# Sophie Winkleman calls for smartphone ban in schools citing extensive harms to children



Sophie Winkleman, also known as Lady Frederick Windsor, has called for smartphones to be banned from schools, describing it as “impossible” to make these devices safe for children. Speaking at an event hosted by the Policy Exchange think tank in Westminster, the actress and royal family member highlighted the extensive physical and emotional harms she associates with smartphone use among young people.

Winkleman, famed for her role as Big Suze in Channel 4’s comedy Peep Show, has previously supported restrictions on smartphone ownership for under-16s and backed measures to strengthen the Online Safety Act. At the event, she emphasised the addictive design of smartphones, stating, “They’re designed by geniuses to be unputdownable.” She elaborated that even passive activities, such as watching animal videos for hours, leave children “stationary, isolated and passive” as they consume content that can often be harmful.

Outlining the physical consequences, Winkleman mentioned a range of issues including eyesight damage, spinal problems, sleep disturbances, hormone disruption, obesity, and neurological impairments such as reduced attention spans with ADHD-like symptoms. She added that the emotional and safeguarding risks are “equally multiple.”

Recent research by the Children’s Commissioner, surveying over 15,000 schools in England, shows that most already restrict mobile phone use during the school day. Nevertheless, the UK Government has so far resisted calls for a comprehensive ban on phones in schools. Public debate around this topic has intensified following the release of the Netflix drama Adolescence, which explores incel culture and has prompted further discussion about the influence of smartphones.

Another voice at the Westminster event was Rosie Duffield, an independent MP who resigned from the Labour Party last year. A former teaching assistant, Duffield highlighted the need for the Government to engage more effectively with evidence on the harms smartphones pose to children in educational settings. “We share evidence, research, ideas and opportunities to engage with the Government and discuss policy,” she said, adding, “This has been surprisingly clunky and difficult given the mounting evidence of harm and the growing level of concern from individual parents and groups of parents.”

Duffield called for sustained pressure to ensure that the government's relationship with technology firms does not come at the expense of child welfare. She noted increasing engagement from parents and community groups on the issue. The Canterbury MP left the Labour whip in September 2024 amid strained relations with party leadership, particularly over differing views on transgender rights, and has criticised the Prime Minister for what she called “hypocrisy” and “cruel” policies.

The Independent is reporting that the conversation around smartphones in schools remains a contentious topic as policymakers, educators, and families continue to grapple with balancing technological advancements and child wellbeing.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/adolescence-sophie-winkleman-rosie-duffield-netflix-government-b1224732.html> - This article supports Sophie Winkleman's call to ban smartphones from schools and her concerns about their safety for children. It also mentions Rosie Duffield's involvement in advocating for stronger government engagement with evidence on smartphone harms.
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7V6nucKFK88> - This video corroborates Sophie Winkleman's argument against using tech in schools by highlighting compelling reasons for such restrictions.
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPrNFES3IUk> - This video provides insight into Sophie Winkleman's concerns about the addictive nature of smartphones and their impact on children, aligning with her broader stance on tech in schools.
4. <https://www.policyexchange.org.uk/> - The Policy Exchange think tank is mentioned as the host of an event where Sophie Winkleman voiced her opinions about smartphone safety and potential bans in schools.
5. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/smartphones-ban-schools-uk-government-a2218031.html> - This article discusses the ongoing debate and contentious nature of banning smartphones in schools in the UK, providing context for the public and government perspectives on this issue.
6. <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/> - The Children's Commissioner's recent research on mobile phone restrictions in English schools supports the claim that many schools already limit phone use during the school day, furthering the discussion around comprehensive bans.
7. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/adolescence-sophie-winkleman-rosie-duffield-netflix-government-b2740874.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data