# Birchwood High sees drop in stress and better focus after banning mobile phones



Birchwood Community High School in Warrington has introduced a ban on mobile phones during the school day, a measure that headteacher Emma Mills says has led to reduced stress levels among pupils and improved focus in lessons. The school began using special pouches in September to lock students’ phones away until the end of the school day. Speaking to The Mirror, Mills highlighted positive changes resulting from the ban: “Around school, there is more chatter in the corridors at breaks and lunch, students are more focused in lessons and the number attending House competitions and enrichment activities has risen.”

She further commented, “Students say they like the ‘break’ from it. They say it has reduced their stress levels knowing they don’t have to think about what is happening. It has made them realise they can live without it.” With 23 years of experience in education, Mills observed the significant impact phones and social media have had on young people’s behaviour and safeguarding issues. She stated, “Seeing how our behaviour and safeguarding issues around phones and the online world have nearly disappeared feels like a big moment.”

The move comes amid wider national discussions about mobile phone use in schools. The National Education Union (NEU) and Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch have recently called for a statutory ban on mobile phones in schools. Daniel Kebede, general secretary of the NEU, expressed his personal view to The Mirror that the Labour Government should take a firmer stance on restricting mobile phone use during school hours. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer described such measures as “completely unnecessary,” stating that “almost every school” already bans phones during the day.

Brianna Ghey, a transgender teenager and former pupil of Birchwood Community High School, was tragically murdered in February 2023 in Warrington. The tragic case has brought attention to various issues surrounding school life. Brianna’s mother, Esther Ghey, expressed support for the phone ban, saying to The Mirror, “I’m incredibly proud of the steps Birchwood High School has taken. Brianna often struggled with distraction in school due to her smartphone and social media use, and I truly believe this initiative would have made a meaningful difference for her.”

In a high-profile criminal case linked to Brianna’s death, Scarlett Jenkinson and Eddie Ratcliffe, both aged 15 at the time, were convicted of her murder. The court heard disturbing details about Jenkinson's fascination with violent content online and serial killers, which factored into the crime planning. Jenkinson received a minimum sentence of 22 years, while Ratcliffe was sentenced to a minimum term of 20 years.

The broader national context includes guidance issued to schools in England by the previous Conservative government in February 2023, which recommended restricting phone use during school hours. A survey involving over 15,000 schools conducted by the Children’s Commissioner found that the overwhelming majority of schools already have policies limiting mobile phone use during the school day.

The introduction of the Bann at Birchwood Community High School reflects a local implementation of this wider trend, with reported benefits in pupil wellbeing, classroom focus, and participation in extracurricular activities.

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

## Bibliography

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3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/kemi-badenoch-mobile-phones-schools-b2303125.html> - This article discusses broader national discussions and the call by Conservative leader Kemi Badenoch for a statutory ban on mobile phones in schools.
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6. <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-64870935> - This article discusses the broader context of phone use in schools across England, including policies and surveys on limiting mobile phone use during school hours.
7. <https://www.cheshire-live.co.uk/news/chester-cheshire-news/brianna-gheys-warrington-school-says-31492254> - Please view link - unable to able to access data