



**Parents Voices in Wales**  
**Support Campaign Collaborate**

[Website : Parents Voices in Wales CIC](http://www.parentsvoicesinwales.org.uk)

**NATIONAL POLL DATA ON SMARTPHONE USE IN SCHOOLS**

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**6 J ANUARY 2025**

### About Us

Parent Voices in Wales CIC (PV) is part of the Neurodiversity Movement in Wales that works collaboratively across sector/agencies. PV has worked with the office of the Childrens' Commissioner for Wales relating to the No Wrong Door Approach Report, coproduced the NEST/NYTH Framework with T4C YP(2), worked with Welsh Government on the Whole School Approach Evaluation (Lynne Neagle MS, then Chair of the Senedd Committee for CYPE), Additional Learning Needs Reform (Kirsty Williams MS, then Minister for Education) and currently co-Chairs the Welsh Government Ministerial Advisory Group on Neurodivergence and trains schools and services in Neurodiversity and Inclusion.

### National Poll Data

In meeting the ambitions of the Whole School Approach, NEST/NYTH Framework and ALN Reform in promoting the Rights of the Child and the voices of learners and parents/carers, PV created an online poll for both professionals and parents/carers across Wales to collate views in relation to a possible smartphone ban to support the Round Table discussion on 6 January 2025.

1. Whether this should be blanket ban of smartphones in schools?
2. Whether this should be a national or local policy led development?
3. Whether accommodations should be considered for both Additional Learning Needs and/or Neurodivergent learners?

Participants were invited to comment after voting to share their views on limitations of practical implementation and what would be the downsides of the ban.

#### National Poll Data : Professionals

12 professionals (ie those working with children and young people in any capacity) responded to the poll.

Single National Policy	58%
Local School Policy	0%
Yes to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	42%
No to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	0%

No further comments were made by professionals.

#### National Poll Data : Parents/Carers of ALN/Neurodivergent Learners

134 votes were collected from the closed group poll.

Single National Policy	29%
Local School Policy	0%
Yes to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	3%
No to accommodations for Additional Learning Needs	0%

The Poll was amended by participants by adding the following voting options

No to a ban	13%
Yes to Accommodations on a Needs Led Basis	55%*

\*(this includes Additional Learning Needs and Neurodivergent Learners)

Further comments made by Parents/Carers are shared below.

### Parent 1

I have two children in different schools (nowhere near each other) and I work. Without a phone how is one meant to tell me football has been cancelled and he needs collecting (neither can walk home). How do I inform an anxious child there's an accident and to stay put, I'll be along asap. Don't panic. Forgotten kit, run out of lunch money, laptop charger (on the IDP as essential equipment) has broken can you bring the spare? Let alone managing the anxiety via text at lunch and break.

### Parent 2

At my girls school they have banned phones. Teachers have said it's nice to see children talking more at lunch breaks.

My child used hers to listen to music in her headphones to help her regulate/concentrate so that's been difficult.

I know I wouldn't like to be a teen in this era of social media. It causes so many problems with bullying etc. Pro and cons either side of the argument. There was a programme on channel 4 last week about a school that banned them for a month and the families did it at home too. It made a huge difference to their mental health.

### Parent 3

My son used to message me when he had a panic attack. I used to text him instructions on how to breath and ground himself so he could manage his anxiety or before he would become overwhelmed. I can't imagine ever getting him into school if they'd not let him text me. Sometimes he would ring and text several times a day during break times until he found the confidence to manage himself. I think there needs to be accommodations for those who need support inside and outside the classroom. Staff know which learners are taking advantage and ones which need access to emotional support. My daughter used to take photos with her phone of the homework instructions as she has a poor working memory and ALN which meant she wouldnt remember what she had to do. We live in a digital age – why can't we use these constructively?

#### Parent (Teacher) 4

I think there should be a ban but ND pupils (and in fact all pupils) should have access to their own diverse set up to their own particular specific needs using accessibility tools. That's inclusion and makes education accessible for those who require it. I've seen some amazing examples of best practice, especially at one Yorkshire school where the children did a personalised programme for all maths and literacy. It would be cheaper than text books and exercise books and better for the environment. They can still use a stylus to learn handwriting but those who need it can use AAC, voice to text, type etc. but no social media below 16 for sure to eliminate cyberbullying and safeguarding concerns. In my opinion all children should have a device and should be taught to use them safely by school and parents working in coproduction as Ceri Reed does with the NHS services.

#### Parent 5

Our secondary school headteacher banned phones during the school day, it has been in place for over a year and a resounding success, it is being rolled out across the county now, instances of bullying has dropped dramatically, pupils concentration in class has also improved dramatically, alongside them engaging in the playground & joining in lunchtime activities clubs, chess & board games & in the leisure centre next door, this is a state/voluntary aided secondary school that has 25% of pupils with ALN. There are circumstances where some pupils can have them, but all phones are handed in & locked away in secure cupboards in their form rooms until the end of the school day. Pupil aggression & behaviour generally has improved including those already diagnosed with ALN. They're also using scientific calculators in class. The police used to visit the school regularly at least three times a week due to cyber bullying issues, there hasn't been one incident of such since. It definitely works for the better, with a few tweaks.

#### Parent 6

The school my children attended are no longer allowed their phones they are allowed in the bag but are to be switched off. If caught using them they are taken and given back at end of day it has made a massive difference to socialising break and dinner and less issues I'm all for no phone usage during school

#### Parent 7

I've found, as a foster carer, phones to be a huge hindrance rather than a help for many reasons. I would love to see children socialising more in the playground and believe children having phones in schools causes issues and anxiety around socialisation. I would prefer children to take their phones to high school so that they have them for emergencies but for a system to be in place where they hand their phones in on arrival to school and collect on leaving.

I was planning on not giving my children phones until well into their teens, and definitely not to be used at school but when my eldest was diagnosed with dyslexia and dyscalculia the Ed Psych recommended they have a smart phone as an aide, as a reader, voice to text etc functions.

Until very recently their school were unable to use immersive reader software (Welsh medium education and full licenced version of MS word now has Welsh option, at last). So the smartphone has been extremely useful.

Parent 8

Absolutely NO BAN of smartphones in school! My daughter's school allow phones but no use age or sight of them during class times, and have regularly been able to communicate with school and my daughter via text and or call from and to her mobile to help regulate her whilst she's been with teachers and or pastoral staff, this in turn has aided re-integration into her main stream classes, thus benefits for both my daughter and school staff, However, the boundaries in school are set, are consistent and adhered to by majority. We must make allowances for those who need them and how can we trust the schools to get it right?

Parent 9

My eldest daughter suffers with extreme anxiety and undiagnosed tics made worse when anxious excited upset etc and the ban is help the school understand her needs a lot more I can still be contacted if needed but its definitely made a massive difference to her and us as parents as well as schools understanding and help provided I was so against it when it first come into force but honestly it has worked for the best

Parent 10

My daughter is allowed to phone me if she's feeling very anxious. It's made the difference to her managing to go to school or not. Her school do allow phones break and dinner time but only children with prior agreement like my daughter can use

them at other times. I think it is especially important not to be banning mobiles when so many local authorities are taking away school transport too it will put children walking alone/bullied children at higher risk.

Parent 11

Why have you asked the group this question? What is the purpose of banning phones and what is it expected to achieve?

I can't imagine how any 'ban' can ever work.

There are already such mixed messages.

Our Secondary schools allow pupils to have phones in school but they need to be on silent and remain in school bags. But then some teachers actually allow them to be used to support lesson topics. Conflicting messages.

Parent 12

I think yes ban them in relation to cyberbullying and given that a lot of schools just respond with 'it didn't happen on school property' this feels like shuffling the problem off their hands. If you have children using their phones inappropriately, ban them from having their phone, use detention or youth intervention team, conflict resolution, or something to actually address the issue. Banning phones outright isn't going to curb bullying, make those children accountable for/address their actions, or make poor parents magically start parenting appropriately. Where kids need to learn though and speak to parents for support then they should have access to them.

Parent 13

My oldest sons school allows kids to have their phones with them but they have to be on silent and they cannot take them out of their bags on school grounds. Unless of course they're given permission by teachers.