Text B

Mobile ban in schools not improving grades or behaviour, study suggests

5 February 2025
Alice Evans — BBC News



Banning phones in schools is not linked to pupils getting higher grades or having better mental wellbeing, the first study of its kind suggests. Students' sleep, classroom behaviour, exercise or how long they spend on their phones overall also seems to be no different for schools with phone bans and those without. However, academics did find that spending longer on smartphones and social media in general was linked with worse results for all of those measures. Dr Victoria Goodyear, the study's lead author, said the findings were not "against" smartphone bans, but suggested that bans in isolation were not enough to tackle the negative impacts.

The University of Birmingham's findings compared 1,227 students and the rules their 30 different secondary schools had for smartphone use at break and lunchtimes. The research found a link between more time on phones and social media, and worse mental wellbeing and mental health, less physical activity, poorer sleep, lower grades and more disruptive classroom behaviour. Joe Ryrie, director of the campaign group Smartphone Free Childhood, called the results "surprising", because teachers in their network had reported benefits from phone bans.

Charlie got his first smartphone in Year 8, but a strictly enforced ban meant he was not allowed to bring it to school until sixth form. He says the smartphone ban "forces you to hang out and chat with your friends". Now in Year 13, he thinks the ban has "probably" helped him spend less time scrolling social media, but says lots of his friends are still "on their phones all the time". However, Colin Crehan, head at Holy Trinity Catholic School in Birmingham, believes students should learn to use phones in a "safe and controlled space".

Students at other schools where phones are banned have reported benefits like less bullying and better social skills, factors not included in the University of Birmingham study. Ysgol Aberconwy, in Conwy, recently introduced magnetic pouches that keep students' phones locked unless a teacher unlocks them during class. Georgie, 15, says the atmosphere at school previously "was quite aggressive", with students filming fights. Now, she feels arguments do not escalate as much. "People have got closer, because they're talking face-to-face," she said.

Other schools have found parents wanting contact with children to be a sticking point when introducing phone restrictions. At The Fulham Boys School in west London, concerns came from parents worried about children travelling without smartphone apps. One student got on a bus going in the wrong direction and ended up far from home without a smartphone to check a map or call home.

In the UK, 96% of 12 to 15-year-olds have their own phone, according to Ofcom. The Department for Education has encouraged schools in England to restrict smartphone use, while Scotland and Northern Ireland have followed suit. The study may intensify debate around whether under-16s should have smartphones altogether. A government official said more robust evidence was needed to reach clear conclusions and confirmed that further research into social media's impact on children's wellbeing had been launched.

Choose an appropriate option from the list that completes each gap in the following text.

The study found no evidence that school phone restrictions [1.] students' academic performance, wellbeing, or other measured outcomes. In contrast, greater overall use of smartphones and social media was [2.] with poorer results across these areas. The researchers therefore did not [3.] school bans altogether; instead, they argued that restrictions alone may be [4.] to address the wider problem. These conclusions were based on a study that [5.] students from 30 secondary schools with different rules on smartphone use.

The following statements are either true or false. Choose the correct option, then justify it using words as they appear in the text. **Both** parts are required for **[1 mark]**.

6. Joe Ryrie expected the research findings because they confirmed what teachers in his network had experienced.

○ True ○ False

Justification

7. Charlie was prevented from taking his smartphone to school before sixth form.

○ True ○ False

Justification

8. Charlie is certain that the school ban reduced the amount of time he personally spent using social media.

○ True ○ False

Justification

9. The University of Birmingham study examined the social advantages that students from schools with phone bans have reported.

○ True ○ False

Justification

LIVEWORKSHEETS

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Choose an appropriate option from the list that completes each gap in the following text.

Georgie believes that restricting phones has helped [10.] conflicts at her school and encouraged students to communicate directly. However, some parents [11.] restrictions because smartphones can help children travel safely and contact their families. Despite these concerns, education authorities across the UK have [12.] schools to limit smartphone use. The recent study could [13.] discussion about whether younger teenagers should own smartphones at all. Nevertheless, the government believes more evidence must be collected before researchers can [14.] firm conclusions about their effects.

LIVEWORKSHEETS