



Great Sampford
Primary School

Filtering and Monitoring

Updated : October 2023
Review : September 2024

1. Introduction

The Keeping Children Safe in Education updated guidance for September 2023 does not have that many amendments for the new school year, but the Department for Education's update does ask schools to be clearer about how they manage their online monitoring and filtering systems.

This is an area of renewed focus for the DfE due to, in part, campaigning by Judy and Andy Thomas to raise awareness of the importance of these technologies after the tragic death of their daughter, Frankie, who viewed content online at her school unmonitored because its systems were broken.

In addition to aspects of both filtering and monitoring systems, these standards detail the allocation of roles and responsibilities, and that schools and colleges should be checking their filtering and monitoring provision at least annually. Most schools should already have the right systems in place and the new requirement will hopefully mirror existing best practices.

2. What is filtering and monitoring?

Filtering and monitoring systems are used to keep pupils safe when using the school's IT system.

- Filtering systems: block access to harmful sites and content.
- Monitoring systems: identify when a user accesses or searches for certain types of harmful content on school and college devices (it doesn't stop someone accessing it). The school is then alerted to any concerning content so you can intervene and respond.

No filtering and monitoring system is 100% effective, so you need to use it alongside your existing safeguarding systems and procedures.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing bodies have overall strategic responsibility for filtering and monitoring and need assurance that the standards are being met.

To do this, they should identify and assign:

- a member of the senior leadership team and a governor, to be responsible for ensuring these standards are met
- the roles and responsibilities of staff and third parties, for example, external service providers
- Ensure that the child protection policy includes how your school approaches filtering and monitoring on school devices and school networks

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL should take lead responsibility for online safety, including understanding the filtering and monitoring systems and processes in place - this is part of their role in taking the lead responsibility for safeguarding.

Day to day management of filtering and monitoring systems requires the specialist knowledge of both safeguarding and IT staff to be effective. The DSL should work closely together with IT service providers to meet the needs of your setting. Your IT service provider may be a staff technician or an external service provider.

Senior Leadership Team

- procuring filtering and monitoring systems
- documenting decisions on what is blocked or allowed and why
- reviewing the effectiveness of the provision
- overseeing reports
- Speak to your IT lead about what your school is already doing to filter and monitor harmful online content.
- Check that your current filtering and monitoring system blocks harmful and inappropriate content without unreasonably impacting teaching and learning, and what you'll do if it doesn't
- Schedule an annual review meeting with your safeguarding and IT teams, (and the responsible governor) to keep on top of your provision

Teachers and support staff

Should understand the expectations, applicable roles and responsibilities in relation to filtering and monitoring as part of their safeguarding training. For example, part of their role may be to monitor what's on pupils' screens.

Need to report safeguarding and technical concerns, such as if:

- They witness or suspect unsuitable material has been accessed
- They are able to access unsuitable material
- They are teaching topics that could create unusual activity on the filtering logs
- There is failure in the software or abuse of the system
- There are perceived unreasonable restrictions that affect teaching and learning or administrative tasks
- They notice abbreviations or misspellings that allow access to restricted material

The IT service provider (HfL) should work with the senior leadership team and DSL to:

- procure systems
- identify risk
- carry out reviews
- carry out checks

4. Additional guidance and further reading

- Keeping children safe in education –statutory guidance for schools and colleges (September 2023)
- DfE Filtering and Monitoring standards <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/meeting-digital-and-technology-standards-in-schools-and-colleges/filtering-and-monitoring-standards-for-schools-and-colleges>
- UK Safer Internet Centre <https://saferinternet.org.uk/guide-and-resource/teachers-and-school-staff/appropriate-filtering-and-monitoring/appropriate-filtering>
- Test filtering <http://testfiltering.com/>
- TES article <https://www.tes.com/magazine/analysis/general/kcsie-2023-safeguarding-schools-online-filtering-and-monitoring>