

# Two Edinburgh schools become phone free zones

## Two schools in Edinburgh will become phone free zones this month.

From today pupils at Portobello High School will be asked to store their phones at the beginning of each day in a lockable pouch. The Yonder pouches are locked and unlocked magnetically with phones remaining in each pupil's possession all day. From 14 May pupils at Queensferry High School will join the pilot project.

There has been engagement with pupils and parents to determine what to do and to set a new policy for the schools. At Portobello 86% of parents and carers support the new phone ban.

The hope is that it will encourage young people to stay in class focussed on lessons without any distractions.

The schools are basing their decisions on research which shows that a phone free school impacts mental health and wellbeing positively.

Councillor Joan Griffiths, Education, Children and Families Convener, said: "I'm pleased to see Edinburgh schools leading the way in introducing a mobile-phone free school environment. Mobile phones in classroom settings are increasingly competing with the teachers for learners' attention and limiting access to mobile phones during the school day is only a positive thing for our young people.

"I know that schools across Edinburgh, and indeed the country, are exploring ways to manage mobile phone use, including

restricting phone use during the school day. The new pouches provide an innovative way for our young people to have distance from their devices while having the reassurance that they are still in their possession. We hope that this new policy will increase focus on learning, reduce classroom distractions and help improve wellbeing.”

Scottish Conservative education spokesperson on The City of Edinburgh Council, Cllr Christopher Cowdy said: “Making sure children can focus on their education without distractions is basic common sense.

“In April last year I raised a Motion in Council, highlighting concerns raised by teachers about mobile phone use in schools that can encourage seriously disruptive behaviours in the classroom. I was very disappointed not to get support from other political parties to help Headteachers with a more robust Council policy on smartphone use but delighted that 2 High Schools have now decided to press ahead themselves with pilot schemes to control use during the school day.”\

“Having heard, back in March, that Portobello High school intended to introduce a pilot ban on mobile phones, I spoke to the Headteacher to hear about his plan and offer my support.

“I applaud the initiative of both Portobello and Queensferry High Schools with their pilot smartphone initiatives. This is exactly the sort of bold action the Scottish Conservatives support Headteachers to take in helping combat the national rise in poor classroom behaviour and to drive improvements in our lagging attainment record.

“Other parties were resistant to initiatives of this kind for too long, despite the Scottish Conservatives repeatedly highlighting how removing access to mobiles could help improve discipline in schools.

“It is welcome schools are now taking these measures and SNP ministers must continue to give them powers to maximise

opportunities for students.

“Under the SNP standards have declined and proposals to reverse the damage have been little more than cosmetic. They must deliver real change if Scotland’s once world-leading education reputation is finally to be restored.”



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