

Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

To: Renfrewshire Joint Negotiating Committee for Teachers

On: 6th February, 2024

Report by

Joint Secretary (Teachers' Side)

Mobile 'Phone Use in Schools

Background

Improving behaviour in schools is one of the key priorities of the EIS Stand Up For Quality Education campaign. It has come to the attention of the teacher unions across Renfrewshire that there is an increasing number of incidents involving the misuse of mobile 'phones by pupils and that mobile devices are having a detrimental impact on teaching and learning. It is widely felt that mobile misuse is having a detrimental impact on attainment. The teaching unions are therefore seeking an urgent review of the existing policy on mobile 'phone use in schools and discussions on whether the existing policy is adequate or if indeed the current policy is even being implemented consistently in schools.

The Council's policy on mobile 'phone use was ratified by JNC on 13th March 2007 and was reaffirmed in Feb 2008. Link to the JNC is attached:

<https://acrobat.adobe.com/link/track?uri=urn:aaid:scds:US:35a422ab-b426-3b75-90f9-307a91abdb82>.

There have been some serious breaches of the policy and instances of pupils making recordings of other pupils and teachers. Such behaviour is unacceptable and is leading to teacher welfare and wellbeing issues. Moreover, it is reported that teaching and learning is being negatively impacted by the misuse of mobile devices: they cause distractions, lack of pupil focus and can often lead to conflicts in and out of the classroom that are not conducive to raising attainment or positive learning environments.

Behaviour in schools has also been the subject of recent national debate. It has been reported widely and debated in the Scottish Parliament and is acknowledged as a priority for education. There has already been Scottish government research into the matter, namely in the *Behaviour In Scottish Schools Research* which was published in December 2023. It observes:

The abusive use of mobile phones and digital technologies was one of the most frequently experienced serious disruptive behaviours among secondary staff, as were general verbal abuse between pupils and towards staff...

And

The three behaviours that staff identified as having the greatest overall negative impact were all low-level disruptive behaviours: talking out of turn; hindering other pupils; and using/looking at mobile phones/tablets inappropriately...

Restricting mobile phone use is regarded by the teaching unions as a vital part of improving behaviour.

Limitations on mobile use has been trialled in a couple of schools in Renfrewshire with anecdotal reports describing it as a “positive move”. And, when parents are consulted there is broad support.

The issue of mobile ‘phone use in classrooms needs to be considered in the context of raising pupil attainment and the Teachers’ side would urge the Council to reinforce the existing limitations on the use of mobile devices in all educational settings in Renfrewshire.

Action:

- The Teaching Unions request that all schools be reminded of the extant agreement that is already Council policy in an effort to have a more rigorous and consistent implementation of practice in place in all schools.
- That teachers be supported in their efforts to implement current policy when calling for a curtailment of the use of mobile devices in schools.
- The Teachers’ side seeks to engage with the Council around the current policy and whether current measures are sufficient or need to be tightened.