

Assignment 1 – Example 1

www.tes.com/news/why-social-media-should-be-banned-under-16s

Write a letter to Natasha Devon in response to her article 'Why social media should be banned for under 16s'

Dear Ms Devon,

I recently read your article entitled "Why Social Media should be banned for Under 16s", and I am writing this letter to explain why I completely disagree with your proposal. Whilst I agree that "no one fully understands the consequences of the widespread use of social media", this is a not a reason to abolish it. As a young person myself, I can offer more than any "steering group" or committee, to explain to you the effects of social media on the under 16s, some of which are entirely positive. I am, erm, "an actual young person"!

So, the European Union proposed a ban on under 16s using social media and, although you claim to be against "telling young people what their problems are" you have concluded that the European Union was "absolutely right to propose a ban as it did", even though your own research found the idea of such a ban to be "patronizing and unnecessary". You suggest that my generation, a group of individuals "born into a world of broadband, smart phones and widespread social media usage" is unable to view this argument objectively. On the contrary, I suggest to you that young people who have grown up in such an environment, are best placed to interrogate the pros and cons of social media use. We understand how it all works, we use it regularly and routinely, we see the effects it has. I would not be so impolite as to make a guess at your age, but something tells, me that your teenage years are somewhere in the distant past. As such, the online world is likely to be more alien to you, who did not grow up with social media, and it is this that makes so wary and critical of its use.

You draw our attention to the opinions of Professor Rachel Thompson, who claims that whilst adults use social media intermittently during breaks from other activities, for teenagers the balance is reversed. You argue that "if she is right" then teenagers are at risk of viewing their online lives as more "real" than their physical lives. The key word here is "iP". With respect, it is my belief that Professor Thompson is wrong in her judgement of the situation. Moreover, I think people of a young age can see the difference between the online world which they spend time in and the real world. I know that for most of them, the real world is just as crucial as the online one. They do not consider the time spent with their family as an awkward "pause", and they value this part of their everyday routine.

You highlight the findings of Young Minds' research, showing the key areas of unhappiness amongst teenagers as: bullying, exam stress, sexual pressures from online pornography and body image. Bullying exists on line and in the real world and there is no doubt that this

causes distress and needs to be addressed. However, this is not the fault of social media; teenagers need to be educated about the ways they behave so that they learn to behave responsibly. Exam stress is not the fault of social media use. In fact, online forums offering support and advice about exam preparation can be very helpful in reducing exam stress. I agree that online pornography should be banned, but this is not something that social media encourages. Likewise, social media can be used to promote positivity about body image by encouraging and celebrating real people, rather than those we traditionally aspired towards on movie screens.

It is disappointing that your article does not offer a more balanced evaluation of the role that social media plays in young people's lives. You have focused only on the dangers and down sides, ignoring the positive effect of social media on the lives of teenagers. Social media allows teens to escape the stresses of their daily lives, finding solace through communication with others who may be facing similar challenges. Similarly, suppose a group of astronomy enthusiasts meet online, they can form friendships, organise events and develop their shared interest. Social media has also become a crucial part of everyday life for many young people, allowing them to share information, arrange meetings and develop and celebrate social groups. Teenagers can stay connected, share experience, whilst also creating a record of their lives that can be reviewed and revisited. All of these things are surely positive benefits.

Ultimately, in the modern, technological era, teens must be allowed to use and enjoy social media. However, adults have a responsibility to educate young people to ensure that they learn how to use what is available to them with positivity and responsibility. I suggest you spend your time considering how this can be best achieved, rather than supporting an unjustifiable ban.

Yours sincerely

Assessment Criteria

- Effective style. (W1)
- Secure overall structure, organised to help the reader. (W2)
- Wide range of vocabulary, used with some precision. (W3)
- Effective register for audience and purpose. (W4)
- Spelling, punctuation and grammar mostly accurate, with occasional minor errors. (W5)
- Successfully evaluates ideas and opinions, both explicit and implicit. (R1, R2, R3)
- Assimilates ideas from the text to give a developed, sophisticated response. (R3, R5)