

Considerations for Supporting the Social Media Age Restrictions for Students Under 16



Impacts for schools

Support for students

Schools will need to consider tailored support for students whose mental health and wellbeing may be impacted by changes in access to social media platforms. For some, this shift may lead to feelings of grief, loss of connection, or anxiety about missing out socially. Students may require assistance in adjusting to new ways of communicating and engaging with their peers, including building confidence in offline activities, and exploring safe digital alternatives.

Counselling services may be necessary to help students navigate these changes. Proactive approaches such as peer-support networks, wellbeing check-ins, and structured opportunities for social connection can help mitigate isolation.

Schools are encouraged to review the supports currently in place, including counselling, peer support, and co-curricular activities, and consider how these can be strengthened to ensure students feel safe, supported, and connected throughout the transition.

Updating/Revising Communication Strategies

When the restrictions take effect, schools may need to review and reconsider their communication methods with students, including the possible cessation of the use of restricted social media platforms. Schools that have established social media policies, procedures and strategies in place and will be well prepared to manage the upcoming changes.

The communication channels that may need further consideration are Google environments and YouTube use in school settings. Schools that use apps such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger will need to reconsider their communication channels for those under 16.

Alternative approaches may include reverting to email or SMS messages; hosting a discussion forum nested within a course hosted in your learning management system or leveraging communication channels provided by your Student Information System.

Further education and curriculum adjustments

Schools may need to consider how they explain the new legislation to students and their families and include these discussions as part of their ongoing education in digital literacy and responsible online behaviour. Within the PDHPE K-10 Syllabus, specific learning addresses social media, supporting students to build self-management and interpersonal skills that promote positive online engagement.

Children's Online Privacy Code

Schools will be aware that the Australian Information Commissioner is currently working to develop a Children's Online Privacy Code and has recently asked for feedback and comment. Independent Schools Australia has made a submission in relation to the proposed Code mainly directed towards its possible scope and how it may apply to the normal operations of a school.

We expect a draft Code to be prepared and circulated early 2026, at which time public consultation will take place "for a minimum of 60 days". At that stage we will be able to consider its possible effect on schools with more certainty.

Key strategies and planning required by schools

Schools should take a proactive approach and develop strategies that will address the immediate impact of the social media age delay and any long-term adjustments to school policies and procedures. The upcoming changes and restrictions regarding social media usage for children under 16 signify a notable shift in how young people interact and communicate online.

In response, schools must prioritise student wellbeing while ensuring that their communication strategies, policies, and practices are compliant with current legislation to manage these developments effectively.

Communication with parents and school community

Providing guidance, support and resources for parents to effectively manage the transition at home, including identifying affected platforms and evaluating appropriate alternatives for their children to communicate with family and friends. It is important to recognise that enforcement responsibility rests with the platforms rather than with children or their parents.

Consider ways in which parents are engaged in your school around child safety issues and include discussions about the implications of the social media delay and restrictions for children under 16. Ensure parents and carers can provide feedback or have ways of raising their concerns with the appropriate staff in your school.

Ensure your students are aware of the appropriate communication channels they can use to provide any feedback or concerns about the upcoming changes.

Visiting the [e-Safety Commissioner website](#) for updates on legislation and supporting resources for students, parents and schools. The e-Safety Commissioner provides regular updates on their websites in this area.

Review Policies and procedures

Schools are encouraged to take the opportunity to revise their existing policies related to technology use and re-assess the logged in use of YouTube for under 16 year olds.

Note: Google advises that schools adopting Google Classroom will still be able to assign educational YouTube videos to students under 16 safely as they advise that this method removes the YouTube url, all advertisements and once viewed, no further videos are promoted or suggested to the student.

YouTube Kids: We are advised that YouTube for Kids is not being rolled into the u16 social media ban because it is a more contained environment and stores only age appropriate videos.

Reinforce the school's approach to digital literacy

To effectively prepare teenagers for the digital age in using social media schools are encouraged to embed digital literacy into their learning programs. This involves integrating lessons on safe and responsible online behaviour, critical thinking, and the ethical use of technology across various subjects. By incorporating digital literacy into the curriculum, schools can help students develop the skills needed to navigate the digital world confidently and responsibly including for social media. This includes teaching students how to evaluate the credibility of online information, understand the implications of their digital footprint, and protect their privacy and security online.

Consider the potential impact of the ban on students with diverse needs. Schools need to be mindful of the impact that the new social media age restrictions may have on students who rely heavily on social media for communication, especially those who with diverse needs. These students may face new challenges in the potential absence of being able to maintain social relationships and access support networks via social media. To mitigate these effects, schools may wish to plan for alternative communication methods, such as in-person social groups and specialised support services. Working closely with parents and caregivers is also essential to ensure consistent support. By taking these steps, schools can help all students, including those with diverse needs, to thrive despite the new restrictions.



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