

Subject: A request to review EdTech and screen use at [School name]

Dear [Headteacher's name],

I am writing as a parent of [child's name] in [Year X] to raise concerns about the use of digital devices and EdTech in lessons and for homework at [School name].

Optional: insert a positive comment about your child's school experience here, if possible.

We try to limit [child's name]'s exposure to the internet and to screens when at home. However, [he/she/they] tells us [he/she/they] uses a laptop or iPad in most lessons, and we see that almost every piece of homework requires a device.

Optional - include any of the following if they apply to your family, in your own words:

- We restrict screen time at home, only for school to override that through homework requirements*
- We know our child is distracted by social media when using a laptop or iPad for homework or in class*
- Our child is sleeping less well because they are on a screen for homework in the evening*

We are not opposed to all uses of technology in schools. We would argue, though, that schools are no longer using it sparingly, or critically, but indiscriminately. There is an important distinction between teaching students about useful forms of technology, and using technology to teach. Our concerns centre around the following points:

- Children and teens spend around 7 hours on screens every day. Schools are enabling this by requiring them to use computers in so many lessons and for so much homework.
- The data is clear that learning is not improved by digital education tools. The use of personal devices - laptops and iPads - is particularly damaging. If this is the case, why are schools persisting in using them?
- Children's mental and physical health is being adversely affected by screen use.
- Children's brains are being rewired due to the addictive nature of social media - and EdTech uses the same dopamine-driven, gamified strategies. Their ability to focus is being undermined.
- The arrival of AI means that future employees will need problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity skills - in other words, the skills which humans can uniquely excel at, skills which do not depend upon technology.

Where technology is concerned, we would encourage [School name] to be rigorous in insisting EdTech tools are only used when they have clear positive benefits in a specific subject area.

Drawing on the work of neuroscientist Dr Jared Cooney Horvath in his recent book *The Digital Delusion*, we suggest that any proposed EdTech intervention is measured against the following criteria:

1. What clear educational need is this tool trying to meet in the proposed subject area?
2. Is there clear, unbiased evidence this tool will improve learning in this subject area, rather than simply solving a logistical problem?
3. Has this tool been compared fully with the other possible solutions for delivering the subject content, and is it clearly better than the non-digital alternatives?
4. Has [School name] undertaken a risk/benefit analysis of the EdTech tools used in lessons, and can you provide us with a copy?

Further, has the school written a policy on AI in light of the increasing evidence of its impact on the integrity of the learning process - as well as its status as an unregulated product with wide-ranging safeguarding implications?

We think the British education system has taken a wrong turn with its wholesale adoption of EdTech, but there is now enough evidence to support any school in returning to analogue methods, which are proven to produce better results for children. Sweden and Denmark have both taken this decision.

We are asking [School name] to stand with parents and protect our children from the harms of excessive screen use, and to deploy technology far more selectively.

A summary of the evidence behind these concerns is available at closescreensopenminds.com/the-evidence.

We would like to set up a meeting with you this term. Please let us know your availability when convenient.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your child's name and year group]

[Your contact email]