Schools which enforce a no-smoking policy may experience lower rates of pupil smoking. Little is known, however, about how young people view such restrictions and it has been argued that smoking bans might actually encourage adolescent smoking. This paper presents pupils’ views on the extent to which staff could, and should, enforce smoking restrictions. Twenty-five single-sex discussion groups were held with 13-year-old pupils who had been purposively selected from two Scottish secondary schools. Both schools served relatively deprived communities and ostensibly had no-smoking policies, but varied in their pupil smoking rates. The pupils’ accounts suggested that staff enforcement could interrupt pupil smoking and discourage smoking on school premises, but did not affect whether or not they actually smoked. Pupils viewed staff efforts as ineffective and felt staff did not always have the authority or status needed to enforce a ban. Differences were found between the schools, but these did not explain the variation in their smoking profiles.

Introduction

Schools enforcing a no-smoking policy may experience lower rates of pupil smoking (Wakefield et al., 2000; Moore et al., 2001). Little is known, however, about young people’s attitudes towards no-smoking policies or about pupils’ views concerning the role of school staff in enforcing smoking restrictions.

It has been argued that smoking bans may cause resentment and, paradoxically, encourage young people to smoke. Adolescent smokers can feel that anti-smoking policies limit their freedom (Jeffery et al., 1990) and Unger et al. (Unger et al., 1999) highlight the possibility that those who believe their rights are being restricted may smoke in order to reassert their autonomy. They also argue that the existence of a no-smoking policy may encourage adolescents to smoke as they may feel, if such policies are deemed necessary, ‘smoking must be an enjoyable, rebellious, exciting and attractive behaviour’ [(Unger et al., 1999), p. 752]. It would therefore seem that the way pupils view school-based no-smoking policies, and feel about staff imposing them, could have implications concerning both their effect and effectiveness.

These observations provide support for the view that school-based no-smoking policies should be developed through negotiation with pupils (West and Foulds, 1999). Exploring pupils’ views of such policies and staff enforcement of them would indicate issues policy makers and practitioners may need to consider. It could also provide an insight into why enforcement can make a difference. Although researchers have considered how smoking bans could impact upon young people [e.g. (Unger et al., 1999)], so far the relationship between staff enforcement and pupil smoking rates has only been considered using quantitative methods which provide little insight into how staff enforcement affects pupil smoking behaviour.
This paper documents pupils’ views of the extent to which staff could, and should, enforce smoking restrictions. The data presented were collected as part of the Teenage Health in School (THiS) study. THiS aims to explore if and how certain school characteristics [such as those espoused within the Health-Promoting School (HPS)] and/or pupil factors could explain differences in the smoking profiles of secondary schools which were similar in terms of their pupils’ socio-economic characteristics. Pseudonyms have been used throughout this paper in order to maintain confidentiality.

### Methods

Single-sex discussion groups were held with second year (S2, age 13) pupils in two local authority secondary schools. Both schools were located in the Central Clydeside conurbation, which includes Greater Glasgow and surrounding areas. On the basis of the West of Scotland 11–16 Study (Sweeting and West, 2000), both were known to be relatively disadvantaged and to differ in their pupil smoking rates at second and fourth (S4, age 15) year levels. Surveys conducted during THiS with S2 and S4 pupils 3 years later (in 2001) confirmed that there was still a difference between the schools (Table I). While the relatively low smoking school (Lowlands) had a school roll of 1400 and served predominantly urban neighbourhoods, the other (Highacres) had a roll of 1100 and served both urban and rural communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School and year</th>
<th>Response rate (%)</th>
<th>Percentage of pupils smoking</th>
<th>$\chi^2$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highacres S2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>19.0 (39)</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowlands S2</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>11.7 (32)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highacres S4</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>26.5 (50)</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowlands S4</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>10.6 (23)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consideration of THiS survey data and the wider literature would suggest that the differing smoking rates may reflect different school processes. Adolescents’ smoking rates in rural towns and villages are comparable with those in non-rural areas (West and Sweeting, 2002) and rates of parental smoking were actually higher in Lowlands than Highacres (Gordon and Turner, 2003a). Additionally, the schools were similar in their male:female ratios.

Although the difference between the schools’ smoking rates was greater at S4 than at S2, for empirical and pragmatic reasons, only S2 pupils were involved in the discussions groups. Results from 11–16 showed that ‘school effects’ (variations between schools over and above individual predictors of a particular outcome) for smoking were stronger at S2 than at S4 (West, pers. commun.), and the schools were reluctant for S4 pupils to be involved due to academic pressures.

We recruited participants by asking pupils from various S2 classes to volunteer, along with friends from their class. Friendship-based groups were seen as encouraging open debate and offering the potential for ‘collective remembering’ (Kitzinger, 1995) where co-participants could discuss shared recollections. Pupils were asked to select no more than seven friends and the groups formed ranged from three to eight individuals.

Discussion groups were conducted in order to elicit information from as broad a range of pupils within the time available. Twenty-five groups were held in total (13 in Highacres and 12 in Lowlands). In order to capture diverse experiences and mindful of the potential for participant collusion, or one minority perspective dominating, we routinely prompted whether individuals held similar or dissimilar perspectives on what was said. Most discussions lasted over an hour. Following participant consent, each was taped and fully transcribed. As the aim of THiS was to identify school-level and pupil-related factors, in each school half the groups focused on issues concerning the HPS, while the other half explored pupils’ views of smoking, smokers, peer structures and how smoking was addressed within their school. The main...
The question underpinning the HPS discussions was whether and how features of a school’s formal and hidden curricula affect pupil smoking behaviour. The other discussions were driven by the question of whether and how peer structures and friendships, staff enforcement of smoking policies, and pupils’ views on smoking and smokers, could contribute to school differences in pupil smoking.

Initial stages of the analysis involved thoroughly reading each transcript, and developing a coding frame based on issues covered during the interviews and emergent themes. Transcripts were then imported into the software package NVivo version 1.2 (NVivo, 2000) to enable electronic coding and retrieval. Data coded under specific themes (e.g., pupils’ accounts of staff enforcement) were then selected and analysed in detail. This involved one of us (K. T.) writing descriptive summaries detailing exactly what participants in each group had said under this code (e.g., their accounts of how staff reacted to pupil smoking), and noting the nature of any group consensus and divergent views. Using these summaries, within and across school comparisons were then made. K. T. repeated this process so that she moved through the data set analysing chunks of coded data and noting possible (and rejected) explanations for school differences in pupil smoking rates.

For the purpose of this paper, analysis focuses on all discussions concerning smoking, whether these arose in response to direct questions on smoking and/or health more generally (Table II) or arose spontaneously throughout the interviews. Themes pulled out were participants’ accounts of how staff enforced a ban, staff’s right to enforce such restrictions, barriers to enforcement, and where and when pupils smoked during the school day.

In this paper, in order to differentiate between pupils who took part in the discussions and pupils in the schools more generally, the former are referred to as participants, the latter as pupils.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HPS discussions</th>
<th>Smoking/peer discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you think that schools should just teach subjects to young people or should schools teach subjects and also focus on the health of their pupils?</td>
<td>Thinking about the pupils in your school who smoke at least once a week, what are they like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think teachers and other staff members should be setting a good example to the pupils or is it their own business whether they eat a healthy diet, exercise, smoke?</td>
<td>In this school, where do pupils smoke? How often do you see pupils smoking on school premises?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which members of the school staff do you think have a right to tell you not to smoke, tell you not to drink, tell you to exercise?</td>
<td>How easy is it for pupils in this school to smoke without being found out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent do you view school staff as: role models for health issues, role models for smoking behaviour, and role models for how you should behave and talk to others?</td>
<td>What would happen if an S2 pupil was caught smoking while at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do pupils get disciplined in this school?</td>
<td>How worried would you be if you were caught?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about this?</td>
<td>Do you know which members of staff at your school smoke?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does this influence your view of: smoking, your teachers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II. Discussion group questions

K. M. Turner and J. Gordon
Results

The schools’ policies, staff enforcement and pupils’ reactions

The official stance taken in both schools was that pupils were not to smoke within the school buildings (Gordon and Turner, 2003b). Although participants in each school were aware of this, they described how it was common to see pupils smoking during school time. For example:

I: Do you see people smoke in the school each day?
P: Aye. [Number of voices]
P: Aye, there’s no day you don’t see somebody. [HS3, girls]
I: How often do you see pupils smoke?
P: Everyday. [Number of voices]
P: All the time, every single day. [LS4, girls]

In order to contextualize participants’ comments, it is worth noting that, in general, Highacres staff seemed to take a firmer line than those in Lowlands. Additionally, Highacres pupils appeared more willing to accept staff authority, since Highacres participants described how smokers extinguished their cigarettes and scattered when staff members approached, while Lowlands participants gave accounts of pupils opposing staff authority.

Yet, although Lowlands seemed to take a more lenient line, a few Lowlands participants described how smokers tried to hide their habit from staff and some claimed that pupils did not smoke on school premises because they knew this was forbidden. Furthermore, while the suggestion that staff would do nothing was mentioned more often in Lowlands than Highacres, reference was made to this in each school. In addition, in both schools there were descriptions of pupils smoking where staff could see them. Thus, in each school there was evidence of staff interrupting pupil smoking, but also of pupils being relatively unconcerned about being caught.

Both Highacres and Lowlands participants argued that schools/school staff could do little to address pupil smoking. They may have held this view because they regularly saw pupils smoking during the school day and therefore felt staff presence had little impact. As Lowlands participants provided accounts of pupils opposing staff authority, they may also have realized staff could only influence those pupils who were willing to accept their authority. Considering some Lowlands participants described how pupils re-lit their cigarettes or returned to their smoking place having just been told not to smoke or to move on, it is also possible they felt staff were merely ‘fire fighting’ rather than solving the problem.

Participants may also have felt staff were unable to address pupil smoking because they perceived a number of factors limiting the extent to which they could intervene. These related either to the immediate context in which staff worked or to issues existing beyond the school setting.

Immediate barriers to enforcement

The sheer number of pupils smoking was viewed as preventing staff from intervening. Highacres participants argued that teachers did not approach groups of smokers because there were too many of them to deal with, and moreover that teachers could do little because there were ‘big crowds’ and ‘no just a wee gang o’ people’ smoking. In addition, one participant commented that teachers ‘cannae [cannot] expel them [smokers] cos there are too many that smoke’ and consequently gave the impression that she felt such numbers meant a firm line could not be taken. In Lowlands, some described how staff had walked past pupils smoking near to the school because there were so many and one group argued that it was difficult for schools to address pupil health because so many pupils smoked.

Another issue mentioned as preventing staff from effectively intervening was the extent to which they could influence pupil behaviour. In both schools participants commented that pupils would not stop smoking simply because a staff member had asked them to. Lowlands participants
argued that pupils would need to witness someone who was ill from smoking in order to be sufficiently shocked to think about this habit, suggesting that staff views did not have enough impact. The idea of staff comments having little effect was also implied when participants argued that teachers/schools could not make a difference because pupils did not heed their warnings:

P: …we’ve been warned ever since we were in primary no to smoke right, and all the secondaries know that, they’ve been warned by everybody, they come up to the secondary school and they’ve been warned but they still light that cigarette and put it in their mouth and if they want to do that to themselves then that’s fine. I don’t even think the school can stop them.

I: What do the rest of you think, do you think the school can stop?

P: No.

P: No.

P: I don’t think they can… [HS12, girls]

During this same discussion, participants argued that smokers were individuals who did not listen to teachers, or care about their education or about the implications of being caught. Such comments implied that the extent to which staff could address pupil smoking was not only related to the position of teachers, but also the attitudes of those who smoked. This was similarly suggested by Lowlands participants who commented that staff could not control the smokers, and/or described how smoking pupils were unconcerned about the implications of being caught and reprimanded.

In both schools there was also a sense that staff could not address pupil smoking because they did not have the necessary authority. Participants mentioned they would be concerned if they were caught smoking because they feared not how a staff member would respond, but how parents would react if they were informed. Participants held this view because they regarded parents as having the right to physically discipline children, expected their own would firmly reprimand them and placed more importance on their relationship with parents than staff. For example:

I: It sounds as if you’re more concerned about what your parents think than what your teachers think?

P2: Well the teachers don’t really matter.

P4: The teachers can’t really.

P2: Your ma can hit ye [you], your teachers cannæ.

P4: You have to live with yer ma, you don’t need to live with teachers…so if they are disappointed in ye.

P2: If I did smoke ma mum wouldnae be aff [off] ma back. [LS1, girls]

In both schools then, the number of smokers, the extent to which staff could influence pupils, the attitudes of those who smoked and the lack of authority staff had over pupils were each viewed as hindering staff from addressing smoking. However, although such commonalities existed, there were differences between the schools. These indicated that Lowlands staff faced additional problems.

In Lowlands it was argued that the experience of being disciplined actually encouraged some pupils to smoke because they felt being reprimanded looked ‘good’ in front of their peers. Participants also stated that teachers might leave some smokers alone because they were troublemakers and because they (teachers) feared for their own safety. In addition, there were accounts of pupils opposing staff authority, and it was argued that staff were ineffective because they could not control pupils, and because some pupils viewed schools as settings for education and not social/personal issues:

I: And do you think that schools can make a difference to whether or not pupils do smoke?

P: No, ‘cos they don’t have any control over them.
P: A lot of people think the school’s school, and you just go there—

P: For a laugh.

P: …for the sake of education.

P: And it’s nothing to do with after school or outside in normal life. [LS10, boys]

None of these issues were mentioned in Highacres. Considering members of the senior management team (SMT) had greater authority than teaching and non-teaching staff, it might be expected that pupils would be particularly concerned about being caught by an SMT member. This was the situation in Highacres where participants described how smokers scattered when the head teacher approached, and how they and others would be particularly concerned if he caught them smoking. It was implied that this concern stemmed from the fact that he had the authority to suspend or expel a pupil, and was an imposing figure:

P: A lot of folk are like scared o’ him and that, like a’ the first years.

I: Why are they scared?

P: Cause he’s so big. [Two voices]

P: And he’s the head teacher and his voice is dead loud and that.

P: And he can suspend you or anything, he can dae [do] anything he wants. [HS2, boys]

In contrast, in Lowlands, an account was given of a pupil opposing the authority of an assistant head. In addition, it appeared that Lowlands pupils were not particularly scared of their head teachers (both the head teacher and the deputy head were referred to as ‘head teachers’) as a few participants mentioned how pupils smoked in front of the deputy head teacher. As participants described how this individual either ignored pupil smoking or responded by simply telling pupils to put out their cigarettes, this could have been because he was viewed as someone who would do little. It could also have been because he was not taken seriously, as a few participants joked about the manner in which he dressed. This comparison of accounts given in each school suggests that a staff member’s designation did not automatically bestow authority, but rather that it was the manner in which pupils regarded the individual which determined the extent to which s/he could influence pupil smoking behaviour. Further evidence for this comes from the fact that a staff member who could be viewed as having least authority (a non-teaching staff member who was bullied by some of the pupils and described as someone who let pupils smoke), paradoxically, was able to discourage pupils from smoking because she had a good relationship with them:

P: There’s a woman…Agnes and she’s dead nice isn’t she? She kens [knows] you smoke but she says ‘if I catch you I need to take you doonstairs cause if I don’t that’s me daeing [doing] something wrang’.

P: Cause she can lose her job…

P: So we just don’t dae anything then cos that’s like sad on her.

P: Aye, sad on Agnes cos we like Agnes and we’re no wanting her to lose her job and all that.

P: She would hate to teel (tell) but she would have to…

I: Is that why you don’t smoke in those places [areas inside the building] because you don’t want her to get into trouble?

P: We don’t smoke…[there] because it would be Agnes, Agnes could end up losing her job for it. [HS4, girls]

**External barriers to enforcement**

In both schools participants argued that since young people could legally smoke, it was up to the individual whether or not s/he did so. In Highacres it was also argued that because of this, unless pupils were smoking in school, staff could not reprimand them for having cigarettes. Thus, pupils’ rights were viewed as limiting the extent to which staff could intervene.
Earlier it was noted that both Highacres and Lowlands participants had commented that a pupil would not give up smoking simply because a staff member asked him/her to. When making this point, it seemed that participants felt the situation was complex because smoking is addictive. Certainly it was evident that the addictive nature of this habit could be viewed as reducing the extent to which teachers could address pupil smoking:

P7: …teachers used to walk by [the pupils smoking] and just say nothing.

P4: Aye but a teacher really cannae dae anything because once you are hooked. [LS1, girls]

We have also noted that Lowlands participants described pupils opposing staff authority. In some cases it was apparent that the pupil had been able to do this because his/her parents knew of his/her smoking. For example:

P: …this lassie [girl], her ma lets her smoke and she just—Mr [assistant head] telt (told) her to put her fag oot and she just took a draw and blew it in his face and he didnae dae anything cos her ma knows she smokes.

I: Which teacher?

P: Mr [assistant head] I think it was, he kept saying, ‘put the fag’ out but she just kept smoking it in front of his face. [LS4, girls]

Thus, although participants had stated they would be particularly concerned about how parents would react, in Lowlands it appeared that parental knowledge could undermine staff authority.

**Staff’s right to impose a ban**

Participants stated that staff should not reprimand a pupil who was smoking off school premises or outwith school time. In one Highacres group the manner in which ‘school time’ was considered was quite complex, since it was argued that lunchtime, which was a time when pupils could leave the school grounds, was not ‘school time’, but that other break times were since pupils were not permitted to leave the premises.

In both schools, participants also commented that it was up to the pupil if s/he smoked. This indicated that they felt enforcement of a no-smoking policy imposed upon pupils’ personal rights. In Highacres, however, some believed that such infringement might be appropriate if the pupil was smoking in school:

P5: They should maybe do something aboot it if you’re smoking in school or something but if you get caught outside school they shouldn’t do anything, it’s up to you if you want to smoke and that.

P: I don’t think they should dae anything, cos it’s your life you’re wasting.

P5: It’s your decision. [HS9, girls]

Interestingly, although some participants argued that staff should not intervene, there was some evidence of pupil support for staff involvement in reducing pupil smoking. In Highacres it was commented that staff should help smokers to give up and that teacher concern for pupil smoking indicated that they cared:

P: I suppose they (teachers) care about you a bit, or they wouldn’t give you all this on drugs and tell you not to smoke an’ everything, so they must like…[HS13, girls]

In addition, in both schools participants (usually non-smokers) commented they disliked the smell of cigarette smoking and a few argued that they felt the school should do more. In Lowlands, there was also the suggestion that by doing little, staff were encouraging pupil smoking.

In each school, participants also commented that staff members who smoked had less right to reprimand a smoker. However, in both schools others argued that knowing that a teacher smoked would not change their view of that individual, and that a smoking staff member had more authority to advise and reprimand a smoker. For example:

P: Mrs Shaw smokes.

I: And what do you think about that?
P: She sits and tells us don’t smoke it’s bad for your health and stuff.

I: So do you think she’s in a better or worse position to tell you not to smoke?

P: I think she’s in a better because I think she’s trying because the way she talks about it and that she says ‘I’ve been smoking for how long and I try and stop’ and stuff like. [LS11, girls]

Discussion

Before drawing conclusions and considering their implications, various limitations of the study design should be acknowledged. As Highacres and Lowlands were not randomly selected, they cannot be viewed as representative of schools in general. Since a non-random sampling approach was also used to recruit participants, their views may not be representative of their peers. In addition, as most participants described themselves as non-smokers, the findings might not reflect the views of smokers as fully as those of non-smokers. The fact that groups were friendship based may have contributed to this situation as smokers can be loners (West and Michell, 1999) and thus the sampling approach may have meant pupils with no friends were excluded. Notwithstanding these limitations, the following points can be made.

It was evident that staff could interrupt pupil smoking and discourage smoking on school premises. There was no evidence to suggest, however, that staff could actually encourage a smoker to give up; only the smokers themselves and their parents were viewed as having such power. It was also evident that the school setting does not support staff enforcement. Pupil numbers greatly outweigh staff and participants viewed the sheer number of pupils smoking as discouraging staff from intervening. Additionally, whilst pupils were allowed to move off school premises during the school day, staff were not viewed as having the right to reprimand pupils for smoking when they were out of school. Interestingly, some staff have argued that they would not approach groups of smokers and that the responsibility of the school ends at its gates (Gordon and Turner, 2003b). The fact that both pupils and staff may view staff authority as being limited according to both time and place implies that neither party would support a policy which extended beyond school premises and outwith school time.

It was apparent that staff could only influence smokers who were willing to accept their authority and that the manner in which a pupil appraised a staff member could have a greater influence than his/her professional status in determining the extent to which the pupil accepted his/her instructions. In addition, it was clear that pupils might not view staff as individuals they wished to impress or get on with and, consequently, may have no desire to listen to them, so providing staff with no interpersonal basis from which to encourage pupils to comply. The implications of this situation are heightened by the fact that staff have only a limited formal/legal foundation from which to act. Although, in practice, pupil smoking is banned in all schools (Goddard and Higgins, 1999), in Scotland there is no national legislation underpinning these policies (Kannas and Schmidt, 2001). The problems this situation raises for staff are further increased by the fact that adolescents are legally allowed to smoke.

The difficulties faced by staff attempting to impose a ban were also demonstrated by the descriptions of the pupils who smoked. Adolescent smokers are often individuals who are alienated from school and have lower levels of academic achievement (West and Foulds, 1999), and it was apparent that smokers in both schools were viewed as those pupils least likely to listen to staff. The possibility of smokers limiting the extent to which staff could intervene was also indicated by the suggestion that staff might not approach them in case they responded in an aggressive manner; a prospect which staff themselves have noted as discouraging them from intervening (Gordon and Turner, 2003b). Considering adolescent smokers may feel alienated from school, it might be that efforts to improve their engagement with school could impact on their smoking behaviour. These
efforts could also have educational gains as Samdal et al. (Samdal et al., 1999) argue that activities which boost pupils’ satisfaction with school are likely to improve their academic achievements.

Lowlands staff appeared to face particular issues when addressing smokers, with Lowlands participants arguing that the experience of being reprimanded encouraged some pupils to smoke, and describing how staff authority had been opposed and how staff might not intervene for fear of being physically harmed. It was also apparent that parental knowledge of pupil smoking could undermine staff authority. As Lowlands staff seemed to experience greater problems than Highacres staff when attempting to reprimand smokers, there was no evidence to support the hypothesis that pupils’ views of the extent to which staff could and should enforce a ban explained the difference between the schools’ smoking rates. However, such views present only one possible explanation and it is conceivable that other factors, such as access to cigarettes and pupils’ views of smoking were important.

The possibility that parental acceptance of pupil smoking undermines staff authority provides support for the view that staff should work with parents in order to promote pupil health (Lister-Sharp et al., 1999). Acknowledging the potential influence of parents also highlights that the wider context within which schools are located cannot be ignored. Young people’s smoking behaviour has been associated with many factors including peer and parental smoking behaviour (West and Foulds, 1999), and this suggests that staff enforcement can only have limited effects and that school policies alone are not sufficient to address pupil smoking.

The addictive nature of smoking was also viewed as limiting the extent to which staff could address pupil smoking, suggesting that when assessing the effectiveness of staff enforcement, attention needs to be given to the nature of the behaviour targeted. It would also imply that schools aiming to address pupil smoking need to implement interventions, such as smoking cessation programmes in order to help those already addicted.

Although this paper has focused on staff enforcement of a smoking ban, the potential of pupils to influence levels of pupil smoking should be acknowledged. It was apparent that some pupils support staff enforcement, and Vartiainen et al. (Vartiainen et al., 1996) state that pupil involvement in controlling and monitoring pupil smoking can be an effective means of discouraging this behaviour. Involving pupils might also help them to understand the purpose of smoking bans. Pupil compliance to no-smoking policies is generally poor (Kannas and Schmidt, 2001) and here it was evident that pupils may view smoking bans as curtailing young people’s rights. Unger et al. (Unger et al., 1999) argue that adolescents who understand the need for no-smoking policies may be more likely to accept them and encourage others to do the same. In addition, if pupils were informed of their benefits (e.g. reduce risk of passive smoking), they might view them as protecting their welfare and rights, rather than working against them. It has been argued that no-smoking policies should be developed through negotiation with pupils (West and Foulds, 1999). Clearly, however, if pupils decide that smoking bans should not be enforced, their involvement could lead to a complex situation. This situation could be avoided if pupil involvement was restricted to discussions concerning how, rather than whether, a no-smoking policy should be implemented. As Wight notes ‘[pupil] consultation can come at different stages in the development of a programme...’ (Wight, 1999, p. 241).

Whilst this research has suggested that staff efforts will not have a substantial impact on pupil smoking rates, the intention to enforce a ban would still seem to be a laudable one. Stead et al. (Stead et al., 1996) state that the absence of a ban may convey the message that smoking is acceptable and here it was apparent that not enforcing a ban could be viewed as encouraging pupils to smoke. There was also evidence to suggest that smoking restrictions should extend to staff, as some participants described how they viewed staff members who smoked as having less authority to reprimand
them for the same behaviour. Yet, it was also apparent that a smoking staff member can be viewed as someone who can advise from an informed position (Gordon and Turner, 2001).

In conclusion, pupils may consider staff enforcement as ineffective and cite a number of reasons for this view, and while staff enforcement of a smoking ban can influence when and where pupils smoke, it may not be sufficient to reduce pupil smoking rates. When considering implications for practitioners and policy makers, five key points can be made. First, it would appear that if staff are expected to enforce a ban, and especially if this ban is to extend beyond the school setting, such actions should be formalized and supported by national legislation. Often staff cannot intervene because they are not viewed as having the right or authority to do so and such legislation can increase the credibility of school-specific efforts (Kannas and Schmidt, 2001). School rules, such as pupils not being allowed to leave school premises during the school day, could also provide staff with more leverage. Second, consistent with the HPS, greater effort should be made to gain parental support (Scottish Executive, 1999). Third, specialist programmes for pupils already addicted to nicotine should be provided. Fourth, pupils should be involved in developing and implementing no-smoking policies, and smoking bans should be presented in terms of increasing pupil welfare and safety, rather than in disciplinarian terms. Finally, the limitations of staff enforcement should be acknowledged. Staff may not be the most influential people in relation to a pupil’s health behaviours and, while schools have a role to play in addressing pupil smoking, their efforts should be located within a much broader context.

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