

# Bring in an age limit for smartphones

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As a teacher, I am thrilled that the UN has called for a ban on mobile phones in schools (Report, 26 July). This is long overdue. Since the ubiquity of phones has been normalised, I've seen a parallel fall in pupils' concentration and retention, and a rise in demotivation. From my observations, the advance of smartphones has advanced the dumbing down of pupils. School heads seem reluctant to challenge parents' sense of their right to contact a child at any time of day. I am frequently told by pupils – after asking them to turn off their phone and put it away– “Oh Miss, I can't – it's my mum [or dad]. I have to answer them!” I believe that smartphones should be regarded as potentially as destabilising as cars or alcohol, and should only be legally available to anyone over a certain age (16 or 18 perhaps). It must be possible to make a phone that functions only as a phone, which children all ages can have, in order to be in safe contact with their parents/carers. Siobhan O'Tierney Paisley, Renfrewshire • Your feature (27 August) on “phubbing” – snubbing someone in your company in order to engage with your phone – misses a common “phubbing” situation: parents or carers staring at their phones while children try to engage them in eye contact or verbal interplay. If the child gets lucky (or the parent wants to make them be still and silent), they may get to play with the phone. Sushila Dhall Oxford • Have an opinion on anything you've read in the Guardian today? Please email us your letter and it will be considered for publication in our letters section.