# Committee recommends flexibility over smartphone use in Welsh schools



A recent report by the Senedd’s Petitions Committee has concluded that a nationwide ban on smartphones in Welsh schools is not recommended. This decision emerges from discussions reflecting on the multifaceted role smartphones play in students' lives, considering both their potential harm and benefits. Committee members interacted with a diverse group, including teachers, pupils, and parents, while examining existing school policies and the intricate relationship young people have with their devices.

The report was a response to a petition that garnered more than 3,000 signatures, advocating for a complete ban on mobile phones in schools, except under exceptional circumstances. However, within the findings, the committee argued for the Welsh Government to establish clear guidelines and a robust decision-making framework, thereby allowing individual schools to create their own policies regarding smartphone use.

Carolyn Thomas, chairwoman of the committee, articulated the committee's findings by stating, “The growing body of evidence about the harms of smartphones outweighing the benefits for children is both compelling and concerning. However, on balance we do not believe that it supports a move to a uniform ‘ban’ on smartphones in all Welsh schools." She highlighted the complexity of the issue, noting that while some children face challenges such as distraction, cyberbullying, and addiction related to smartphone use, others find their phones supportive, helping them manage health conditions or providing a sense of security on their way to school.

The committee’s evidence-gathering mission illustrated that the relationship between youth and technology cannot be easily categorised as purely negative or positive. "Every so often a petition comes in that grabs our attention and sometimes things that seem the simplest, are much, much more complex once you scratch the surface," Thomas added, acknowledging the depth of the inquiry.

Additionally, Laura Doel, national secretary of the school leaders’ union NAHT Cymru, expressed that an outright ban would not be effective. She noted, "We gave evidence to the petitions committee on this, on behalf of school leaders, and we are pleased they have listened to those voices on the ground." Doel emphasised that school leaders require the flexibility to develop policies suited to their unique contexts and indicated the necessity for supportive guidance from the Welsh Government alongside parental collaboration on appropriate phone use.

As the debate progresses, the evidence compiled by the Petitions Committee will be presented for consideration by the Welsh Government, with an official debate planned to take place in the Senedd in the near future. In contrast, England has produced guidance from the UK Government that encourages schools to adopt smartphone prohibitions, underscoring different approaches to this growing concern within the UK educational landscape.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/246289> - This URL supports the claim about a petition advocating for a ban on smartphones in Welsh schools, which garnered over 3,000 signatures. It highlights concerns about the negative impacts of smartphones on children's well-being.
* <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/131539/pdf/> - This URL provides context on the Senedd's Petitions Committee and its role in examining various petitions, including those related to social issues in Wales.
* <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10311201/> - Although not directly related to the article's main topic, this URL illustrates the broader impact of digital technology on society, which can inform discussions about smartphone use in schools.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This URL is the source of the original article, providing context on the Senedd's Petitions Committee's decision regarding smartphone bans in Welsh schools.
* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-behaviour-and-exclusions> - This URL could provide general information on school policies and guidelines in the UK, which might support discussions on smartphone use in schools.
* <https://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/ict-in-education/> - This URL offers insights into UNESCO's perspectives on technology in education, which can inform discussions about the role of smartphones in schools.