

Dear [Head Teacher / name relevant school contact],

[I am/We are] currently exploring secondary school options for my child OR [I/We] have chosen to send [my/our] child to [XX insert name of school] and [I am/we are] writing to better understand your school's approach to homework and the use of digital devices and teaching applications in the classroom, for independent learning and for homework.

[I/We] have very deliberately chosen to limit the use and role of devices and technology in our home, particularly smartphones and tablets. [I've/we've] done this because [I/we] feel that our children should have the chance to grow up free from device dependencies and the negative health implications now widely associated with the intrusion of tech into all of our lives; and because [I/we] want to help them develop strong core skills: reading, handwriting, critical thinking, patience, the ability to focus and maintain attention, social and play skills. These are all skills which traditional non-digital learning methods are known to nurture, and which the presence of devices and gamified edtech platforms appears (for most children at least) to disrupt.

While [I/we] recognise that some targeted uses of technology in the classroom could potentially enhance learning, and can doubtless create efficiencies for teaching staff, [I am/we are] also aware that many secondary schools are increasingly relying on pupil-facing EdTech applications and platforms, and 1:1 devices, for use in lessons and to set and complete homework. Based on [my/our] own experience and the growing body of research that [I/we] have taken time to review, [I am/we are] concerned that this trend is not leading to better educational outcomes for school children, and may even work against the development of vital skills such as focus, comprehension, handwriting fluency, and independent critical thinking.

With this in mind, [I/we] would very much appreciate it if you could provide some information about your school's current approach to using devices and pupil-facing EdTech. For example:

1. Are students routinely asked to use tablets or laptops in lessons other than computing/ICT? If so, roughly how regularly each week and is there a different approach in different year groups or in particular subject areas?
2. If devices are used in classrooms, is that typically for specific tasks directed by the teacher, such as collectively viewing a relevant image or video clip to demonstrate a point of learning, or will pupils use them for more general free-form activities such as note-taking, completing tests or carrying out research?
3. Is homework regularly or exclusively set online, or are paper-based alternatives available or encouraged? Could we as parents request paper-based alternatives for our child?

4. Does the school give any guidance to pupils and parents about the amount of time students are expected to spend on screen-based homework or revision tasks?
5. What is your view on pupils developing strong core academic skills – such as extended long form handwriting, independent reading, and structured revision techniques – particularly in preparation for GCSEs, which remain paper-based?
6. How has the school assessed the educational value of its digital tools and platforms to assure itself, and parents, that their use will enhance learning?

[My/Our] purpose in posing these questions is simply to understand how technology, and particularly devices and online platforms, are being used in your school. [I am/We are] concerned about children spending too much time on screens and devices, and that core skills development – especially at secondary level, where students are preparing for public exams and developing habits that will shape their academic future – will be suffering as a result.

[I/We] hope that you will understand [my/our] concerns, and perhaps share at least some of them. Thank you for your time and consideration. [I/We] would welcome any information you can share about your school's practices in this area.

Yours sincerely,

[Your name]