

ASH guidance on developing school policies on vaping

For Designated Safeguarding Leads, PSHE leads and others developing school policies on vaping, in the context of the far greater risk from smoking. See links to additional resources overleaf.

Curriculum Headlines

Vaping is not for children. While it can help people quit smoking, if you don't smoke don't vape.

However, most children who try vaping, have also tried smoking, and vaping is far less harmful than smoking, which kills up to two thirds of smokers.

Uptake of vaping has a distinctive age profile. Curriculum design should reflect this. The key ages for take up are 16, 17 and particularly 18, although it can occur earlier.

It is illegal to sell cigarettes or nicotine containing vapes to under-18s, but it is not illegal to smoke or vape underage and punishment should be proportionate.

Children should not be excluded from school for vaping or smoking, unless it is associated with other disruptive behaviour which justifies this.

The main source of supply to children of cigarettes and vapes is shops.

Children under 18 should be asked where they got their vape (or cigarette) from. Complaints can be made to trading standards through the [Citizens Advice online portal](#).

Teachers should be aware that vapes could be used to exploit the most vulnerable children, as is the case with other age restricted products such as tobacco and alcohol.

Questions to ask to inform wider school policies and ethos

Do staff know what they would do if children in Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 are found to be smoking or vaping?

Would policy change for children of different ages?

Is there a range of sanctions to reflect severity?

Do your policies support students if vaping is being used to stop smoking?

How do you support children who smoke to stop?

Are you in touch with school nurses about these issues?

Do these policies align with a wider school ethos? If so, how?

Resources for schools on vaping

[Action on Smoking and Health](#) (ASH) has developed this resource with advice from teachers, and educational experts on health and safeguarding.

The ASH youth vaping briefing for local authorities is [available online](#) and includes:

- national data on youth attitudes and behaviour
- an explanation of the laws on vaping
- how to report any breaches
- a myth-buster.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guideline NG209 covers schools based interventions in its [recommendations on preventing uptake](#).

The New Zealand Ministry of Health [Vapefree Schools website](#) has a range of materials designed to empower students to make informed decisions, by *“making the law clear, the facts known and the decision theirs”*.

Preliminary work with groups of young people in England and Wales suggests that young people in England and Wales found the New Zealand resources useful. In contrast the [US real cost campaign](#), which does not put the risks of vaping in the context of the greater risks of smoking, led one group of young people to conclude that they would rather be seen smoking than vaping after viewing the campaign.

However, schools should be aware that vaping laws in New Zealand are not identical to the UK. For example, New Zealand schools must display notices stating that smoking and vaping within the premises is forbidden at all times, as this is a [legal requirement](#). Schools in England could, however, consider doing this on a voluntary basis.

New content covering nicotine and nicotine vapes will be available from mid-September 2022 on the youth-focused [FRANK website](#).