



Eich cyf/Your ref LN/10323/24

Carolyn Thomas MS
Chair - Petitions committee

20 November 2024

Dear Carolyn,

Thank you for your recent correspondence which included reference to the Petition P-06-1482 to ban smartphones in all schools in Wales (with exemptions for exceptional circumstances).

Our current generation of learners are growing up with the internet and social media and have access to a range of digital technology and devices. It has become an integral part of their lives and is something they and educational settings are navigating as technology evolves.

When managed correctly, access to the online world can be educational, informative and a great way for children and young people to stay in touch with family and friends. Teachers regularly find innovative ways of integrating digital technology into classroom teaching and when used in a positive context this can be a valuable learning resource tool.

Often, the biggest challenge for schools around mobile phones and social media is not what goes on in school or during school hours, but what happens outside of the school environment. The instant, real-time access to social media, messaging apps and the internet can unquestionably lead to issues that have a detrimental impact on mental health and wellbeing.

Whilst policies on mobile phone usage within the school day are a matter for schools and governing bodies to address, I am aware of the impact mobile phone usage in school is having on school attendance and behaviour. When setting their mobile phone and behaviour policies, we encourage schools to consider the effect mobiles could have on learning and learner wellbeing. Where headteachers consider the use of mobile phones in school is having a detrimental impact on learners, they already have the authority to ban or restrict their use including other electronic devices such as tablets if they choose to do so. Schools are best placed to make this decision, reflecting on the way they use technology within a school setting and the needs of their learners.

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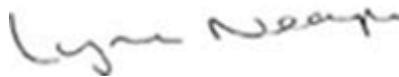
We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

I am also conscious of the need for learners to understand how to use digital devices safely and responsibly. Online safety in particular is a key feature with the mandatory relationship and sexuality education code and educating young people on how to engage with social media a cross-curricular issue. We continue to provide [guidance](#) to schools, learners and parents to raise their awareness towards digital resilience and safety.

Our behaviour toolkit, due to be published early next year, provides evidence and good practice for schools to incorporate into their behaviour policies. This toolkit will include reference to the use of mobile phones in schools and keeping safe online.

I have also discussed the impact of mobile phone usage in schools on learner behaviour at the headteacher conference and directly with trade union representatives, earlier this month.

Yours sincerely



Lynne Neagle AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Addysg
Cabinet Secretary for Education