FILTERNING & MONITORING STATEMENT 2023-24

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The name of our Filtering and Monitoring software

Smoothwall, which is a market leader in the UK, being the most purchased software including real-time, content aware and granular control web filtering. The real-time element is particularly important as it means that a page that was considered harmless a minute ago, can be recategorised and blocked if the content on that page changes. 1 in 3 schools in the UK use Smoothwall as their preferred filtering and monitoring software. Incident/breaches can be tracked end to end which means it is easy to identify, track, educate and sanction users where appropriate.

b.   Reasons why this software was chosen.

NMAT and Nunthorpe Academy's contract began with Smoothwall approximately 15/16 years ago. The ongoing use of the Smoothwall filtering and monitoring software is assessed annually. The IT team, led by the Network Manager (SF), SWOT analyses competitor's software annually (in February each year) and considers capability, costs and reviews to ensure that the filtering and monitoring software chosen is best value but more importantly fit for purpose.

One example of an alternative software used is Lightbox which was discounted for 2023/24 due to significantly increased costs for a similar product.

c.   Who checks the filtering systems are up to date and monitoring for appropriate words.

SF runs the filtering and monitoring software at Nunthorpe Academy and has administrative rights to ensure it is always up to date. SF has access to add and create blocks as well as override/bypass proxy settings to ensure that all stakeholders have safe access to the Internet and use genuine and trusted sites as needed. Smoothwall is not completely infallible and it is important to have an autonomy of control, in particular when subject teachers make specific requests. The autonomy of control is in place in Nunthorpe Academy.

d.   Who decides what is inappropriate and harmful content?

Smoothwall itself has categories that contain millions of websites, it works by scanning the copy, content and context of every page for unwanted material and has 120 filtering categories to ensure that harmful or inappropriate content is blocked.Smoothwall themselves update the processes from Keeping Children Safe in Education and UK Safer Internet Safety centre to make sure that what is deemed inappropriate and harmful content is constantly updated.

Examples:

Inappropriate content

- Discrimination: Any form of prejudice on grounds of race, religion, age or sex.
- Drugs/substance abuse: Anyone displaying or promoting the illegal use of drugs or substances.
- Extremism: Anyone promoting terrorism and terrorist ideologies, violence or intolerance.
- Malware/hacking: Any form of compromising of systems including anonymous browsing and other filter bypass tools as well as sites hosting malicious content.

- Pornography: Displays of sexual acts or explicit images.
- Piracy and copyright theft: Illegal provision of copyrighted material.
- Self-harm: Promotion or display of deliberate self-harm (including suicide and eating disorders).
- Violence: Any display or promotion of the use of physical force intended to hurt or kill.

SF adds and dismiss specific filters and websites as needed/reported although the software updates regularly with scans in place daily to ensure this is not usually required.

e.   The software's appropriateness for our age range of students.

Smoothwall is used in 1 in 3 secondary schools in the UK. In principle, different filters and monitoring rules could be put in place for each year group/set of users although we use two groups: students and staff. The software is long established and as noted above is used in settings of Nunthorpe Academy's size and of age range.

f.   Who checks and responds to attempted breaches of the filtering and monitoring systems and g. How frequently is this done?

Instant notifications are in place which lets the network manager and the DSL (SIB) know of breaches by both staff and students. Daily alerts are forwarded each morning giving a list of breaches. The network manager produces a weekly and half termly report via the Smoothwall administration interface so that this can feed into the DSL's safeguarding reports as required.

Checks and responses for both students and staff alerts are completed by the DSL who investigates and discusses cases as/when required. This sometimes leads to CPOMs safeguarding entries, internal or external support being organised or if appropriate, no further action.

h.   How this is recorded.

The Smoothwall administrative interface creates a weekly and half termly log of breaches. Some are also recorded in CPOMs as needed. The network manager is currently investigating the capability for results to be exported in spreadsheet format rather than PDF to enable the data to be analysed and actions added in one place easily. This would allow easier sharing of this information.

i.   How the filtering and monitoring data is used to safeguard more vulnerable students.

Follow up is prioritised for all students, but is particularly important for our PPG and SEND students. Smoothwall is set up to safeguard all students to a high level, including our more vulnerable students. Major beaches from Child Protection (CP) and Child In Need (CIN) students have the action of social care/early help workers being alerted in addition to any supportive work and follow up.

j.   How the impact of this software is reviewed.

The network manager and DSL review outcomes from the software each term, with analysis of impact measured by number of breaches, quality and clarity of information produced by Smoothwall and follow up work.

k.   What the process is for Quality Assuring this process.

The QA process is completed via Line Management, with the filtering and monitoring software results being discussed as a standing item on the safeguarding line management agenda between the Head of School and DSL. Categories and data for analysis have been added to the Safeguarding and Behavioural report produced weekly by the AVP Behaviour and Attitudes and AVP Inclusion and DSL. This is also reported to the Academy's Local Governing Body on a termly basis.