# National Education Union calls for mobile phone ban in schools



The leader of the National Education Union (NEU), Daniel Kebede, has advocated for a statutory ban on mobile phones in schools across the UK, citing concerns over their impact on children's well-being and education. Speaking in anticipation of a debate at the NEU’s annual conference in Harrogate, Yorkshire, Kebede argued that a formal ban could alleviate stress for parents, teachers, and headteachers alike.

Kebede's comments follow a survey from the Children’s Commissioner, which revealed that a significant number of schools already implement policies limiting phone use during school hours. Despite this existing framework, Kebede insists that the situation requires a stronger governmental stance. He elaborated on the damaging effects smartphones have, stating, “The average 12-year-old has access to the most hardcore pornography on their mobile phone and that is incredibly damaging to the wellbeing of young boys and their perceptions of women, girls, sex and relationships.”

The survey, published by Dame Rachel de Souza, indicates that while many schools are effectively managing mobile phone use, she believes decisions regarding bans should rest with headteachers rather than the government. Dame Rachel's stance highlights the varying approaches to mobile phone regulation within educational settings.

Amid these discussions, Kebede highlighted the need for a national conversation on online harm, particularly in the context of rising misogynistic attitudes fostered by unregulated social media. The NEU has expressed increasing concern over the influence these platforms have on the behaviour and perceptions of young people. Kebede referenced the Australian Senate's recent actions in banning social media for children under 16, suggesting that the UK might look to adopt similar measures.

David Wilson, the NEU's deputy general secretary, expressed that the issue of misogyny in schools is a significant worry among educators, exacerbated by cultural factors such as the recently released television drama "Adolescence," which tackles incel culture and its implications. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer has also engaged with this topic, acknowledging the complexities of addressing the issue of misogyny among boys, while Netflix has announced plans to make the series accessible for all secondary schools in the UK.

The debate on mobile phone use is not without political friction. Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch recently questioned the Labour government’s rejection of a Conservative amendment to ban phones in schools, while Sir Keir dismissed the proposal as “completely unnecessary,” claiming that most schools already implement bans. Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson indicated that the current government is prioritising the reduction of distractions in classrooms, having tasked officials with monitoring smartphone use in schools.

The Children’s Commissioner has called for a more holistic approach to online safety, suggesting that parents need guidance in managing their children's screen time and online interactions. A recent YouGov poll highlighted that nearly a quarter of children aged eight to 15 spend over four hours a day on internet-enabled devices, underscoring the growing concern surrounding children's extensive digital engagement.

As discussions continue, the NEU prepares to address the broader issues of sexism and misogyny within educational frameworks, evident in the proposed motion for their upcoming conference. This aligns with Kebede's vision of increasing accountability for social media firms, akin to regulations placed on the tobacco industry, in an effort to protect children’s mental health.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://niesr.ac.uk/news/why-governments-mobile-phone-crackdown-rings-false> - This article discusses the UK government's crackdown on mobile phones in schools, focusing on debates around distractions and potential impacts on education. It also touches on the NEU's perspectives and challenges related to such policies.
2. <https://saferphonesbill.co.uk> - The Safer Phones Bill is highlighted as a response to concerns over smartphone addiction and its effects on children's well-being. This initiative seeks government support for stricter regulations on screen time and social media use.
3. <https://neu.org.uk/latest/press-releases/mobile-phones-schools> - This article supports the NEU's stance on mobile phones in schools, echoing concerns about their impact on students' well-being and education. It also reflects on existing school policies and the need for a stronger governmental approach.
4. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk> - The Children's Commissioner's views on mobile phone policies in schools are discussed, emphasizing the importance of headteachers' autonomy in making decisions about bans, while also highlighting the need for a holistic approach to online safety.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/childrens-commissioner-calls-for-action-on-social-media-harms> - This government news piece covers the Commissioner’s call for action on social media harms, particularly focusing on the need for guidance on managing screen time and online interactions for parents, aligning with broader discussions on digital engagement.
6. <https://www.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2023/02/14/screen-time-children> - A YouGov survey detailed in this article reveals the extent of children's screen time, with nearly a quarter of those aged eight to 15 spending over four hours daily on internet-enabled devices, underscoring the need for effective digital management strategies.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/phone-ban-schools-uk-education-union-b2730369.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data