

Appropriate Filtering for Education settings

May 2023



Filtering Provider Checklist Responses

Schools (and registered childcare providers) in England and Wales are required “to ensure children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in school, including by establishing appropriate levels of filtering”. Furthermore, it expects that they “assess the risk of [their] children being drawn into terrorism, including support for extremist ideas that are part of terrorist ideology”. There are a number of self review systems (eg www.360safe.org.uk) that will support a school in assessing their wider online safety policy and practice.

The Department for Education’s statutory guidance ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ obliges schools and colleges in England to “ensure appropriate filters and appropriate monitoring systems are in place and regularly review their effectiveness” and they “should be doing all that they reasonably can to limit children’s exposure to [Content, Contact, Conduct, Contract] risks from the school’s or college’s IT system” however, schools will need to “be careful that “over blocking” does not lead to unreasonable restrictions as to what children can be taught with regards to online teaching and safeguarding.”

By completing all fields and returning to UK Safer Internet Centre (enquiries@saferinternet.org.uk), the aim of this document is to help filtering providers to illustrate to education settings (including Early years, schools and FE) how their particular technology system(s) meets the national defined ‘appropriate filtering standards. Fully completed forms will be hosted on the UK Safer Internet Centre website alongside the definitions

It is important to recognise that no filtering systems can be 100% effective and need to be supported with good teaching and learning practice and effective supervision.

Company / Organisation	Smoothwall (part of Qoria)
Address	Second Floor, 2 Whitehall Quay, Leeds, LS1 4HR
Contact details	https://www.smoothwall.com/education/contact-us/
Filtering System	Smoothwall Filter
Date of assessment	30/08/2023

System Rating response

Where a supplier is able to confirm that their service fully meets the issue identified in a specific checklist the appropriate self-certification colour for that question is GREEN.	
Where a supplier is not able to confirm that their service fully meets the issue identified in a specific checklist question the appropriate self-certification colour for that question is AMBER.	

Illegal Online Content

Filtering providers should ensure that access to illegal content is blocked, specifically that the filtering providers:

Aspect	Rating	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are IWF members 		Yes, Smoothwall is a member of the Internet Watch Foundation and implements the IWF CAIC list.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> and block access to illegal Child Abuse Images (by actively implementing the IWF URL list) 		Smoothwall implements the IWF CAIC list of domains and URLs. Smoothwall Filter also uses a number of search terms and phrases provided by IWF and their members. We perform self-certification tests daily to ensure that IWF content is always blocked through a Smoothwall Filter.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate the 'the police assessed list of unlawful terrorist content, produced on behalf of the Home Office' 		Smoothwall Filter implements the police assessed list of unlawful terrorist content, produced on behalf of the Home Office.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirm that filters for illegal content cannot be disabled by the school 		It is not possible to disable the illegal content filter rules

Inappropriate Online Content

Recognising that no filter can guarantee to be 100% effective, providers should both confirm, and describe how, their system manages the following content

Content	Explanatory notes – Content that:	Rating	Explanation
Discrimination	Promotes the unjust or prejudicial treatment of people on the grounds of race, religion, age, or sex.		The 'Intolerance' category covers any sites which promote racial hatred, homophobia or persecution of minorities. Sites which advocate violence against these groups are also covered by the Violence category.
Drugs / Substance abuse	displays or promotes the illegal use of drugs or substances		The Drugs category covers the sale, manufacture, promotion or use of recreational drugs as well as abuse of prescription drugs. Sites which provide resources which aim to help those suffering from substance abuse are covered by the 'Medical Information' category. Sites which discuss

			Alcohol or Tobacco are covered by the 'Alcohol and Tobacco' category.
Extremism	promotes terrorism and terrorist ideologies, violence or intolerance		The 'Terrorism' category contains the 'police assessed list of unlawful terrorist content'. Smoothwall also provides both a 'Violence' category which covers violence against both animals or people; An 'Intolerance' category (covered further above) and a 'Gore' category which covers any sites which describe or display gory images and video.
Gambling	Enables gambling		The Gambling category includes all online gambling sites, along with sites promoting gambling or discussing strategies for gambling
Malware / Hacking	promotes the compromising of systems including anonymous browsing and other filter bypass tools as well as sites hosting malicious content		As well as providing a level of protection against externally created malware, Smoothwall Filter provides a Hacking category which includes sites such as "how to" on hacking, and sites encouraging malicious computer use. Filter bypass tools are covered separately in a comprehensive "web proxies" category, which uses a combination of domain lists and dynamic content analysis.
Pornography	displays sexual acts or explicit images		The 'Pornography' category contains sites containing pornographic images, videos and text. Sites which contain mild nudity for purposes other than sexual arousal are covered by the 'Non-Pornographic Nudity' category. The 'Pornography' category uses both a list of domains/URLs as well as dynamic content rules which ensure new, previously unseen sites can be identified on the fly.

Piracy and copyright theft	includes illegal provision of copyrighted material		The 'Piracy and Copyright Infringement' category contains sites which illegally provide copyright material or provide peer-to-peer software.
Self Harm	promotes or displays deliberate self harm (including suicide and eating disorders)		The 'Self Harm' category contains sites relating to self-harm, suicide and eating disorders. The category excludes sites which aim to provide medical or charitable assistance which are categorised as 'Medical Information' or 'Charity and Non-Profit' respectively.
Violence	Displays or promotes the use of physical force intended to hurt or kill		The 'Violence' category contains sites which advocate violence against people and animals. We also provide a 'Gore' category which contains images and video of gory content.

This list should not be considered an exhaustive list. Please outline how the system manages this content and many other aspects

As well as the categories listed above, Smoothwall Filter provides filtering and reporting for over 100 other categories ranging from 'Sexuality Sites' and "Non-Pornographic Nudity" through to "News", "Sport" and "Online Games".

Smoothwall Filter uses a wide variety of techniques in order to identify and categorise content. All categories use a list of both URLs and domains, with the majority of categories also using search terms, content-based rulesets, and regular expressions to identify content on the fly.

Smoothwall has an in-house Digital Safety Team which is responsible for maintaining and updating the site categorisation rules which are released to customers on at least a daily basis; ensuring that schools are always protected from the latest threats.

Regarding the duration and extent of logfile (Internet history) data retention, providers should outline their retention policy, specifically including the extent to the identification of individuals and the duration to which all data is retained.

Retention policies when using on-premise reporting are set by customer preference (and limited by size of disk). Smoothwall will assist customers in specifying the correct hardware for their desired retention. Customers are encouraged to discuss with Smoothwall their retention requirements when using Cloud Reporting, for which the standard retention is 3 months.

All loglines are identified by the users directory username unless an on-premise device is not configured with authentication.

Providers should be clear how their system does not over block access so it does not lead to unreasonable restrictions

What is and is not blocked depends primarily on the policies specified by the customer. However, the underlying categorisation is highly granular, and assesses the content of pages. This uses an intelligent rules-based mechanism rather than automatically categorising a site as “pornography” for only one mention of “porn” on a page. This intelligence allows sites to be more accurately classified and filtered upon, without unduly restricting access.

Furthermore, while these same underlying categories are also used for identifying sites for the purpose of Smoothwall’s Safeguarding suite of tools,

A site may be allowed according to the filtering policy, but still be flagged as a potential issue in Safeguarding reports. This means a school can provide access to a large proportion of the internet, while also keeping an eye on content accessed by pupils. With this degree of visibility and awareness, pupils can be educated rather than merely ring-fenced.

Filtering System Features

How does the filtering system meet the following principles:

Principle	Rating	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Context appropriate differentiated filtering, based on age, vulnerability and risk of harm – also includes the ability to vary filtering strength appropriate for staff 		Smoothwall Filter integrates with a wide variety of directories (e.g. Microsoft AD, Azure AD, Google Directory) allowing filtering to be set appropriately at group and user level. It is also possible to combine user group with location (eg outside school)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Circumvention – the extent and ability to identify and manage technologies and techniques used to circumvent the system, specifically VPN, proxy services and DNS over HTTPS. 		Smoothwall maintains an extensive rules database for detecting circumvention activity. VPNs must also be blocked by a firewall – Smoothwall's optional Firewall uses Layer 7 analysis to identify non-web VPN traffic. Agent based filtering adds an additional layer of protection.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control – has the ability and ease of use that allows schools to control the filter themselves to permit or deny access to specific content. 		Smoothwall Filter has a full range of policy tools available, allowing School

<p>Any changes to the filter system are logged enabling an audit trail that ensure transparency and that individuals are not able to make unilateral changes</p>		<p>users to easily make policy changes, test a site against current policy or simply quickly allow or block a site.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contextual Content Filters – in addition to URL or IP based filtering, the extent to which (http and https) content is analysed as it is streamed to the user and blocked, this would include AI generated content. For example, being able to contextually analyse text on a page and dynamically filter. 		<p>All downloaded content (HTTP and HTTPS) is analysed in real-time and dynamically categorised by the Smoothwall filter. Private content, such as banking sites, may be excluded from this dynamic filter.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Filtering Policy – the filtering provider publishes a rationale that details their approach to filtering with classification and categorisation as well as over blocking 		<p>Smoothwall maintains a “blocklist policy document” which includes clear criteria on what should and should not be in each category. This is available on request.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group / Multi-site Management – the ability for deployment of central policy and central oversight or dashboard 		<p>Smoothwall products allow for multi-tenant deployments, where a central unit controls policy and reporting. Delegated access is available. Smoothwall can work in a cluster as well as a standalone unit.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification - the filtering system should have the ability to identify users 		<p>Smoothwall Filter offers a wide range of techniques for identifying users – including negotiate authentication, login pages and RADIUS compatibility, as well as a number of custom options.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobile and App content – mobile and app content is often delivered in entirely different mechanisms from that delivered through a traditional web browser. To what extent does the filter system block inappropriate content via mobile and app technologies (beyond typical web browser delivered content). Providers should be clear about the capacity of their filtering system to manage content on mobile and web apps 		<p>Any app content delivered via HTTPS (not necessarily through a web browser) can be blocked and inspected by Smoothwall’s on-premise network appliance, assuming the app permits this. In addition, Smoothwall’s optional firewall module can</p>

		identify and block many other types of app.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Multiple language support – the ability for the system to manage relevant languages 		Smoothwall’s combined blocklist includes words in a wide variety of languages, focussed on those spoken in UK and US schools. This includes Polish and Spanish as well as “non latin” such as Urdu and Russian.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Network level - filtering should be applied at ‘network level’ ie, not reliant on any software on user devices whilst at school (recognising that device configuration/software may be required for filtering beyond the school infrastructure) 		Smoothwall Filter offers both network level filtering, and device based filtering, for use as appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remote devices – with many children and staff working remotely, the ability for school owned devices to receive the same or equivalent filtering to that provided in school 		Smoothwall’s Cloud Filter provides identical filtering capabilities to the on-premise system including dynamic, contextual real-time content filtering.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reporting mechanism – the ability to report inappropriate content for access or blocking 		Smoothwall provides the ability to report overblocked content to the administrator. Uncategorized content (which is possibly “underblocked”) is automatically fed back to Smoothwall and will subsequently be appropriately categorised.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reports – the system offers clear historical information on the websites users have accessed or attempted to access 		Smoothwall Filter offers a comprehensive suite of reports and logs, with a complete URL-by-URL record of all web activities including timestamp, username and source device. Logs are retained to customer preference.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safe Search – the ability to enforce ‘safe search’ when using search engines 		Smoothwall offers forced safesearch on all major search engines, social media sites and some niche providers.

Filtering systems are only ever a tool in helping to safeguard children when online and schools have an obligation to *“consider how children may be taught about safeguarding, including online, through teaching and learning opportunities, as part of providing a broad and balanced curriculum”*.¹

Please note below opportunities to support schools (and other settings) in this regard

As part of the wider Qoria group, Smoothwall offers a huge range of products and support for schools, including best in class Monitoring, Record Management, Classroom Management and Student Wellbeing tools. Additionally Smoothwall offers training and resources to promote safety in UK schools, including a school branded “hub” for parents and students.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

PROVIDER SELF-CERTIFICATION DECLARATION

In order that schools can be confident regarding the accuracy of the self-certification statements, the supplier confirms:

- that their self-certification responses have been fully and accurately completed by a person or persons who are competent in the relevant fields
- that they will update their self-certification responses promptly when changes to the service or its terms and conditions would result in their existing compliance statement no longer being accurate or complete
- that they will provide any additional information or clarification sought as part of the self-certification process
- that if at any time, the UK Safer Internet Centre is of the view that any element or elements of a provider's self-certification responses require independent verification, they will agree to that independent verification, supply all necessary clarification requested, meet the associated verification costs, or withdraw their self-certification submission.

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Date	30/08/2023
Signature	