



Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College  
Sports Specialist College

## Encouraging safer ICT use

The use of ICT in schools has dramatically increased over the last few years. This has brought many benefits to students and teachers alike and the ready availability of technologies like the Internet, e-mail and instant messaging (IM) has helped to provide a more flexible learning environment.

But, these resources are also open to misuse if not properly monitored. This can be through viewing inappropriate online material or using e-mail and IM to abuse and cyber-bully fellow students. As well as the deleterious consequences of such action must be added the impact this has on student productivity across the school in addition to being a severe drain on infrastructure bandwidth by reducing network speed.

In many cases schools' will be unaware that this abuse and misuse is actually taking place, unless they have invested in the necessary user monitoring and image control technology. However, this ignorance is no defence as duty of care requirements place clear responsibility on a school's leadership to protect their charges from the adverse affects of ICT abuse. Failure to do so can lead to legal repercussions for both the school and its leadership.

### Understanding the problem

Saints Peter and Paul Catholic College is a specialist sports college for students aged 11 to 19. Located on a purpose-built, single-site in Halton, Cheshire, the college has over 1600 students and 200 staff.

They were approached by e-safe education who wanted to discuss with them how their ICT resources were being abused by students. Chris Fairchild, network manager at the College, takes up the story. "We were not aware that we had a problem with students abusing our ICT resources. We had invested in all the usual protection, such as proxy servers and antivirus solutions and presumed this was providing us with all the cover we needed. So when e-safe education outlined the nature of the threat and offered to show us the scope of it within our school network, we decided it was a sound policy to see what was occurring."

Colin McKeown, a Director of e-safe education said, "Most educational establishments do not realise the abuse that is occurring on their networks. The results of which can have a negative impact on students work, can offend fellow students and teaching staff, compromise network security, put data at risk and damage the school's reputation."



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*But with e-safe education and the right policies we were quickly able to take control of the problem. Behaviour modification has been key to this, as in most cases students did not know that what they were doing was wrong"*

Chris Fairchild  
Network Manager

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## **Monitoring and proactive management**

“We decided to go with a managed service rather than the more traditional approach because we were mindful of the additional workload which this initiative would involve for schools”, said Ian. “Perhaps more importantly, school staff did not have the same level of expertise that the e-Safe Education staff had in the detailed forensic analysis of the results.” The e-safe education managed service enables the transgression data received from the monitoring solution to be managed on a proactive basis. It is delivered through professional Digital Forensic examiners, typically ex-law enforcement officers, specialists in identifying illegal transgressions, grooming and predator activities. The facility provides rapid monitoring and reporting for the most serious issues and regular reports of more general transgressions of the users and devices within the CfP scheme.

It provides the school's e-safety Officer with regular and timely reports summarising transgressions of the CfP Home School Agreement by device name cross-referenced against the system's serial number and MAC address should the Hardware Inventory facility be utilised. If a major issue arises, transgression data can be professionally assessed and the relevant advice be communicated back to the school's e-safety Officer, Child Protection Officer or Head Teacher.”

## **Amending inappropriate behaviour**

The rollout of the laptops with the e-safe education solution installed and underpinned by the managed service started in September 2008, with e-safe education consultants working closely with Ian and the schools across the borough. “e-safe education's partnership with us is very important to the progress of this initiative”, said Ian. “They have worked with us to solve the issues we have discovered such as getting everything to work over a 3G Network connection. In addition their advice and knowledge helped us build up our expertise in this area internally.”

The solution is designed to amend inappropriate behaviour as it occurs. This makes it possible to define intervention strategies that encourage positive use. This positive behaviour modification can help to encourage the responsible use of ICT resources, not only for the CfP scheme but across all ICT use.

As part of the service the schools in the district receive a monthly bulletin from e-Safe Education that highlights the major issues with regard to online threats. “Some of the schools are even using this bulletin in their morning assembly to alert all their students to the issues”, said Ian.

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

## **Flexible process to provide year-round cover**

To ensure that serious incidents can be acted on at all times, during school holidays any transgressions are reported to the Children's Services department of the authority. Jayne Palmer of Children's Services said, “As well as providing cover during school holidays for all students, we also have a number of looked after children on the CfP scheme. e-safe education can provide us with a regular overview for these children in order that we can monitor their activity.”

Commenting on future plans Ian said, “Currently most of the elements of what is termed Web 2.0 are blocked by the filtering software. But, we believe that with the e-safe education Managed Service in place and the encouragement students receive via the system to behave responsibly we may be able to consider allowing access to some of these tools in the future.”

