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Headteachers should have clear guidance allowing them to remove smartphones from school if they deem it necessary, a Scottish Conservative MSP has said today.

It follows academic evidence that restricting access to smartphone use by pupils can boost educational attainment – and reduce educational inequality.

No guidance has been issued to Scottish schools on smartphone technology since 2013, during which time mobile phone usage has increased by more than a third among the population.

Michelle Ballantyne, the party's spokesman for childcare and early years, said today that a ban should exist in primary schools and restrictions on use should be introduced in secondary school where heads deem it necessary.

It comes after a major paper by the London School of Economics declared "schools that restrict mobile phones subsequently experience an improvement in test scores".

It also found that "low-achieving students are more likely to be distracted by the presence of mobile phones" meaning that "banning mobile phones could be a low-cost way for schools to reduce educational inequality".

However, the 2013 guidance issued by the Scottish Government declares that it is "unreasonable and impractical to attempt to impose a ban" on mobile phones in schools.

Now the South Scotland MSP has called for that guidance to change if attainment is to be improved.

Scottish Conservative early years spokeswoman Michelle Ballantyne said:

"We are all becoming more and more reliant on smartphones and we know parents see them as valuable to ensure they can keep in contact with their children before and after school.

"But we do need to get the balance right.

"The evidence suggests that excessive smartphone use in schools can reduce

educational attainment, particularly among low-achievers.

“At the same time, we know that online bullying is a growing problem in school.

“Many primary school teachers would like to see a ban on smartphones, something I support.

“And in secondary, headteachers who want to restrict the use of smartphones if they think it is necessary should be supported to do so.

“Given the explosion of smartphone use over the last few years, the Scottish Government should be looking again at its four-year old guidance.

“This may be a cost-free way to help boost standards in classrooms all over Scotland, giving teachers the support they need to deliver the high quality education we all want for pupils.”

A study by the London School of Economics concluded in 2015 that schools which banned mobile phones saw an increase in test scores – with improvements particularly pronounced among low-achievers
<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/dp1350.pdf>