SMART Schools+: Social Media and Adolescent mental health – the impact of UK national policy Restrictions on social media use and menTal health

This is a Wellcome Trust Funded Study, led by the University of Birmingham and by Prof. Victoria Goodyear and Prof. Miranda Pallan. This document provides information for *Teachers* who are participating in the study. Further information about the study can be accessed on our website https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/projects/smart-schools

What is the aim of the study? To evaluate the impact of the upcoming UK social media restrictions for under 16s on adolescent mental health and wellbeing.

Why is this research needed? From April 2027, social media access will be restricted for under-16s in the UK. This research will provide timely evidence on how these restrictions influence young people's digital behaviours, mental health, wellbeing, and educational experiences. By working with schools, we aim to understand not only whether the restrictions are effective, but also who benefits most, under what circumstances, and whether there are any unintended consequences. The findings will help schools, families, and policymakers make informed decisions about how best to support young people's wellbeing, learning, and development in both the short and longer term.

What will I be asked to do? We will ask you to complete an online teacher survey (up to 30 minutes duration), which we will email to you.

- The survey will ask you to provide information regarding each pupil in your form/class, including their attendance, attainment, free school meals eligibility, if registered as having special educational needs and whether English is an additional language. This data can be entered manually, via document upload and/or be provided by another member (e.g. admin assistant, subject teacher). We are collecting this information in order to understand more about pupil characteristics and the differences in school phone policies
- The survey will also ask you to report on each individual pupil's level of disruptive classroom behaviour
- The survey is to be completed during the school day on a school device

What will my pupils be asked to do? Your form/class pupils will attend a timetabled lesson facilitated by a researcher in which they will complete an online pupil survey (up to 40 minutes) on tablets provided by the University of Birmingham. We will ask you to attend this lesson and provide additional support to pupils if needed.

- The pupil survey will include a range of topics, such as, mental wellbeing, quality of life, anxiety and depression, smart phone and social media use, and social connections.
- At the end of the timetabled lesson, pupils will also be provided with an activity monitor watch (measuring sleep and physical activity), to wear at home and in school for 7 days. Pupils will need to return these watches to you in the same lesson, the following week
- Pupils will complete the survey and wear the accelerometers at two time points – now (pre implementation of national restrictions) and in a year's time (post implementation of restrictions)

- For further information about what your pupils will be asked to do, please read the 'Pupil Participant Information Leaflet' on our website https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/projects/smart-schools

What are the benefits to taking part? Your school will receive £1000 for involvement in the SMART Schools Study (£500 at each time point). In addition, each pupil will receive a £5 voucher for taking part at each time point.

This study will also offer your school the opportunity to play a key role in understanding the impact of the UK wide social media restrictions, and how to best support adolescent mental wellbeing.You will be provided with free access to resources and materials developed from this study and can request a summary of findings specific to your school related to pupils' wellbeing and their uses of smartphones and social media.

What are the risks to taking part? Any risk or harm is not expected to you as a direct result of this research, as you will only be reporting on pupil characteristics.

Will information be kept confidential? All information that we collect will be kept strictly confidential. This means that your name will be removed from any reporting of the findings. All information will be stored electronically and securely. Only the research team will have access to the data. Electronic files will be deleted from the system after ten years. For further information on how we store data, please read our Teacher Participant Privacy Notice on our website https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/projects/smart-schools.

Can I withdraw myself from the study? Yes. You can withdraw yourself from the study. If you do this within 4 weeks of completing the survey, all documents and data generated will be destroyed. Your consent will not be destroyed to ensure we remain within legal processes. Any data stored electronically will be deleted.

What will happen with the results of the study? The results will be presented in academic journal papers and at national and international conferences. We will produce blogs, podcasts, videos and infographics targeted at pupils, parents and the wider public on the study findings and these will be made available on our website and sent to your school.

Do I have to take part? No. The choice to take part is up to you. Before you start the online survey, you will be asked to give your consent to participate. If decide you do not want to take part, you can just tick 'no' to this question. You do not have to give a reason for this and you will not be affected in any way.

For further information, please visit our website
https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/research/projects/smart-schools

If you would like to speak to someone about the study, please contact us:

Further contact details:
SMART Schools+ Study Project Manager
School of Sport and Exercise Rehabilitation Sciences
University of Birmingham
B15 2TT

Email smartstudy@contacts.bham.ac.uk;

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<u>Thank you for considering taking part in the SMART Schools Study</u>

(Located at the start of the Teacher Survey)

SECTION 1: Teacher Consent

Please read and tick the following before you start the survey:

- □ I confirm that I have read and understood the Teacher Information Letter dated 03/11/2026 (Version 7), and have had an opportunity to ask questions
- □ I understand that I am being asked to complete one online survey (30 minutes) and attend one timetabled lesson with my pupils (up to 60 minutes)
- □ I agree to participate in the SMART Schools+ study, to complete the survey honestly and support my pupils with completing their online survey's and to collect accelerometers 7 days after they have been given to pupils
- □ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw (remove myself from the study), up to 4 weeks after I have participated and my information will be deleted. I understand I can do this without giving any reason, and without my rights being affected
- □ I understand that my answers will be kept confidential and only members of the research team will have access to my information

I give my consent to participate in the SMART Schools+ Study:

- □ **Yes**
- □ **No**