

**Press Release from The National Parent Forum of Scotland:
“All I want for Christmas is a new tablet and a new smart phone...for school!”**

The National Parent Forum of Scotland today calls on local authorities and schools to switch on their school Wi-Fi hubs to allow internet access for pupils to enhance their learning.

Iain Ellis, Chair of the National Parent Forum of Scotland, said:

“We are aware that there is Wi-Fi provision in a number of schools but that pupils are not yet being given access to this absolutely essential learning tool. Whilst we fully understand that pupil safety is paramount, we have to get to grips with using Wi-Fi technology, in order to help young people to use the Internet constructively for educational purposes. Increasingly it seems that almost the only place pupils can't access the Internet is in schools. Schools are the very place where children and young people can be taught the skills to navigate the Internet safely and responsibly, and to use it to enhance and extend their learning”.

“Our children and young people access the internet at home or in libraries or in the many places where Wi-Fi is freely available. Parents and teachers do not always feel confident or comfortable about the Internet - but we cannot turn the clock back and we cannot let young people down by trying to hold back the tide. Schools and local authorities have a great opportunity to lead us in harnessing all the benefits of the Internet, and in helping us to avoid the pitfalls. We would like to see more progress in this, more quickly.”

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Background information:

The National Parent Forum of Scotland was founded in 2009 and is comprised of parent/carer representatives from Scotland's 32 local authority areas. The National Parent Forum works to enable the parent voice on education to be heard at local and national level. Representatives of the National Parent Forum sit on a number of national bodies and committees – please visit www.parentforumsotland.org for more details.

For further press information, please contact National Parent Forum press officer, Tina Woolnough, 07799 416 360 or 0131 337 3486 or by email via tina@kristina.org.uk

Background to Wi-Fi in schools:

A range of measures can be used to manage internet use in schools: pupil contracts; clear directions from teachers as to when equipment can be used and when it must be put away; clear instructions as to the purpose of using the internet, just like using any other piece of equipment; school-backed sanctions if inappropriate use occurs; involving parents/carers in understanding good practice and safeguards for internet use.

Examples of using the internet as a learning tool:

- Pupils are invited to consider key search words for researching a topic and are helped to identify effective search words, different search engines and useful websites which provide relevant material
- Pupils learn to analyse reliable and unreliable sources
- Pupils use their smart phones to scan a QR code which presents them with their homework
- Pupils with learning difficulties access course material on the school intranet in a format that suits their learning needs (eg large print; audio)

Note: The National Parent Forum of Scotland is fully aware that some areas of Scotland have no or limited broadband access and would like to see this resolved as the children and young people in these areas are disadvantaged. The National Parent Forum of Scotland is also aware that some children and young people and families do not have access to this technology. We consider that addressing this is a priority for schools and local authorities to ensure inclusion.