# Scottish schools weigh mobile phone bans amid calls for national legislation



A recent survey conducted in England has highlighted the widespread use of mobile phone restrictions in schools, with 99.8% of primary schools and 90% of secondary schools implementing some form of ban on phone use during school hours. This development has intensified debate in Scotland, where there have been increasing calls for the Scottish Government to introduce legislation banning mobile phones in schools across the country.

The Scottish Conservatives have been among the most vocal proponents of a nationwide ban, arguing that restricting mobile phone use can help reduce behavioural problems in Scottish schools. However, the Scottish Government has so far refrained from imposing a blanket ban. Instead, it has opted to grant individual headteachers the autonomy to decide on phone policies within their schools.

In August 2024, the Scottish Government issued guidance permitting headteachers to enact bans as they see fit, including the option of a full prohibition of phones on school premises during the school day. Education Secretary Jenny Gilruth explained the rationale behind this approach, stating that it is important to strike a balance between equipping students with the technological skills required to thrive in the modern world and minimising distractions that may affect learning and teaching.

"That means empowering headteachers to take the steps they see fit to limit the use of mobile phones in our schools, up to and including a full ban on the school estate during the school day, if that is their judgement," Ms Gilruth said. While she expressed support for any school choosing to implement a complete phone ban, she emphasised her confidence in headteachers' ability to make informed decisions tailored to their pupils' needs.

Academic perspectives on the impact of mobile phone bans remain mixed. Research studies have shown varied outcomes depending on the extent and enforcement of the bans — whether phones are prohibited throughout the entire day, only during class time, or limited to certain areas of the school. Such variability has made it challenging to draw definitive conclusions about the overall benefits of phone restrictions in schools.

International experts writing in the British Medical Journal (BMJ) have cautioned that blanket bans may serve only as "stop-gap solutions" and urged policy makers to adopt rights-based approaches that prioritise the interests and rights of young people. They warned that overly restrictive measures could undermine children's access to technology and the education needed to navigate an increasingly digital world.

Educational psychologist Dr Jame McTaggart, writing in The Herald, echoed this sentiment, emphasising the need to balance technological literacy education with safeguarding students from potential harms associated with mobile phone use.

The ongoing discussions in Scotland underscore a complex interplay between educational priorities, student wellbeing, and the evolving role of technology in young people's lives. With the Scottish Government currently deferring to school leadership on phone policies, individual schools continue to navigate this issue within their specific contexts.

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

## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/content/news/survey-finds-most-headteachers-restrict-chidlrens-access-to-mobile-phones-but-many-worry-about-online-harms-to-children/> - The article touches on the prevalence of phone restrictions by headteachers due to concerns about online harms, complementing the broader context of phone use policies.
4. <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10241/CBP-10241.pdf> - This PDF provides an overview of mobile phone use in English schools, aligning with discussions about phone policies and their implications for education and wellbeing.
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6. <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/statistics/2024/08/11071925-guidance-on-mobile-phones-in-schools.pdf> - This is not available as a public URL in the search results. However, it would relate to the Scottish Government's guidance on mobile phone policies if it were accessible. For alternative information: The Scottish Government's stance on granting autonomy to headteachers in managing phone policies is documented in various news outlets, though specific URLs might not be readily available.
7. <https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/25115822.latest-smartphones-scottish-schools/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data