this trend go on into the 6th Form? We believe it does.

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Table A. Every drink which contains alcohol has a different alcohol strength. In the following examples the number below the drawing represents the concentration of alcohol in the blood (in milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood, mg/100ml) for each measure of each drink.

Dry/Sweet Sherry or Vermouth 20	Single measure of Spirits (Whisky, Brandy, Gin, Vodka) 15	Table Wine 15	Sparkling Wine 25
Cider 1/2 pint 20	Special Lager 1/2 pint 25	Draught Bitter 1 pint 30	Draught Mild 1 pint 25

How units of alcohol were presented in the school's alcohol policy document.