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Does banning phones reduce the risk of online bullying?

Image by The Independent

In February 2024, the government proposed a ban of phones in schools across the UK. It comes as a part of a scheme to crack down on smartphone use to reduce the risk of bullying and classroom distractions.

97% of children own a mobile phone by the age of 12. Research suggests that teens spend nearly 9 hours per day on screens - longer than a school day by over 2 hours. This excessive use of mobiles has been thought to negatively impact childhood, attention span and wellbeing.

That's why 74% of teens feel happier and more peaceful when they are without their smartphones, according to a new Pew Research study.

Within the last year, 1 in 5 children have experienced some form of cyberbullying. Because of this - among other reasons - schools are starting to clamp down on phone use during the school day, with some even introducing phone lockers to secure their devices away.

One school that has already implemented this policy has found that their school is a much happier place and students have experienced more joy.

From July 2024, Clifton Community School will be prohibiting the use of phones within school time, causing a divide between some students and staff.

Manha, a year 7 student at Clifton Community School, said: "I think mobile phones increase the chance of bullying and phones carry many dangers. However, I don't agree with schools banning phones because many kids have families who need to contact them and it is unfair that teachers can carry phones but students can't. Plus phones in lessons are a good tool for research and quizzes."

Mr Skirrow, Deputy Headteacher at Clifton Community School, commented: "A phone-free school results in fewer bullying incidents, better learning, more confidence and more verbal communication between students."

With many people divided on this subject, it will be a case of more schools trialing this to find out the effectiveness of the ban in reducing cases of bullying and improving the learning environment.

Top tips for reducing mobile phone use to improve mental wellbeing:

- Ask your parents to set a limit on screen time
- Join an extracurricular activity
- Don't bring your phone to bed
- Get a hobby
- Play with friends