# Highland Council to consult community on restricting mobile phones in schools amid distraction concerns



Highland Council is poised to engage the community in a critical debate on mobile phone usage in schools, following a substantial call to action from local officials. This initiative stems chiefly from former teacher and current Inverness councillor Michael Gregson, who has articulated serious concerns regarding the pervasive influence of smartphones in classrooms. He described the current educational environment as suffering from “catastrophic” effects due to the distractions posed by these devices, labelling the situation as one of fragmented attention spans. This viewpoint echoes broader discussions across various regions, suggesting a growing consensus on the necessity for stricter controls on mobile phone usage within educational settings.

The council’s plan, which has garnered unanimous support, promotes a consultative approach to gather insights from the entire school community—including parents, teachers, and pupils—regarding the presence of smartphones in classrooms. While the proposals do not call for an outright ban, the emphasis is clearly on fostering a learning atmosphere free from the "constant distraction" that mobile phones introduce. Gregson referenced a workshop conducted by the council’s principal educational psychologist, Bernadette Cairns, which highlighted issues of “dysregulation and disengagement” in classrooms as a direct consequence of mobile phone use.

This local initiative resonates with trends seen in the United States, where bipartisan efforts are gaining traction for implementing restrictions on mobile phone usage in schools. States like California and Indiana have taken legislative steps, evidencing that such bans can lead to improved academic performance and decreased instances of cyberbullying. Research supports these measures, showing a notable improvement in student focus and engagement when mobile phones are absent from classrooms. Although some students have devised methods to circumvent these bans, a general shift towards prioritising healthier boundaries with technology is becoming apparent.

In a similar vein, concerns about the implications of mobile phone use extend beyond mere distractions. Gregson and fellow councillor Helen Crawford pointed to instances of misuse, including cases where teachers have been filmed and shared online without their consent, a trend that exacerbates issues of respect and professional integrity within educational spaces. Crawford underscored the potential for such unethical behaviour to cause distress and lead to bullying, asserting that a ban on phones could help mitigate these disruptions.

Moreover, evidence from schools within the region already adopting their own mobile phone prohibitions, such as Nairn Academy and Grantown Grammar School, supports the anticipated outcomes of such a policy. The Highlands education system’s approach, particularly with initiatives that equip students with Chromebook laptops, diminishes the necessity for mobile phones as educational resources, thereby bolstering the case for a policy shift.

This initiative reflects a broader global context, where educational institutions grapple with the ramifications of digital distractions. In France, for instance, the government enacted a law in 2018 banning cell phones in schools, a move that aims to bolster student performance while addressing concerns related to bullying. The rollout of this law, and the subsequent trials of stricter enforcement, suggest a nationwide commitment to reducing distractions caused by personal devices.

As Highland Council prepares to initiate these discussions, the hope is that through constructive dialogue and comprehensive feedback, schools can foster environments that promote focus and learning devoid of electronic distractions. With the full backing of the council now secured, this move signals a significant step toward reevaluating mobile phone policies in educational settings across the Highlands.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/)
2. Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/), [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/02e0f64c-08da-49ef-b3f6-f5673bdceb22)
3. Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/), [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/01fd6293a84a2e4e401708b15cb71d36)
4. Paragraph 4: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/), [[4]](https://time.com/7279360/school-phone-ban-bill-ready-essay/), [[6]](https://www.axios.com/local/twin-cities/2024/08/26/minnesota-cell-phone-bans-schools-principal-model-policy)
5. Paragraph 5: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/), [[5]](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/09/04/full-ban-on-cell-phones-in-some-french-middle-schools-raises-questions_6724783_7.html)
6. Paragraph 6: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/), [[7]](https://apnews.com/article/fa4ff41c47edb38249fe7ae63c8c3ef7)
7. Paragraph 7: [[1]](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/)

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/6758789/highland-council-mobile-phone-ban-in-schools/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/02e0f64c-08da-49ef-b3f6-f5673bdceb22> - This article discusses the growing bipartisan support in the United States for banning mobile phones in school classrooms. It highlights actions taken by states like California and Indiana, where restrictions have been implemented due to concerns that mobile phones distract students and negatively impact academic performance. Research indicates that phone bans have led to improved test scores and reduced cyberbullying. Despite these measures, some students find ways to circumvent the rules, but overall, attitudes towards such bans are shifting, with experts advocating for healthier boundaries with technology.
3. <https://apnews.com/article/01fd6293a84a2e4e401708b15cb71d36> - This article examines how schools are addressing the issue of students using smartphones during class, which distracts from learning. Despite existing rules against phone use, enforcement is inconsistent, leading to calls for complete bans during school hours. Teachers report that students often secretly use phones for non-educational purposes, prompting states like Utah and Florida to pass legislation restricting phone use in schools. While some students and parents express concerns about losing contact during emergencies, others acknowledge improved focus and engagement when phones are not present. Advocacy groups support strict enforcement of these bans.
4. <https://time.com/7279360/school-phone-ban-bill-ready-essay/> - This article advocates for banning smartphones in classrooms to combat the growing distractions they cause. It highlights how social media apps, designed to maximize user engagement, contribute to student anxiety, depression, and declining academic performance. Studies reveal that excessive screen time negatively affects students' mental health and education outcomes. In response, over 20 U.S. states are considering or have passed legislation to restrict phone use in schools. Public opinion supports these measures, with evidence from pilot programs suggesting that phone-free classrooms improve engagement and behavior.
5. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/france/article/2024/09/04/full-ban-on-cell-phones-in-some-french-middle-schools-raises-questions_6724783_7.html> - This article discusses France's 2018 law banning cell phones in schools and the subsequent trial of a more rigorous 'digital break' in nearly 200 middle schools, requiring students to leave phones at the entrance. The initiative aims to improve performance and reduce distractions and bullying, with plans to expand nationwide by January 2025. However, the experiment has raised concerns about practicality, costs, and logistics, as the government will not fund necessary infrastructure, leaving it to local authorities. Unions argue that the focus should be on issues outside school grounds, and further analyses are needed before widespread implementation.
6. <https://www.axios.com/local/twin-cities/2024/08/26/minnesota-cell-phone-bans-schools-principal-model-policy> - This article highlights the growing concern among educators in Minnesota about students' excessive use of cell phones, leading to the development of formal policies to limit mobile device usage. School principal organizations have proposed a 'bell-to-bell' smartphone ban during the entire school day, aiming to combat issues such as anxiety, loneliness, and sleeplessness among students while enhancing face-to-face social skills. However, enforcing these rules requires comprehensive plans involving administrators and classroom aides. The broader issue includes the addictive design of apps, not just the phones themselves, prompting varied opinions from parents and educators on the impact of phone restrictions on student behavior and health.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/fa4ff41c47edb38249fe7ae63c8c3ef7> - This article reports on Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's advocacy for 'screen-free schools' by proposing a statewide ban on cellphones in classrooms to enhance student achievement, social interaction, and mental health. Legislation introduced would require school districts to implement policies banning personal wireless devices during class, with some exceptions, and set secure storage guidelines. This initiative aligns with a growing national trend, with eight states already having similar policies and 15 others considering restrictions. Studies indicate that cellphone distractions are a significant issue in classrooms, and schools that have adopted screen-free policies reported increased student engagement and reduced distractions.