

31 October 2025

Education Bureau Circular No. 20/2025
Smoking Ban in Schools

[Note: This circular should be read by –

- (a) Supervisors/heads of all schools – for necessary action; and
- (b) Heads of all sections – for information.]

Summary

This circular provides schools with information on building a smoke-free campus and reminds schools to take necessary actions in accordance with latest measures and legislation in respect of tobacco control. It supersedes the Education Bureau (EDB) Circular No. 2/2007 issued in 2007.

Details

Detrimental effects of smoking on the youth

2. Most smokers become addicted to smoking during adolescence. Tobacco smoke, containing over 7 000 chemicals and 60 carcinogens, is one of the major causes of deaths and diseases. Nicotine in tobacco products is highly addictive and affects brain development. Since human brains continue to develop until the age of 25, children and young people are especially vulnerable to the effects of nicotine. Nicotine can impair the part of the brain connected with attention, learning and memory, and even undermine the ability to control emotions.

3. The World Health Organization has set "Unmasking the appeal: Exposing industry tactics on tobacco and nicotine products" as the theme of the World No Tobacco Day 2025. To protect young people from the hazard of tobacco, schools should take extra care in responding to the strategies employed by the tobacco industry.

Types of smoking products

4. In view that the conventional tobacco market has shrunk as a result of worldwide implementation of tobacco control measures, the tobacco industry has strived to develop tobacco products (e.g. electronic cigarettes and heat-not-burn cigarettes), and promote them as less hazardous substitutes despite the lack of objective scientific proof to maintain profitability. Targeting young people as the new generation clientele, the tobacco industry has deliberately

adopted flavours and designs that appeal to the youth in these new products and marketed them with the appearance of celebrities or other influencers. For details about alternative tobacco products, please visit the website of the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health (<http://www.taco.gov.hk>).

Beware of strategies employed by the tobacco industry

5. Over the years, the tobacco industry has strongly hindered the implementation of effective tobacco control measures, such as regulation by legislative means. Furthermore, it has attempted to get rid of its negative image through efforts in sponsorship and establishment of organisations, (including the Global Action to End Smoking). The World Health Organization has urged all parties to stay alert to the activities of such organisations and avoid any cooperation with them. Under the name of anti-smoking campaigns, the tobacco industry has also tempted young people to try smoking by claiming that smoking is an adult behavior, shirking its responsibility for producing and promoting hazardous products to young people.

6. Schools should therefore decline any sponsorship offered by the tobacco industry or related organisations. Nor should schools collaborate with them in holding any promotional or educational activities on smoking. Projects with Government subvention must not concurrently accept sponsorship of the tobacco industry or related organisations. Moreover, the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) prohibits the display, publication or distribution of tobacco advertisements in any forms. Other than situations specified in the Ordinance, displaying to the public objects (e.g. promotional leaflets and posters) that bear the name of any person, trade name, trade mark or brand name associated with the marketing of any tobacco product during the provision of service or conduct of business would also be regarded as a form of tobacco advertisement, and is prohibited.

Building a smoke-free campus

7. In accordance with the Tobacco Control Legislation (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 (“The Ordinance”), the statutory no smoking areas of schools¹ will be expanded to include public areas that lie within 3 metres outside entrances/ exits. Any person who consumes a conventional or alternative tobacco product; carries a lighted cigarette, cigar or pipe; or carries an activated alternative tobacco product within a statutory no smoking area commits an offence and is liable to a fixed penalty of \$ 3,000 or, on summary conviction, a fine of \$10,000 (To be implemented on 1 January 2026). In addition, the possession of Alternative Smoking Product (ASP) substances (including capsules, heat sticks and herbal cigarettes) in public places² is also an illegal act (To be implemented on 30 April 2026).

¹ “Schools” means a school within the meaning of Section 3 of the Education Ordinance (Cap. 279).

² Schools may be considered public places in certain circumstances, such as during open days or other events that are accessible to the public.

8. To ensure students receive an all-round education, schools should cultivate a sense of physical and mental health awareness and equip them with the necessary knowledge, skills, proper values and attitudes for maintaining good health. The EDB has been encouraging schools to formulate their Healthy School Policy (HPS)³ by reintegrating their existing resources to develop a healthy and pleasurable school environment and help students develop healthy lifestyles to promote and ensure students' healthy growth, development and learning. Schools should review the relevant school policy from time to time, and consider including the above information as well as related education and activities on Smoking Ban in Schools, ensuring the healthy growth of young people.

9. The discipline and guidance work in schools play a crucial role in student development, helping them face various challenges in life positively. Schools should adopt the Whole School Approach and cross-disciplinary collaboration to provide comprehensive student guidance and support services at preventive, remedial and developmental levels. Schools should also reinforce students' self-discipline, proper behaviours and attitudes through positive disciplinary measures.

School curriculum and learning and teaching resources

10. Helping students lead a healthy lifestyle is one of the seven learning goals of the school curriculum. The learning elements related to the harmful effects of smoking have been incorporated into values education and different Key Learning Areas/subject curricula, e.g. Primary Humanities and Primary Science, Citizenship, Economics and Society at junior secondary level, as well as Citizenship and Social Development at senior secondary level. Through a variety of learning activities that nurture students' health awareness and good living habits within and beyond the classroom, school can enable students to understand the harms of smoking and related laws, and to make wise and responsible decisions based on proper values by firmly rejecting substances harmful to their health. The EDB will continue to develop learning and teaching resources to support schools in promoting health education.

Other administrative measures

11. In a bid to protect the health of students and teachers, anti-smoking messages should be disseminated by schools to tie in with relevant legislation. While it is not required by the law, schools are advised to display no smoking signs at conspicuous spots as appropriate. Schools may use their own designs or obtain no smoking signs in various sizes and forms

³ For relevant details and resources, please refer to the EDB Circular No. 2/2010 on HPS and the [HSP Webpage](#) of the EDB.

directly from the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (“TACO”) of the Department of Health (https://www.taco.gov.hk/t/english/downloads/downloads_nss.html). Order forms of the materials are available on the website of the TACO (<https://www.taco.gov.hk/t/english/forms/forms.html>). Besides, the TACO provides free health talks to schools to explain the harmful effects of smoking and teach students how to say “NO” to smoking. Information on methods of quitting smoking and smoking cessation services will also be provided. To reserve a health talk, schools may call 2961 8823 or submit an application form to the TACO (https://www.taco.gov.hk/t/english/forms/files/cessation_talk_english.pdf).

12. A set of implementation guidelines of the Ordinance is available on the website of the TACO (https://www.taco.gov.hk/t/english/downloads/downloads_guidelines.html) for reference. Schools may also visit the following websites to learn more about existing tobacco control measures and legislation as well as other related information:

- (a) Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health
<http://www.taco.gov.hk>
- (b) Hong Kong Council on Smoking and Health
<http://www.smokefree.hk>

13. To be in line with the Government’s anti-smoking policy and live up to public expectations, staff of schools should refrain from smoking in public appearances in an official capacity. Staff of schools are specifically requested not to smoke in the following circumstances:

- (a) when carrying out duties, regardless of whether the venue is indoor or outdoor;
- (b) when appearing on television or likely to be filmed or photographed by the press;
or
- (c) when present at press conferences or any publicity-related events.

Enquiries

14. For enquires about legislation on prohibition of smoking, schools may contact the TACO on 2961 8823. For suspected cases of non-compliance, schools may email the TACO at taco_school@dh.gov.hk. For other enquiries, please contact the respective Senior School Development Officer of your school.

Ms Ivy LAU
for Secretary for Education