NILE's Online safety policy

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Policy aim & scope

Students and staff at NILE are be protected from harmful, illegal and inappropriate content whilst using the NILE Wi-Fi network, devices and accounts for online activity. This policy outlines the Filtering and Monitoring System (FMS) put in place in order to minimise safeguarding risks and regularly review their effectiveness.

NILE is careful that "over-blocking" does not affect the quality of teaching or lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what can be taught.

Staff are aware of their role in monitoring online behaviour during class time and should report any concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Person (DSP), Miriam Anderson.

Background

DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education requires schools to have "appropriate filtering" on our internet systems to protect under 18s from content that's 'inappropriate to the education context'. In March 2023 DfE published Filtering and monitoring standards for schools and colleges. Schools are recommended to use the UK Safer Internet Centre Definitions to help them determine if their filtering system is appropriate.

This measure is also in line with our duty to prevent extremist views and behaviour, as outlined in this guidance: Prevent duty guidance: England and Wales (2023) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk).

Filtering measures

Filtering is carried out by the IT systems provider, currently InTouch Systems.

At NILE, internet content is filtered to prevent course participants from accessing content that is illegal or not appropriate to the education setting. This includes terrorist or extremist material, child sexual abuse content and adult content.

NILE takes careful consideration of which sites are blocked, and records these decisions, so as to ensure cover is as comprehensive as possible without creating unreasonable restrictions on user activity and what can be taught.

It must be noted that due to the vast and dynamic nature of the internet, protection may not be 100% effective, so regular monitoring and reviews are carried out.

The filtering system at NILE is operational, up-to-date and applied to all users, including guest accounts, school-owned devices and devices using the NILE Wi-Fi connection.

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Mobile devices that access NILE's internet connection (whether NILE or personal devices) are subject to the same filtering standards as other devices on the NILE system.

The filtering system:

- Filters all internet feeds, including backup connections
- Is age- and ability-appropriate for the users and suitable for educational settings
- Handles multilingual web content, images, common misspellings and abbreviations
- Identifies technologies and techniques that allow users to get around the filtering such as VPNs and proxy services and blocks them
- Provides alerts when any web content has been blocked

Monitoring measures

Monitoring is carried out by NILE staff.

Monitoring is an essential component to providing a safe internet space as it allows for ongoing review of user activity and immediate response to any risks, through:

- Staff members physically observing the screens of users
- Network monitoring that logs internet traffic and web access
- Individual device monitoring through software or third-party services

There is a monitoring system that enables the prompt investigation of a potential safeguarding incident and outcomes are logged.

Guidance for staff

All trainers planning independent research into class time must report this in advance to the DSP, currently Miriam Anderson. They must also mention any topics being researched that could bring up content of a harmful nature.

All staff need to be aware of reporting mechanisms for safeguarding and technical concerns. You should report if:

- You witness or suspect unsuitable material has been accessed
- You can access unsuitable material
- You are teaching topics which 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
- You notice abbreviations or misspellings that allow access to restricted material

System review

The FMS is reviewed at least annually and checked regularly.

Decisions as to what is blocked and why are recorded and dated. Decisions are made by the DSP and approved by another senior member of staff. Any requests for changes are made to the DSP or course co-ordinator and formally recorded.

The effectiveness of the FMS rests on the ongoing observations by NILE Staff and reports from the IT provider. Issues are reported and responded to as a matter of urgency.

Full reviews of the effectiveness of the FMS are carried out annually.

For further information and advice, refer to the *360 Safe School Online Safety Policy.*

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