

Should Mobile Phones be Banned in Schools?

The question: SHOULD MOBILE PHONES BE ALLOWED IN SCHOOL? has been discussed in recent years. In the last few years there has been an explosion in the use of new communication technologies, including mobile phones. It is estimated that over 90% of young people aged 10 to 14 now own a mobile phone. Considerable debate has taken place in the press recently as to whether pupils should be allowed to take their mobile phones to school. In this discussion I will consider some of the views presented about mobile phones.

No one can deny the positive benefits of children communicating freely with each other. Pupils argue that using a mobile phone to talk to, or to text-message, their friends is simply one way of doing this, using new technology. Many parents are in favour too. They like the reassurance of knowing their children are safer and more independent with a mobile phone, since they can contact them at any time if the necessity should arise. They cite the potential risks faced by some children who have to travel alone. Mrs. Parkinson, a concerned parent from Widnes said, "My child has a mobile phone and it makes me feel rather upset that she cannot use it in school to contact me." In addition, a recent survey confirmed that 55% of the public agreed that children should be allowed to use their mobile phones in school.

Many schools, however, point out that carrying a mobile phone could, in itself, make a child more vulnerable to theft or mugging, both on the street or in the playground. Police figures confirm that a high proportion of crimes committed against young people involve thefts of mobile phones. Moreover, head teachers are concerned that allowing pupils to bring their mobile phones to school could create a competitive atmosphere

amongst pupils, resulting in some individuals feeling marginalised and unvalued. In addition, teachers claim that pupils' education would be adversely affected by the inevitable distraction caused by phones ringing during lessons. Mrs Heston, from Our Lady's Catholic Primary School in Widnes, was questioned about this issue and she claimed that if children were allowed to use their mobile phones in school (during lessons) that their learning would suffer.

This issue is further complicated by the fact that some doctors are warning against the habitual use of mobile phones. They are fearful that children using mobile phones could suffer long-term brain damage. The onus is on those responsible for the manufacture of mobile phones to prove that they are indeed harmless. Until this potential danger is removed, it would seem that schools should protect their pupils. Doctor Martin, from Beaconsfield Surgery in London, speaks out against children using mobile phones claiming, "Mobile phones should stay out of the classroom and should be used after school hours when it would be the responsibility of the parents and carers to look after their children's well-being. Surely we should be looking after our children's health and well-being?"

It is clear that the issue as to whether children should be allowed to use mobile phones in school cannot be resolved as there are many different issues which need to be considered. Personally, I believe that school is for learning; children need to socialise with their friends and concentrate on their learning mobile phones should not enter the classroom as they would have an adverse effect on the education of young people!