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Ceredigion

Internet Filtering in Schools

C O N T E N T S

Background

The Internet is an unmanaged, open communications channel. The World Wide Web, e-mail, blogs and social networking all transmit information using the Internet's communication infrastructure internationally at low cost. Anyone can send messages, discuss ideas and publish material with little restriction. These features of the Internet make it an invaluable resource used by millions of people every day.

Schools need to protect themselves from legal challenge. The law is catching up with Internet developments: for example it is an offence to store images showing child abuse and to use e-mail, text or Instant Messaging (IM) to 'groom' children.

Schools can help protect themselves by making it clear to pupils, staff and visitors that the use of school equipment for inappropriate reasons is "unauthorised". However, schools should be aware that a disclaimer is not sufficient to protect a school from a claim of personal injury and the school needs to ensure that all reasonable actions have been taken and measures put in place to protect users.

Internet Filtering

Much of the material on the Internet is published for an adult audience and some is unsuitable for pupils. In addition, there is information on weapons, crime and racism access to these need to have suitable controls around it.

Web filtering software is designed to limit an end users access to specific sites on the Internet. It should not inhibit school users from accessing appropriate teaching and learning materials.

The software currently in use in Ceredigion is set to filter agreed site categories. The majority of web sites are assigned to a category when they are known e.g. entertainment, games, adult content. Even when Internet filtering software is being used you cannot guarantee that users will not be able to access unsuitable material. Some websites may not have a category set against them or others may not be categorised appropriately.
In such a case it is vital that the person responsible for e-safety within the school reports the full URL (web address) www… so that appropriate action can be taken. It is also good practice to check the whole of the website and any external links from that site as these may also contain unsuitable material, and can affect the category of the site.

Smoothwall – How does Ceredigion web filtering work?
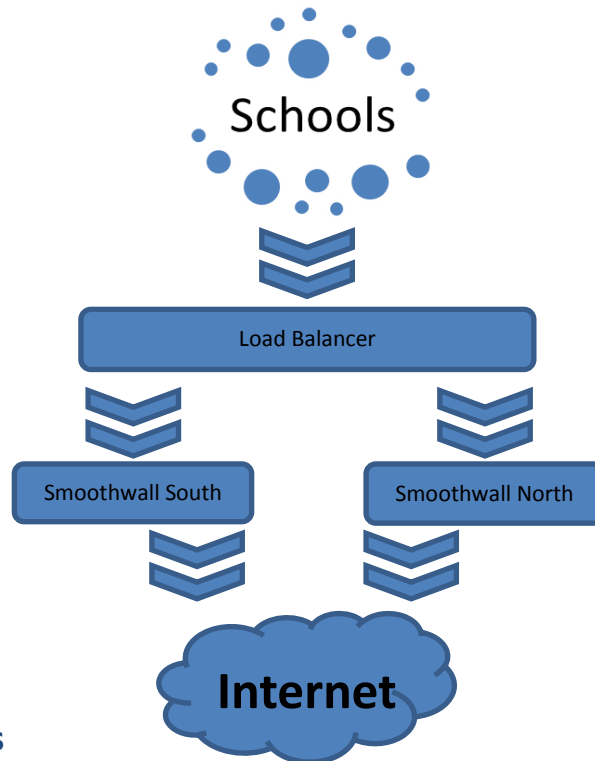
Smoothwall Process

1. All web requests go through the Smoothwall servers. To begin with it will check the URL and determine if the site is allowed or not.

2. The content of the page is checked. Language filters are used. Any embedded content, i.e. photos / videos, will be checked and filtered.

3. Adverts and comments within YouTube are removed.

4. All access requests will be logged.

Websites are not filtered as a whole; each item on the page is individually filtered, eg. Google images, filtering occurs on the sites Google draws their images upon and not Google images itself. Similarly if items are embedded on school websites, these will be filtered appropriately.

Users will be filtered depending upon their username. Users are divided into four categories; 'Core Allowed and Blocked', 'Public Access', 'Staff and Non-Teaching Staff' and 'Student'. Their access rights will depend on their username. A device which has no login will be automatically filtered as a Student.

Requesting Change

Web Filtering is an on-going process and will need amending from time to time. You may feel that the rules set in place need to be adjusted.

The process for requesting change in web filtering.
1. If you feel a site has been incorrectly blocked please contact the ICT support desk with the URL of the web page and the message displayed on screen.

    a. If after a review the site is deemed to be incorrectly categorised then support staff will endeavour to re-categorise.

2. If correctly categorised, then the request will be forwarded to the schools ICT forum to alter the filtering policy.

Assigning Internet permission

The school can determine who gets permission to access the Internet. **It is recommended that all users have Internet Access** and **that they have an appropriate level of Internet filtering assigned to them.** This means that there is an auditable trail on their Internet access.

All users who have access to the school managed service system must sign an Acceptable Use form indicating that they understand what is meant by Safe and Responsible Use of the Internet.

Internet Filter Levels

The Ceredigion Schools and Community ICT Service agree the levels of filtering for all schools. Currently there is one level for all student users. This is endorsed by the Senior Management team of the Education Leisure and Lifelong Services. The document Summary of Current Smoothwall Settings contains information about which Internet categories are filtered in each of the levels.

The levels are categorised to give system administrators an idea of the target group.

- **Core Allowed and Blocked** – Heavily filtered with exceptions Allowed. The core is default if other levels are left empty.

- **Public Access** – Displays sites which are allowed in public areas, (libraries, community areas and adult learner groups) when Core is blocked.

- **Staff and non-teaching staff** - Displays sites which are allowed for staff and non-teaching staff when Core is blocked.

- **Students** - Displays sites which are allowed for students when Core is blocked.

The system has been designed to be flexible and to meet the needs of the user. The Internet Filter level can be changed if the current level applied does not provide appropriate access.

Current Internet Filtering Policy

You will find the current Internet Filtering Policy attached at the end of this document.