

Should mobile phones be banned in schools?

In the last few years there has been an explosion in the use of new communications technologies, including mobile phones; it is estimated that over 70% of young people aged 10-14 now own one. Considerable debate has taken place in the press recently as to whether pupils should be allowed to take their mobile phones into school.

No one can deny the positive benefits of children communicating freely with each other, and pupils argue that using a mobile phone to talk to or text-message their friends is simply one way of doing this, using new technology. Many parents are in favour too, and like the reassurance of knowing their child can be safer and more independent if they have a mobile phone, since they can contact them at any time if necessary. They cite the potential risks faced by some children travelling alone.

However, schools point out that carrying a mobile phone could in itself make a child more vulnerable to theft or mugging, both on the street and even in the playground. Police figures confirm that a high proportion of crimes committed against young people involve thefts of mobile phones. Schools are concerned, moreover, that allowing pupils to bring their mobiles to school could create a competitive atmosphere amongst children and result in some children feeling left out and unvalued. In addition they claim that pupils' education would be affected by the distraction of phones ringing in class.

Some doctors fear that children using mobiles could suffer long-term brain damage. Until this is disproved, it would seem that schools might best protect their pupils from this and other problems by making them leave their mobile phones at home.