



School Filtering Policy Template

Rationale for the policy

SWGfL schools automatically receive a filtered broadband service. Details of the SWGfL Internet Filtering Service and Policy can be found at: <http://www.swgfl.org.uk/safety/default.asp>. This service is intended to prevent users accessing material that would be regarded as illegal and / or inappropriate in an educational environment, as defined in the Filtering Policy. Because the content on the web changes dynamically and new technologies are constantly being developed, it is not possible for any filtering service to be 100% effective. It is important, therefore, to understand that filtering is only one element in a larger strategy for e-safety and acceptable use.

The SWGfL filtering service provides flexibility for schools to decide on their own levels of filtering security. It is possible to add to or override some of the sites filtered by SWGfL.

As the use of the internet becomes more widespread, access becomes available through a wider range of technologies and users become more sophisticated in their internet use, schools need to continually review their filtering and monitoring policies.

Many users are not aware of the flexibility available at a local level for schools, and other organisations, connected to SWGfL and its filtering service. Schools should use this flexibility to meet their learning needs and reduce some of the frustrations occasionally felt by users who wish to maximise the use of the new technologies.

The template document below provides a basis for a school filtering policy. Schools will however need to consider carefully the issues raised and decide:

- Whether they will adopt the SWGfL Filtering Policy without change
- Whether to allow flexibility for sites to be added or removed from the filtering list for your organisation.
- Whether to remove filtering controls for some internet use (eg social networking sites) at certain times of the day or for certain users.
- Who has responsibility for such decisions and the checks and balances put in place
- What other system and user monitoring systems will be used to supplement the filtering system and how these will be used.

In the template below, sections of guidance will be written in RED, while sections shown in bold indicate those elements of the policy that are strongly recommended by SWGfL. Sections in italics indicate those elements that the school will need to consider and decide whether to include or not.

Introduction

The filtering of internet content provides an important means of preventing users from accessing material that is illegal or is inappropriate in an educational context. The filtering system cannot, however, provide a 100% guarantee that it will do so. It is therefore important that the school has a filtering policy to manage the associated risks and to provide preventative measures which are relevant to the situation in this school.

As a part of the South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) schools and connected organisations automatically receive the benefits of a managed filtering service, with some flexibility for changes at local level.

Responsibilities

The responsibility for the management of the school's filtering policy will be held by (insert title – schools may choose to consider – Network Manager / ICT Technician / Head of ICT etc). They will



manage the school filtering, in line with this policy and will keep records / logs of changes and of breaches of the filtering systems.

To ensure that there is a system of checks and balances and to protect those responsible, changes to the SWGfL / school filtering service must (schools should choose their relevant response(s):

- **be logged in change control logs**
- **be reported to a second responsible person (insert title):**
- *either... be reported to and authorised by a second responsible person prior to changes being made (recommended)*
- *or... be reported to a second responsible person (insert title) every X weeks / months in the form of an audit of the change control logs*
- *be reported to the E-Safety Governor every X weeks / months in the form of an audit of the change control logs*

All users have a responsibility to report immediately to (insert title) any infringements of the school's filtering policy of which they become aware or any sites that are accessed, which they believe should have been filtered.

Users must not attempt to use any programmes or software that might allow them to bypass the filtering / security systems in place to prevent access to such materials.

Education / Training / Awareness

Pupils / students will be made aware of the importance of filtering systems through the e-safety education programme (schools may wish to add details). They will also be warned of the consequences of attempting to subvert the filtering system.

Staff users will be made aware of the filtering systems through: (amend as relevant)

- *signing the AUP*
- *induction training*
- *staff meetings, briefings, Inset.*

Parents will be informed of the school's filtering policy through the Acceptable Use agreement and through e-safety awareness sessions / newsletter etc. (amend as relevant)

Changes to the Filtering System

In this section the school should provide a detailed explanation of:

- how, and to whom, users may request changes to the filtering
- the grounds on which they may be allowed or denied (schools may choose to allow access to some sites eg social networking sites for some users, at some times, or for a limited period of time. There should be strong educational reasons for changes that are agreed).
- how a second responsible person will be involved to provide checks and balances (preferably this will be at the time of request, but could be retrospectively through inspection of records / audit of logs)
- any audit / reporting system

Users who gain access to, or have knowledge of others being able to access, sites which they feel should be filtered (or unfiltered) should report this in the first instance to (insert title) who will decide whether to make school level changes (as above). If it is felt that the site should be filtered (or unfiltered) at SWGfL level, the responsible person (insert title) should email filtering@swafl.org.uk with the URL.

Monitoring



Some schools supplement their filtering systems with additional monitoring systems. If this is the case, schools should include information in this section, including – if they wish – details of internal or commercial systems that are in use.

No filtering system can guarantee 100% protection against access to unsuitable sites. The school will therefore monitor the activities of users on the school network and on school equipment as indicated in the School E-Safety Policy and the Acceptable Use agreement. Monitoring will take place as follows: (details should be inserted if the school so wishes).

Audit / Reporting

Logs of filtering change controls and of filtering incidents will be made available to: (schools should amend as relevant)

- *the second responsible person (insert title)*
- *E-Safety Committee*
- *E-Safety Governor / Governors committee*
- *SWGfL / Local Authority on request*

The filtering policy will be reviewed in the response to the evidence provided by the audit logs of the suitability of the current provision. (The evidence might show a large number of requests to remove the filtering from sites – in which case schools might question whether their current level of filtering is too restrictive for educational purposes. Alternatively, a large number of incidents where users try to subvert the filtering system might suggest that improved monitoring / disciplinary action might be necessary).

Date on which policy was approved:

Policy review date: