



Our Lady of Grace RC Primary School

Addressing Ofsted's e-safety related obligations

The Internet gives children the power of global exploration from their classroom, but this opportunity also presents problems. The amount of inappropriate material available for accidental or deliberate access is growing, making the need to protect children from these images paramount.

This is particularly the case for primary school children, who although confident with the technology, are still developing the critical evaluation skills they need to help them make sensible decisions. Such decisions are important in later life, as pointed out by the Byron report (2008):

"Research is beginning to reveal that people act differently on the internet and can alter their moral code, in part because of the lack of gate-keepers and the absence in some cases of the visual cues from others that we all use to moderate our interactions with each other.

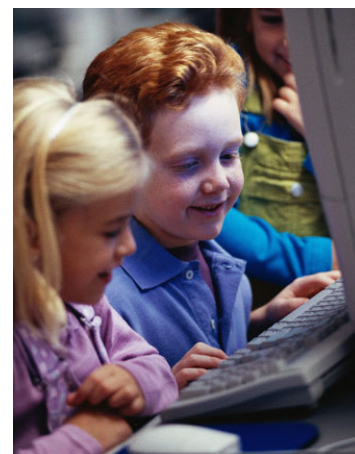
"This is potentially more complex for children and young people who are still trying to establish the social rules of the offline world and lack the critical evaluation skills to either be able to interpret incoming information or make appropriate judgements about how to behave online."

In addition, an increasing body of data is beginning to reveal risks to children in terms of increased exposure to sexually inappropriate content, contributions to negative beliefs and attitudes, stranger-danger, cyber-bullying and access to inappropriate content from sites which may promote harmful behaviours.

Empowering children to keep themselves safe

Our Lady of Grace RC primary school is a voluntary-aided school located in Bury, Lancashire. With nearly 400 children and 30 staff, its ethos of "Work, Worship, Witness" aims to develop Catholic beliefs amongst children and staff.

E-Safe Education Ltd has been a long-time partner of the school for ICT provision as headmistress Pat Jones explained. "At one of our regular meetings with them in early 2006, they asked if we would be interested in becoming a volunteer for their new image interdiction solution that prevents the display of inappropriate images on our computers.



"The first time the software triggers an alert they are naturally worried. But, we sit down with them understand what they have done to trigger the alert and explain to them why it has happened and how to avoid it happening again in the future "

Such positive and immediate feedback enables early behaviour modification and prevents more serious problems as they grow older. It is a very effective method of ensuring that the children and staff in our school are protected all the time they are using our ICT resources."

*Pat Jones
Head teacher*

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As we believe that children need to be empowered to keep themselves safe, as they will always be pushing the boundaries, this solution seemed perfect in helping us achieve that aim.

Although many children will have access to ICT at home there is a generational digital divide which means that parents do not necessarily feel equipped to help their children in this area. This can be compounded by a risk-averse culture where we are inclined to keep our children 'indoors' despite their developmental needs to socialise and take risks. Consequently, the school was keen to take a lead in this matter."

Meeting the objectives of the Byron review

Many schools employ proxy servers and web gateways and while these provide some protection by attempting to block access to known pornographic web sites, they cannot detect inappropriate images from other sources.

Using world leading content-based image processing algorithms the e-safe education image control element captures all images that are displayed on the PC screen and determines the probability that the image is pornographic. It does so in a way that meets the objectives of the Byron review in reducing availability, restricting access and increasing resilience to harmful and inappropriate online material. It can help to protect children from access to such materials and ensures that management within the school is showing a clear duty of care.

When a positive identification is made, that image is either replaced with a non-offensive image (school logo etc), or the user is warned that the image to be displayed may be offensive. All pornographic images captured will be logged and stored, along with the PC name, user name, time, date and the action taken. Authorised personnel can then review suspected pornographic images and provide reports detailing improper usage.

The solution was installed in the School in 2006 and backed up by an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) that was sent to all parents.

Early behaviour modification

The manner in which images are blocked can be a highly visible deterrent in itself as other children and staff are able to easily see when blocking occurs, from across the room. As Pat explained, this has a positive effect on the children. "It helps them to make sensible decisions with regard to Internet use as it reinforces the values that we are trying to instil in them. The first time the software triggers an alert they are naturally worried. But, we sit down with them, understand what they have done to trigger the alert, and explain to them why it has happened and how to avoid it happening again in the future. Such positive and immediate feedback enables early behaviour modification and prevents more serious problems as they grow older."



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