

Applying the Halo Effect to Tackle Schools' Vaping Epidemic

Teachers and safeguarding professionals are having to tackle an epidemic in the use of vapes by schoolchildren



[Giving evidence this May to parliament's Tobacco and Vapes Bill Committee](#), Dr Patrick Roach, General Secretary of teachers' union the NASUWT noted that 75% of teachers had reporting vaping had increased in their schools in the past year.

The union also found that that 85% of teachers report that vaping is an issue either in school or on school premises.

In addition, [research published in August by the Action on Smoking and Health](#) (ASH) campaign revealed that nearly on in five (18%) of all children aged 11-17 had tried vaping. That's some 980,000 schoolkids.

Of those, 230,000 were found to be vaping more than once a week.

These figures raise a number of concerns.

Prime among them is, of course, children's health. The Department of Health & Social Care (DHSC) is understandably decisive, saying "children should never vape." Nonetheless, [the department reports](#) that the number of children vaping has tripled in the past three years.

NASUWT's Roach commented that "Teachers are reporting the very damaging impact vaping can have on a child's mental and physical development."

The use of and even addiction to vapes can also be highly disruptive, with children seeking to escape the classroom for a sneaky puff.

As Surrey teacher Sade Afolabi [told the BBC](#):

“You find them asking to go out of the lessons to go into the toilets. It is damaging because when you quantify how much time is lost it’s quite a big loss to learning.”

Whether the forthcoming Tobacco and Vapes Bill can address this issue is debatable. For example, a big issue is that many of the vapes used by children are already illegal.

Detecting use so that education and health professionals can address juvenile behaviour appears to be key.

However, [research published last month by the Safer Schools initiative](#) found only 20% of parents feel that there are adequate systems in place to detect vaping.

Whilst all this may seem rather depressing, there is hope on the horizon, courtesy of some very smart new technology.



Hello HALO

Schools can and are taking advantage of smart sensors, developed by [Halo](#).

Recently added to Avoira’s portfolio of technology solutions for the education sector, these clever pieces of kit can detect not just vape emissions, but traditional tobacco smoke and THC – the active ingredient in cannabis.

Incidentally, if you’re sceptical – and many teachers won’t be – of the value of THC detection, only this week the [Plymouth Herald](#) reported that a “large number of children from the city’s schools last year had to be taken to A&E after using vapes containing THC or the synthetic drug Spice.

When a [HALO Smart Sensor 3C](#) is triggered it automatically delivers a real-time notification via email or a mobile app to alert staff of the location and type of incident.

This enables an immediate response and, crucially, intervention. This may involve disciplinary action but, with a view on addressing longer term health and behavioural issues schools often support pupils in tackling their vape use, especially if they have developed a nicotine addiction.

HALO also neatly sidesteps privacy issues. Clearly, using CCTV to identify pupils vaping in school toilet cubicles would be more than inappropriate. HALO, on the other hand, doesn’t capture any personal information. It simply alerts staff to incident.

Using the cloud-based HALO dashboard, school staff can also generate heat maps to show both when and where alarms are being triggered. This is useful in identifying the current go-to hot spots for illicit vapers.

Measuring the HALO effect

It all sounds good on paper, so what about in practice? St Joseph's RC High School in Horwich, Greater Manchester provides an excellent case study.

Headteacher Tony McCabe installed HALO sensors in each of the school's student toilet cubicles after several pupils required hospital treatment after using contaminated vapes. One child had briefly stopped breathing.

Mr McCabe was also keen to discourage pupils – some only in Year 7 - from skipping classes to vape.

The sensors yielded immediate results which graphically illustrated the scale of the problem, with the head telling [ITV's Granada News](#) that:

“The very first day that they were fitted they went off 112 times which tells us that some young people could not last an hour without needing to come and use the toilets so they could use a vape.”

Now better able to identify errant pupils, the school can work with them and their parents to educate on the risks of vaping and help address any addiction issues.

Sensors working overtime

The HALO Smart Sensor C3 also offers schools further benefits. Multiple-sensors can identify other potential health and safety risks, such as high levels of particulates – which can trigger asthma – carbon dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and specific chemicals, such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) found in cleaning and cleaning products.

Further, a heat sensor enables not just detection of occupancy but the number of people present (up to nine individuals), again without breaching personal privacy.

Light and motion sensors additionally support safety and energy economy initiatives.

Being Power over Ethernet (PoE) rather than battery devices, they're also always whenever the network is on

Built on open architecture, HALO can be seamlessly integrated with wider systems. For example, a HALO alarm can trigger a camera on a connected CCTV network to record, enhance its frame rate and resolution.



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Say 'hello' to HALO

If you'd like to say 'hello' to HALO and address illicit vaping on your school or college premises, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We'd be happy to offer a free, no-obligation consultation on-site or via preferred video-collaboration tool – at your convenience

[Get in touch to find out more!](#)

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