

Mobile Phone Use in Midlothian Secondary Schools**Report by Michelle Strong, Education Chief Operating Officer****Report for Information****1 Recommendations**

Council is asked to note the guiding principles for mobile phone use in Midlothian Secondary schools, developed by headteachers in line with non-statutory guidance published in Autumn 2024.

2 Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to outline the powers that headteachers have to limit the use of mobile phone use in their school to protect the learning experience for all. The report details the guiding principles that secondary headteachers have developed and will implement across Midlothian secondary schools.

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3 Background

- 3.1 Mobile technology (phones, tablets, watches) are an integral part of the lives of children, young people and families across Scotland.

They can be useful tools to enhance learning, communication and social experiences. They can also bring a sense of security for those walking to or from school or engaging in activities after school hours.

Mobile devices in school can also bring some challenges in terms of disruption in class as well being used in cases of as bullying and harassment of other pupils or staff.

- 3.2 Non-statutory guidance was issued to schools in autumn 2024 to encourage respectful and responsible use of mobile phones in schools.

The guidance is clear that decisions about mobile phones rests with the headteacher: Scotland's headteachers are empowered to act in the best interests of their pupils, to support our hard-working teachers to ensure a consistent learning environment is provided to all our pupils in our classrooms.

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. Crucially the decision is one which rests with Scotland's headteachers, who know their pupils and their staff and who we trust to take the best decisions in the interests of their school communities.

3.3 Midlothian position

All Midlothian secondary schools have protocols in place for mobile phone use. The practice differs but is effective for the individual school.

Secondary headteachers have worked to develop a set of guiding principles for mobile phone use across Midlothian secondary schools.

3.4 Midlothian Council Principles

Mobile Phone Use in Secondary Schools: Guiding Principles and Policy

Summary

All Midlothian secondary schools have policies in place to support a focused and engaging learning environment, free from the distractions of mobile phone use. This document outlines the guiding principles behind these policies and provides a summary of the key elements of the policies.

Guiding Principles

- **Focus on Learning**
Mobile phone use should not disrupt teaching, learning, or student engagement.
- **Wellbeing & Safety**
Reducing distractions and social pressures linked to mobile phone use supports student mental health and academic success.
- **Consistency & Fairness**
The policy applies to all students, ensuring a uniform approach across the school.

- **Parental & Staff Partnership**

Parents, students, and staff must work together to enforce and support responsible mobile phone use.

General Policy

- Mobile phones must be switched off and out of sight during class time.
- Phones should be stored in bags, designated storage pouches, or secure locations determined by each school's individual policy.
- Phones cannot be kept in students' pockets or placed on desks during lessons.
- Mobile phones may only be used during break and lunchtime unless a teacher instructs otherwise for educational purposes.
- Persistent non-compliance will result in the phone being held centrally during class time, with parental notification.

Exceptions

- Certain department (e.g. PE) may have adapted policies based on specific needs.
- Students requiring phone access for medical or wellbeing reasons may keep their device on their person with prior approval.

Non-Compliance Procedures

Schools will use their behaviour management policies to manage non-compliance.

Parental Support

Parents and carers are encouraged to support schools by doing the following:

- Refraining from texting or calling students during class times. Urgent messages should be sent via the school office.
- Reinforcing the importance of minimizing distractions for effective learning.

Teacher Guidelines

To ensure consistent enforcement, teachers should:

- Clearly explain the purpose of the policy to students.
- Avoid physically handling students' phones—students must place and retrieve their own devices from storage.
- Regularly check that all phones are accounted for in designated storage areas.
- Only allow students to retrieve phones at the end of the lessons.

3.5 Although Primary schools are much less impacted by mobile technology, a set of guiding principles will be developed by primary headteachers for implementation in August 2025.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

Not applicable.

4.2 Digital

Not applicable.

4.3 Risk

Not applicable.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

UNCRC rights of the child permeate the approaches taken by schools in relation to school mobile phone use policy and daily practice.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Guidance on Mobile Phones in Scotland's Schools - [Mobile phones: guidance for Scotland's schools - gov.scot](#)

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Not applicable.

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Stakeholders will be involved in the creation of local policy relating to school uniform.

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

It is hoped that by ensuring learners clothing is comfortable and free from barriers they will be able to fully participate in school and learning.

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

School uniform prevents stigma and creates a sense of belonging.

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Environmentally sustainable approaches are a key principle for schools to embed in policy.