# Mother’s Teched Off campaign calls for UK legislation to curb under-16 smartphone use



A mother from Bath, Miranda Wilson, has launched a campaign named "Teched Off" to draw attention to the potentially harmful effects of smartphones and social media on young people, particularly as students gear up for their GCSEs and A-levels. This initiative comes amid growing concerns among educators and parents alike about the implications of excessive screen time on young learners’ academic performance and mental health.

Wilson's campaign is driven by a stark belief in the necessity for legislative action to limit smartphone use among under-16s. "What I would like is really simple; one is legislation to stop under-16s being on smartphones and social media, and two is a public health campaign so parents are educated about the harms," she stated. As technology becomes increasingly ingrained in the daily lives of youth, her appeal resonates with a broader discourse on the challenges posed by digital devices.

Research has already illuminated the negative correlation between excessive social media use and student achievement. Studies indicate that middle schoolers who engage heavily with social media tend to experience declining academic performance alongside rising levels of anxiety and depression. This worrying trend has prompted responses from various quarters, including educational institutions and policymakers. Over 20 states in the U.S. are contemplating or have enacted legislation aimed at reducing phone usage in schools, with public backing for these measures reflecting widespread awareness of the issue.

In an international context, Brazil has taken proactive steps in this area by introducing a law that restricts smartphone use in elementary and high schools, allowing devices only during emergencies or for educational purposes. The intent behind such legislation is to enhance learning environments, addressing concerns not just about distraction but also about bullying and mental health conditions exacerbated by constant connectivity.

In the UK, some schools have already moved to implement strict cellphone policies. Thomas Mills High School in Suffolk has introduced a comprehensive ban on smartphones during school hours in response to rising mental health issues among students. This action follows research that highlights links between smartphone usage and conditions such as anxiety and depression. A survey revealed that almost half of the British public supports a total ban on phones in schools, illustrating a growing consensus that action is necessary to safeguard young people's well-being.

Beyond the legislative discourse, practical interventions are also being trialled in educational settings. For example, at Jacques-Feyder high school in Épinay-sur-Seine, near Paris, educators have launched a programme to monitor and reduce students’ screen time. By establishing a system where students must disclose their phone usage weekly, the school has successfully decreased average screen time from over seven hours to just under five. Despite initial resistance, students have acknowledged their reliance on smartphones, particularly for social media platforms like TikTok, which have been shown to disrupt both sleep and academic focus.

The collective response from various communities highlights an urgent need for a reevaluation of how smartphones are integrated into the lives of young people. As campaigns like Teched Off gain momentum, the conversation around ensuring a balanced approach to technology continues to evolve. The challenge remains not only to protect academic integrity but also to foster a healthier societal framework for the digital generation.

### Reference Map

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8rejlezrp1o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c8rejlezrp1o> - A mother from Bath, Miranda Wilson, has initiated the 'Teched Off' campaign to raise awareness about the dangers of smartphones and social media for young people. As students prepare for exams, concerns are growing about the impact of excessive screen time on learning. Wilson advocates for legislation to prevent under-16s from using smartphones and social media, and for a public health campaign to educate parents about these harms.
3. <https://time.com/7279360/school-phone-ban-bill-ready-essay/> - The CEO of Pinterest argues for banning smartphones in classrooms to reduce distractions and combat student anxiety, depression, and declining academic performance. Studies show a direct correlation between increased social media use and reduced academic achievement among middle schoolers. Over 20 U.S. states are considering or have passed legislation to restrict phone use in schools, with public support for these measures.
4. <https://apnews.com/article/bab6fd0ac6a277441bbaab235f9bbad2> - Brazil has enacted a law restricting smartphone use in elementary and high schools, effective from February. The law permits smartphone usage only during emergencies, for educational purposes, or for disabled students. This move aims to create better learning environments and aligns with global trends of restricting smartphone use in schools due to concerns over bullying, mental health, and distractions from learning.
5. <https://www.lemonde.fr/en/education/article/2024/04/21/the-high-schoolers-trying-to-cut-screen-time-tiktok-is-like-smoking-we-d-like-to-stop-but-we-can-t_6669033_104.html> - At Jacques-Feyder high school in Épinay-sur-Seine, teachers implement a program to monitor and reduce students' screen time. Students show their phones weekly, and based on screen time, they engage in extra hours of sport or homework. The initiative has reduced average screen time from 7 hours and 22 minutes to 4 hours and 57 minutes, despite initial resistance. Students recognize their dependency on phones, especially for social media like TikTok, which disrupts sleep and academic performance.
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/9b928dc8-c873-4132-8cf8-916cc061a283> - Thomas Mills High School in Suffolk has implemented a strict ban on smartphones to address concerns over children's mental health. Since September, students aged 11 to 16 must lock away their phones for the entire school day. This initiative follows increasing evidence linking smartphone use to mental health issues like depression and anxiety among young people. A survey revealed that nearly half of the British public supports a total ban on smartphones in schools.
7. <https://apnews.com/article/e6d1fe8ddfde33f086d5cd2a19f4c148> - Governors from both Republican and Democratic states, including Arkansas' Sarah Huckabee Sanders and California's Gavin Newsom, are supporting school cellphone bans, citing mental health concerns and classroom distractions. Eight states, including California, Florida, and Ohio, have enacted restrictions, with varying policies from complete classroom bans to individual district policies. Advocates argue phones affect students' mental well-being and cause distractions, while opponents emphasize the need for emergency communication and address issues like social media's role in bullying.