

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **First News' Look Up! Month returns this September.**

Campaign urging all schools to hold life-saving assemblies in September by offering all schools a FREE comprehensive assembly pack.

As children across the UK return to the classroom and many start to walk to school by themselves, First News, the UK's leading newspaper for young people, is relaunching the annual First News Look Up! Campaign as part of its ongoing commitment to child safety for the month of September.

**Research found that out of 3,000 road crossings by pupils, nearly a third were holding a phone or another device.** In the UK, 4,913 pedestrians aged 15 and under were injured on roads in 2022 with 1,417 of them either killed or left with life-changing injuries. This equates to approximately four child pedestrians per day or a classroom-sized group of 28 children each week.

Nicky Cox MBE, First News Editor in Chief, says: *"While parents and teachers are rightly worried about their children's safety at school because of RACC, First News is also worried about their safety getting to school in the first place. The number of child pedestrians who are killed or seriously injured every week is shocking – a class full of 28 children. Numerous studies have shown that pedestrian mobile phone distraction is a major cause of road accidents. That's why First News' Look Up! month is reminding children to put away their phones when crossing roads. We have created a free assembly pack and are calling on all schools to hold an assembly about the issue during Look Up! month. The assembly pack can be downloaded at [first.news/lookupteachers](https://first.news/lookupteachers)."*

First News is calling on every school to participate in Look Up! month **this September** by hosting informative assemblies to address the critical issue of mobile phone-related accidents and promote road safety. These assemblies will provide invaluable insights and practical tips to students about the dangers of using smartphones while navigating roadways.

#### **The Real Dangers:**

Recent government figures a stark reminder of the urgent need for action. In the UK, 4,913 pedestrians aged 15 and under were injured on roads last year, with a heartbreaking 1,417 of them either killed or left with life-changing injuries. This equates to approximately four child pedestrians per day or a classroom-sized group of 28 children each week. Experts have identified that the majority of these incidents occur between 8 am to 9 am and between 3 pm to 7 pm, with children aged 12 most susceptible to accidents as they gain independence while walking to and from school.

#### **Encouraging children not to be a SMOMBIE?**

Children are disproportionately affected by mobile phone distractions, earning them the dubious distinction of being labelled "SMOMBIES" (smartphones + zombies). **By the age of 11, 91% of children in the UK own a smartphone. There is a clear link between the use of mobile devices and the time of serious accidents involving children, particularly at the end of the school day.**



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## THE FACTS:

While almost a third of Brits admitted to using their phone when crossing the road in 2021, research carried out by AXA insurance company found that **21% of 11-year-olds** and **25% of 12-year-olds** say that they have been distracted by a screen while crossing a road.

To find out more, researchers at the University of Calgary pulled together data from 33 studies and looked at the impact of phones on road safety. They looked at how long it took 808 children and adults to start walking, begin and complete crossing a road, whenever they looked left or right and if there were any collisions and close calls with other pedestrians and vehicles. They found that, while talking on the phone made people take longer to cross the road, **texting was the most dangerous action as it stopped people looking left and right as much as they should**. A study by the University of Lincoln found that **nearly a third of road crossings made by secondary school pupils involved a phone or other device and that the students looked left and right less frequently because of this**.

### A Heartbreaking Reminder:

The tragic story of Sian Ellis, a 15-year-old schoolgirl who lost her life while distracted by her mobile phone, serves as a chilling reminder of the life-threatening consequences of phone use near roadways. Sian was struck by a double-decker bus just meters from her school gates in Leicestershire on 28 January 2019. Witness accounts and CCTV footage showed her looking down at her phone while wearing headphones, leading to the fatal accident. Her devastated family now calls on young people and adults alike to learn from this tragedy and to exercise caution near traffic.

### A Look Up! Assembly in Every School!

To facilitate these crucial Look Up! assemblies, First News has created a comprehensive assembly pack that is available to all schools free of charge. This pack includes informative materials and a video presentation to help educators deliver impactful messages about road safety and the dangers of mobile phone distractions.

Teachers can access the assembly pack by visiting [first.news/lookupteachers](https://www.firstnews.co.uk/lookupteachers).

First News urges schools and educators across the country to join First News Look Up! month and help raise awareness and educating our children about the risks associated with mobile phone use when crossing roads.

**Nicky Cox MBE, Editor in Chief is available** for comment and interview.

Please contact: [newsdesk@firstnews.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@firstnews.co.uk)

For more information about the First News Look Up! Campaign, please visit: [first.news/lookup](https://www.firstnews.co.uk/lookup)

