

Conservatives push for ban on phones in schools

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The Conservatives have said they will push for MPs to be given a vote on banning mobile phones in schools this week.

The party will attempt to amend the Labour government's Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill to include the ban.

Speaking to the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuennsberg, Shadow Education Secretary Laura Trott said ending phone use in schools was a "no-brainer".

The previous Tory government [issued guidance](#) to schools last year but Trott said this "hasn't worked", with too many children still using the devices in classrooms.

"So now it is time to make it law," Trott said.

A government spokesperson said: "Mobile phones are a distraction from learning which is why our clear guidance sets out that school leaders should be restricting their use.

"Around 97% of schools restrict mobile phone use in some way, while headteachers also have the ability to implement complete bans, with many choosing to exercise this right."

The Conservative amendment would need to be backed by a majority of MPs to be added to the schools bill.

But the bid to change the bill is unlikely to succeed given Labour has a working majority of 167 MPs.

When asked if her party had a chance of adding the phone ban to the bill, Trott said: "I've got to make the argument.

"I've got to ... encourage parents, teachers, children up and down the country to petition their MPs to vote for this because it is incredibly important. It will make a massive difference."

The BBC has been told the Labour government has no plans to legislate to impose a blanket ban on mobile phone use in schools.

Ministers believe headteachers already have the power to ban phones in schools.

Most secondary schools in England already have restrictions on phone use and more primaries are introducing rules too.

The government guidance says "schools should develop a mobile phone policy that prohibits the use of mobile phones", throughout the school day, including during lessons.

Last year, [technology secretary Peter Kyle told the BBC](#) that he was not aware of "a single school" in his constituency that allowed the devices to be used "freely" during the school day "and certainly not in classrooms".

[A recent study suggested](#) banning phones in schools was not linked to pupils getting higher grades or having better mental wellbeing.

Last week, another bill that had suggested banning phones in schools [was watered down](#) to gain government support.

Labour MP Josh MacAlister, who brought the private members' bill, told MPs that reducing phone use in law would be a "process", not one "big bang" event.

The proposed legislation calls for the government to say within a year whether it will raise the digital age of consent from 13 to 16 - meaning companies could not receive children's data without parental permission until that age.

Data Protection and Telecoms Minister Chris Bryant said the bill's recommendations "very much chime with what we intend to do".

Private members' bills rarely make it into law without government backing, but they are an opportunity for backbenchers to raise an issue's profile.