



Internet Filtering Policy

Date adopted	June 2018	Owner	SLT
Last reviewed	June 2022	Review cycle	2 Years

Purpose

This document sets out our policy for Internet filtering. Internet filtering is necessary to block access to websites that are illegal, or considered to be inappropriate for children, although filtering also blocks access to those sites considered inappropriate for staff.

It is intended that this policy ensures that measures are in place to ensure the safety of children whilst using the Internet at school, and provides guidance for those involved in ensuring that measures are regularly reviewed and tested.

Filtering solution

Internet filtering here comprises of three elements:

- A commercial Internet filtering package specifically designed for education from Talk Straight.
- The ability to amend the normal filtering (i.e. blocking or unblocking) based on a clear procedure involving appropriate authorisation.
- Random checks to ensure that filtering is providing an appropriate level of blocking.

These are considered in more detail below.

Talk Straight

New websites are being created continuously. It is simply not possible for an individual to monitor all new sites and determine which should be allowed or barred, and to whom. A number of commercial companies continuously monitor Internet sites and provide filtering packages designed to meet the needs of specific types of user. The filtering solution employed here is a commercial offering from Talk Straight, which is specifically designed for educational use.

Appropriate filtering for education

The Department for Education guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' obliges us to "ensure appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place. Children should not be able to access harmful or inappropriate material from the our IT system" however, schools will need to "be careful that "over blocking" does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regards to online teaching and safeguarding."

The UK Safer Internet Centre provides guidance to help education settings and filtering providers comprehend what should be considered as 'appropriate filtering'. It is important to recognise that no filtering systems can be 100% effective and need to be supported with good teaching and learning practice and effective supervision. This guidance can be found at:

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/teachers-and-professionals/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring/appropriate-filtering>

Illegal online content

In considering filtering providers or systems, The UK Safer Internet Centre states that schools should ensure that access to illegal content is blocked, specifically that the filtering providers are Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) members and block access to illegal Child Abuse Images and Content (CAIC). We should also ensure that we integrate the 'the police assessed list of unlawful terrorist content, produced on behalf of the Home Office'

Talk Straight are IWF members and conform to the above.

Inappropriate online content

Recognising that no filter can guarantee to be 100% effective, the UK Safer Internet Centre states that schools should be satisfied that their filtering system manages the following content (and web search).

Discrimination:

- Promotes the unjust or prejudicial treatment of people on the grounds of race, religion, age, or sex.
- Drugs / Substance abuse: displays or promotes the illegal use of drugs or substances
- Extremism: promotes terrorism and terrorist ideologies, violence or intolerance
- Malware / Hacking: promotes the compromising of systems including anonymous browsing and other filter bypass tools as well as sites hosting malicious content
- Pornography: displays sexual acts or explicit images
- Piracy and copyright theft: includes illegal provision of copyrighted material
- Self-Harm: promotes or displays deliberate self-harm (including suicide and eating disorders)
- Violence: Displays or promotes the use of physical force intended to hurt or kill

The filtering provided by Talk Straight meets these criteria.

Filtering system features

The UK Safer Internet Centre recommends that schools should consider that their filtering system meets the following principles:

- Age appropriate, differentiated filtering – includes the ability to vary filtering strength appropriate to age and role. We can apply filtering to KS1 and KS2 independently.
- Control - has the ability and ease of use that allows schools to control the filter themselves to permit or deny access to specific content. We have this ability through Eduthing.
- Filtering Policy – the filtering provider publishes a rationale that details their approach to filtering with classification and categorisation as well as over blocking. We do not have sight of Talk Straight rationale.
- Clear user identification - There is a client which is installed on each device which enables netsweeper to filter specific users. Therefore staff and students are individually filtered based on their login.
- Mobile and App content – isn't limited to filtering web traffic and includes the blocking of inappropriate content via mobile and app technologies. Blocking applies to our Wifi network including guest users.
- Multiple language support – the ability for the system to manage relevant languages. This is not a facility that our nationally recognised filtering system is currently able to support.
- Filtering should be applied at 'network level' i.e. not reliant on any software on user devices. Filtering is applied at this level.
- Reporting mechanism – the ability to report inappropriate content for access or blocking. We have the ability to see what users are accessing on the web. Requested reports can reflect this and in addition we have Senso Cloud in place which sends these reports to us based on identified safeguarding issues.

Requests to block or unblock specific sites

From time to time staff may wish to have access to sites that are normally blocked by our filter. In such cases we require those staff to send a ticket to Eduthing. They should clearly state the site(s) to which access is required and who should have access. If Eduthing have any doubts as to the sites being requested they will contact a member of the schools leadership team for authorisation.

Ad hoc checking

DSL's and members of the Leadership Team will conduct random checks to ensure that Internet filtering is being applied appropriately. It is recognised that such testing cannot be exhaustive, but will simply check that some of the more obvious inappropriate sites are blocked.