**Head Teacher Information Sheet**

**Study Title**: A mixed methods study exploring perfectionism and flourishing in secondary school students

**Researcher**: Lauren Holmes

**ERGO number:** 48076

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist studying for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at the University of Southampton. As part of the doctorate, I am conducting a thesis exploring perfectionism and flourishing (i.e. high well-being) in secondary school students. I am writing to you as I would like to invite Year 9 and Year 10 students in your setting to participate in my research.

Please carefully read the information below about the study before deciding whether you consent to it taking place in your setting. Please ask questions if anything is unclear or you would like more information. If you are happy for the study to take place in your school, you will be asked to sign a consent form.

Yours sincerely,

Lauren Holmes,

Trainee Educational Psychologist

**What is the research about?**

Research suggests that there are different forms of perfectionism. Some perfectionists gain great satisfaction from setting high standards and striving to reach these. These individuals are sometimes called ‘adaptive’ perfectionists. Other ‘maladaptive’ perfectionists may never feel happy with their performance and experience frustration when they cannot reach their high standards. The purpose of the study is to develop understanding of how perfectionism relates to well-being by exploring whether students displaying traits of adaptive perfectionism have higher well-being than students displaying traits of maladaptive perfectionism and students classified as non-perfectionists. Additionally, the study will explore the views and experiences of students displaying traits of perfectionism regarding school and achievement. Insights gained from this research may be used to support those with less adaptive perfectionism.

The study will involve two parts:

1. A survey including demographic questions and two questionnaires (one measuring well-being/flourishing and another measuring perfectionism).
2. Face-to-face individual interviews with a very small number of young people whose survey data indicate that they meet the criteria for perfectionism to further explore their views and experiences of school and achievement.

**Why has my school been asked to participate?**

I am recruiting students attending state-funded mainstream secondary schools.

**What will happen if the school agrees to take part?**

If you agree for the study to take place in your setting, I will first ask you to provide the name of a school contact who I can communicate with about the study. This person will need to securely store a list of participants’ names and unique identification codes in the school and assist me with following up certain participants.

The school will be asked to send out information letters and opt-out consent forms to the parents/carers of students in Years 9 and 10 regarding participation in the survey – i.e. the first part of the study. Please note that before sending out recruitment materials and collecting data for the survey, I will ask the school’s Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) if there are any students who would not be appropriate for recruitment or participation in the study (e.g. due to an inability to access the study materials or other personal reasons). However, I will seek to explore with the SENCO whether any barriers to inclusion could be overcome before excluding anyone from the recruitment process. All other students will be invited to participate in the research unless their parents/carers have returned opt-out consent forms.

I will then visit the school to facilitate data collection sessions with groups of participants during normal school hours alongside a school staff member. I will liaise with the school to arrange suitable dates and times for these sessions. It is preferable for the session to take place in a school computer room so that the data can be collected via an online survey. However, arrangements can be made for students to complete paper surveys if this is not possible. Each session will last approximately 45 minutes. The survey itself should take approximately 20 minutes. The researcher will use the remaining time to explain the study to students and gain their assent, to allocate student identification codes, to ensure that students can access the survey and to distribute debriefing forms. Information about the study will be provided to students and their assent will be sought before beginning the survey. Afterwards, participants will be given debriefing information and asked to indicate whether they would like to enter a prize draw to win a £20 Amazon voucher and/or to express interest in being interviewed for part two of the study.

After I have completed the survey phase of the research and completed some analysis of the data, I will contact the school again to ask for information and opt-in parental consent forms to be sent home with participants who have met the criteria for the interview phase of the research and have indicated that they would be interested in participating in this. This request will most likely be made just after the school summer holidays.

I will then liaise with the school to arrange a suitable time and room in the school to conduct interviews with a very small number of participants whose parents/carers have provided consent.

Individual semi-structured interviews, of approximately 30 to 45 minutes, will then be conducted during normal hours. Before the interviews, students will be provided with further information about the study and their assent will be sought. Participants will be assured that there are no right/wrong responses, that they may pause or withdraw at any time (and up to 5 working days after the study) and skip any disliked questions. During the interview, they will be asked questions about how they feel about school, their goals, their standards for performance and how they cope with challenges. An audio-recorder will be used to record interviews. Afterwards, they will be given debriefing information and a £20 Amazon voucher for participation.

**Are there any benefits in the school taking part?**

The school will receive a summary of the results of the study. The research may help to improve researchers’ understanding of perfectionism and well-being and provide insights into how school staff and other professionals can support individuals displaying characteristics of maladaptive perfectionism.

**Are there any risks involved?**

There are few risks in this study. However, there is a chance that the topics being explored may induce some uncomfortable emotions in some participants. To minimise this risk, participants will be informed that they may end the survey or interview at any time. Following participation in the survey (and the interview for those recruited for this phase), students will be provided with debriefing information which will signpost them to support services which can be accessed should they experience any negative feelings following participation. Students will be provided with the name of a staff member who they can speak with about any issues and will also be reminded that they can speak with other trusted adults at school or a parent/carer. If I feel that any student is exhibiting signs of distress during the survey and/or interview, they will be encouraged to stop participation and be made aware of the sources of support outlined in the debriefing information. I will also make a relevant member of school staff aware of any students whose survey scores or interview responses suggest that their well-being is a cause for concern so that they may follow this up according to the school’s policy. Should any safeguarding concerns arise during the research, I will report these to the school’s Designated Safeguarding Lead directly so that they can follow these up according to the school’s safeguarding policy. I have undergone an enhanced DBS check.

**What data will be collected and how will this be stored?**

The survey will collect participants’ responses to the perfectionism and well-being/flourishing questionnaires and some demographic information. Schools will also be asked to provide some additional achievement related data (predicted or current grades across a range of subjects). Information will be collected on students’ age, year-group, sex, grades and ethnicity so that the sample of participants can be described. Please note that information on ethnicity is classed as special category data according to data protection. Information on students’ age, year-group, grades and sex will also be collected to investigate whether the study results differ on these variables.

Each participant will be allocated a unique identification code and school code which they will need to enter onto their online/paper survey. **Thus, all data that I take with me off the school premises will be anonymised**. I will use these codes when liaising with the school contact so that the school can identify students who are to be invited to interviews, who have won Amazon vouchers, whose survey or interview responses indicate that they are at risk or who have requested their data to be excluded from the study. The list of names and codes will also be used so that school staff have a record of which pupils have participated so that they can receive summaries of the research findings. I will not take the list of unique identification codes and participant names out of the school. The school contact will be asked to store this in a locked cabinet in an office in the school so that it can only by accessed by them. They will be asked to destroy the list of unique identification codes and participant names when no further contact with participants is required.

Data collected on academic achievement will be entered onto a spreadsheet on password-protected computer along with pupils’ unique identification codes while I am on the school premises.

If survey data is collected online, this will be done via the university’s secure software for distributing online surveys. Data from the survey will be encrypted before it is stored in a database server in the university. This data will be stored on the server for 90 days before being deleted. After each day of data collection, I will download the data as a CSV file and import and save this on a main spreadsheet on a password-protected computer. Data collected through paper surveys will be entered onto this same spreadsheet. Only I will have access to this main spreadsheet. However, supervisors/ advisors from the university may be allowed to see this when assisting with data analysis.

Voice recordings will be uploaded to a password-protected computer the same day as the interview has taken place. The original recording will be deleted from the voice recorder as soon as it is uploaded. Interviews will be transcribed either by myself or by a secure transcription service recommended by the university. Identifying information will be removed from the transcripts and pseudonyms will be used to protect participants’ identities. Participants will have been given the option of choosing a pseudonym during the interview process. After interviews have been transcribed, the audio-recordings will be permanently deleted. Only I will have access to the transcript data (saved on the password-protected computer). However, some transcripts and transcript excerpts (with names and identifying information removed) will be shared with my research supervisors during discussions around data analysis.

If any participant or parent/carer emails me within five days of participation to indicate that they want their or their child’s data to be withdrawn from the research, their email will be permanently deleted so that no record of their email or address will be retained.

Hard copies of documents containing any additional information about participants (e.g. consent and assent forms) will be stored in a locked container in my house.

All consent forms, assent forms, transcripts and survey data will be destroyed 10 years after the research has been completed, in line with the university’s research data management policy.

**Will participation be confidential?**

The school’s involvement will be kept confidential – i.e. it will not be named in any subsequent write-up or dissemination of the research. Student’s confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in the group survey data collection session, but all participants will be asked to respect each other’s privacy and not to discuss the study outside of the research environment. Please see the above question for arrangements made to ensure that students’ participation and information collected about them during the course of the research is kept confidential to the research team. Codes and pseudonyms will be used to reduce the risk that participants could be identified. It will be possible for me to link those participating in interviews with their survey data. However, this information will be kept confidential to the research team. However, it should be noted that before participation, participants will be told that if I have any concerns about any student’s well-being or safety based on their survey or interview responses, these will need to be raised with a relevant member of school staff.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about participants for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to participants’ data. All of these people have a duty to keep participants’ information strictly confidential.

**Does the school have to take part?**

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether your school will take part. If you agree to the research being conducted in your school, you will need to sign the attached consent form.

**What happens if I change my mind?**

You have the right to change your mind and withdraw your school’s participation at any time before data collection begins in the school by emailing me.

Before completing the online survey, students will be informed that they can withdraw their participation and their data at any time during its completion by choosing not to submit the survey. After submitting the survey, they can withdraw their data up to five working days afterwards by emailing me. All of their data will then be destroyed. Before interviews, participants will be informed that they can withdraw their participation at any time during the interview process and the data collected for the interview phase will be destroyed. If, after completing the interview, a participant decides that they do not wish for their interview to be included in the study, they can email me up to five days after the interview and all of their data collected in the interview phase will be destroyed. If a participant wishes to end an interview early, they will be asked whether they wish to withdraw their data or have it included in the study. Parents/carers can also email me to request for their child’s data to be withdrawn up to five working days after it has been collected.

**What will happen to the results of the research?**

The project will be written up into a thesis which will be available online. The project may be written up for a journal and published. Personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify the school or participants.

**Where can I get more information?**

If you have any questions about the study or would like further information, please contact me at [L.M.Holmes@soton.ac.uk](mailto:L.M.Holmes@soton.ac.uk) . Alternatively, you can contact my supervisor, Dr Brettany Hartwell, at b.hartwell@soton.ac.uk.

**What happens if there is a problem?**

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should contact me at [L.M.Holmes@soton.ac.uk](mailto:L.M.Holmes@soton.ac.uk) or my supervisor, Dr Brettany Hartwell, at b.hartwell@soton.ac.uk.

We will do our best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, [rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk](mailto:rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk)).

**Thank you.**

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering your school’s participation in the research.