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SOCIAL MEDIA BAN IS A WELCOME FIRST STEP BUT CHILDREN MUST BE PREPARED FOR THE DIGITAL WORLD, SAYS WALDORF UK

"A social media ban may be necessary, but may not be sufficient," says Waldorf UK as the Government announces plans to ban social media access for under-16s.

Responding to the announcement this morning Waldorf UK, the national representative body for Steiner Waldorf schools, known for delaying children's access to digital technology, welcomed the move but called on ministers to take a broader look at how children and young people are prepared for life in a digital world.

The organisation says that while stronger protections are needed, evidence suggests that restrictions alone will not be enough. In addition to technical knowledge, children also need the maturity, resilience and critical understanding required to navigate technology safely, confidently and responsibly.

Steiner Waldorf schools have long taken a developmentally-informed approach to digital technology. Personal digital devices, including mobile phones, are not used throughout early years and primary education. Instead, children are encouraged to engage directly first with the real world through hands-on play, creativity, practical activity, project work, storytelling, outdoor learning, artistic work and face-to-face relationships.

From secondary school onwards, technology is introduced gradually and safely in age-appropriate ways, with an emphasis on understanding how digital technologies work, developing critical awareness, and becoming conscious, creative users and makers of technology rather than passive or unconscious consumers.

Fran Russell, Executive Director said:

"A social media ban may be necessary, but our experience suggests it would not be sufficient.

"The Government is right to recognise the growing concerns surrounding children's use of social media and the impact it can have on wellbeing, sleep, attention, mental health and safety.

"But the bigger challenge is helping young people develop the skills and maturity needed to engage confidently and responsibly with technology throughout their lives.

"Young people need digital skills and technological understanding, but we believe children benefit from first developing strong foundations in creativity, critical thinking, self-regulation, social confidence and real-world experience before entering highly persuasive digital environments."

Waldorf UK is calling for a wider national conversation about children's relationship with technology, including social media, smartphones, AI systems and digital media more generally.

The organisation is urging policymakers to adopt a staged, developmentally-informed approach that combines appropriate safeguards with education that helps children and young people become thoughtful, independent and responsible users of technology.

Research and experience from Steiner Waldorf schools suggest that delaying children's immersion in digital media can support concentration, creativity, emotional wellbeing and social development while still enabling young people to go on to thrive in higher education and technology-rich careers.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- Waldorf UK is the national representative body for Steiner Waldorf schools in the UK, representing 15 independent schools and one state-funded academy.
- Across the 90 countries there are over 1200 schools and 2000 early childhood centres.
- Waldorf schools are screen-free throughout early years and primary education and have never permitted mobile phones in classrooms. Parents support this approach and are encouraged to establish healthy digital boundaries at home.
- In May 2026, Waldorf UK submitted evidence to the Government's "Growing Up in the Online World" consultation, supporting stronger age protections while also advocating a developmentally-informed approach to digital literacy and media maturity.
- The submission argued that children should be helped to develop the maturity and understanding needed to use technology safely and effectively, rather than relying solely on restrictions.
- Waldorf UK also highlighted the European HERMMES (Holistic Education Resilience and Media Maturity in Education Settings) project, which explores how children can develop media maturity through age-appropriate, staged engagement with technology.

For more information contact:

Fran Russell, Executive Director

Mobile 07973 323795

fran.russell@waldorfeducation.uk

Valerie McDonough (office):

07736592710

businessops@waldorfeducation.uk

Jude Bullen (office):

admin@waldorfeducation.uk

Available for interview:

Fran Russell, Executive Director

Mobile 07973 323795

fran.russell@waldorfeducation.uk

Parents and Headteachers

We can offer parents and headteachers for interview upon request