



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales



Guidance

Guidance document no: 228/2018

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Replaces guidance document no: 169/2015

Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales

Audience

Local authorities; all maintained nursery, primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units; and interested organisations.

Overview

This guidance document is primarily to provide advice to schools and local authorities on recommended approaches to web filtering within educational settings.

Action required

To be brought to the attention of all managers, staff and education professionals working within a maintained school environment and to local authority teams that support the provision of web filtering for schools.

Further information

Enquiries about this document should be directed to:

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Additional copies

This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.gov.wales/educationandskills

Related documents

Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales (2015)

Contents

Aim	2
Overview of the process for reviewing the standards	2
Expectations	3
Prerequisites for Hwb tools	3
Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales: February 2018 review	4

Aim

The key aim of the web filtering standards outlined within this document is that they will enable access to websites that support the effective delivery of teaching and learning in schools.

A common set of agreed standards for internet access provides the tools for schools to make informed choices over filtered internet provision whether delivered by the local authority or another provider.

It is critical that filtering standards are fit for purpose for 21st Century teaching and learning, allowing the access schools require whilst still safeguarding children and young people.

The standards will provide learners with the opportunity to learn within a safe, responsible and supportive environment and prevent access to inappropriate content. An effective online safety programme of education should supplement this guidance to teach children and young people the importance of responsible and considerate online behaviours.

Overview of the process for reviewing the standards

- A working group was established to review the guidance document *Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales*, which was published in 2015. The working group comprised of representatives from:
 - the Welsh Government
 - local authority technical teams
 - Digital Pioneer schools
 - South West Grid for Learning
 - independent expert organisations.
- The working group developed two surveys, one for local authorities and one for schools.

The local authority survey was designed specifically to gauge the current provision of web filtering across Wales. All 22 local authorities responded. Findings included:

- Regarding the 2015 Recommended web filtering standards:
 - 96% of respondents were aware of the standards.
 - 56% of respondents said that the standards had been fully adopted in their local authority.
 - 93% of respondents had found the standards beneficial for their local authority.
- 52% of local authorities in Wales delegate some of the web filtering controls to their schools.

The school survey was specifically designed for school staff to report their views on the success of the *Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales*. In total, 323 responses were received from school staff in all 22 local authorities. Findings included:

- 66% of respondents reported that their school's web filtering system supports their ability to teach effectively.

- 37% of respondents reported that they ask their local authority to unblock sites they need to use in the classroom.
 - 37% of respondents said that they 'move on' when they hit a site that has been blocked by web filtering.
 - 74% of respondents believe that their school's web filtering system helps to keep learners safe online.
- Each age-group category was reviewed by the working group to decide if sites in that category should be blocked or allowed.

Special schools and pupil referral units should adopt the suggested categories based on the abilities of their learners rather than that of their chronological age as appropriate.

Expectations

The Welsh Government expects that:

- Local authorities that control web filtering on behalf of their schools implement these standards.
- Schools that take their filtering provision from outside of the authority will check their current filtering is compliant with these standards.
- Education professionals embrace the opportunity to teach safe, responsible and considerate online behaviours in the context of appropriate educational activities.

Prerequisites for Hwb tools

The prerequisites for Hwb tools can be found on the following web page:

<https://hwb.gov.wales/what-are-the-prerequisites-for-hwb-tools>.

This page will be updated regularly as tools develop.

Recommended web filtering standards for schools in Wales: February 2018 review

Key:

Green (✓) = Allow
Red (X) = Block

Please note the category titles and descriptions are based on one of the solutions provided to schools.

Category	Description	FP & KS2	KS3	GCSE & Post-16	Teachers and non-teaching staff
Advertising	Advertising pop ups that can appear on sites.	X	X	X	X
Alcohol	Sites that promote the use of alcohol or websites of manufacturers and distributors.	X	✓	✓	✓
The Arts	Sites that promote and provide information about creative arts including museums, cinemas, theatres, galleries and live music. Media downloads are explicitly excluded from this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Auction Sites	Sites where you buy and sell products and services using online auctions.	X	X	X	✓
Automotive	This category includes vehicle manufacturers, dealers, trading and servicing. Discussions groups are also included.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Awareness and support	Sites that provide awareness of and support for problems with gambling, alcohol, drugs and similar.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Commercial	Sites of businesses and commercial	✓	✓	✓	✓

	organisations that provide paid for goods and services. This category also includes organisations that represent and report on businesses and commercial organisations.				
Computing	News, information and sales sites related to computer hardware, software and internet are included here, as well as sites of professional IT bodies. Software download is not included in this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dating	This category refers to dating sites, personal listings and sites where you can discuss romance and interpersonal relationships. Sites specifically designed for initiating sexual encounters are covered under the 'Pornography and adult material' category.	X	X	X	X
Drugs	Sites that sell or promote illegal, controlled or recreational substances or drug-related paraphernalia. For drug education, see 'Health and wellbeing' and 'Awareness and support' categories.	X	X	X	X
Education	Sites of nurseries, schools, colleges and universities are all included here, as well	✓	✓	✓	✓

	as online educational resources, although care must be taken to avoid plagiarism. Also included in this category are support bodies such as admissions and research councils.				
Educational gaming	Games that can be used for educational purposes to reinforce classroom learning and/or development of skills. What constitutes an educational game is at the discretion of the school.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Film and Television	Licensed streaming from reputable media providers e.g. BBC iPlayer, ITV Hub. Media downloads are explicitly excluded from this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Finance, investment and banking	Personal and corporate banking and finance sites as well as price comparison and financial reporting sites. Payday loan sites are excluded from this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Food and drink	Sites for food and soft drink establishments, manufacturers (including farming), recipes and cuisine are included in this category. Please see separate category for 'Alcohol'.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Gambling	Sites and software that allow you to gamble online and offline and/or promote gambling skills and practice. Gambling awareness	X	X	X	X

	sites fall under the 'Awareness and support' category.				
Government and affiliated associations	Central and local government sites as well as related bodies and agencies. Defence forces are not included in this category, they can be found under the 'Military' category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hacking and malware	Resources that can be used to gain unauthorised access to systems or advise on how to do this as well as those that promote malicious software. Illegally obtained copyrighted material is also included here. Information about cyber security is excluded from this category.	X	X	X	X
Hate, discrimination, extremism and radicalisation	Sites that portray or promote unjust, offensive, aggressive, degrading or abusive views about any particular group of people on the grounds of race, religion, gender, age, nationality, physical disability, economic situation, sexual preferences or any other lifestyle choice or characteristic.	X	X	X	X
Health and wellbeing	All sites that provide information or advice around personal health, hospitals, clinics, legally-prescribed medication and related services.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Illegal	Sites that sell illegal items or contain instructions, recipes, or advice on them, as well as sites that promote illegal acts and criminal activity.	X	X	X	X
Image sites (moderated)	Sites that provide hosting for moderated images with a safe search filter.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Image sites (unmoderated)	Sites that provide hosting for unmoderated images.	X	X	X	X
Instant messaging	Instant messaging clients and services, and any domains required for their successful operation.	X	X	✓	✓
Lifestyle and culture	Sites that deal with life choices, issues and events such as parenting, sexuality, marriage and bereavement. Sexual content is explicitly excluded and is listed in 'Pornography and adult content'. Dating sites are also excluded from this category and are listed under 'Dating'.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mapping	Geographical mapping services including travel planning sites e.g. Google Maps.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Military	Sites containing information about official military organisations and their activities are included in this category. Illegal and paramilitary organisations are excluded and should fall under the 'illegal' category.	X	✓	✓	✓

Music education	All sites related to the teaching and learning of music fall under this category. Illegal music downloads are explicitly excluded from this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
News	News media outlets including online news and newspapers are listed under this category. Fake news and parody news sites are excluded from this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Offensive and tasteless	This category describes sites that are unsuitable for learners or that could make viewers of any age uncomfortable. E.g. crude humour, graphic images, insulting comments.	X	X	X	X
Online discussion forums	Sites offering access to Usenet newsgroups or similar services, or any other discussion forum that does not sit well in another category.	X	✓	✓	✓
Online gaming	All online gaming sites including those that provide information (including general advice or cheat information) about or promoting online games. Addictive gaming behaviour falls under the 'Awareness and support' category. Educational games fall under the 'Educational gaming' category.	X	X	X	X
Peer to peer (P2P)	All sites that facilitate the sharing of files using P2P software are placed in this	X	X	X	X

	category. This includes, but is not restricted to, sites that host P2P software and sites that allow users to search for files that can be downloaded using P2P software.				
Pornography and adult material	Sites containing adult/sexually orientated content in textual or image-based form.	X	X	X	X
Property and real estate	All sites that provide information or adverts for selling, renting, buying and building private or commercial property.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Proxy avoidance	This category includes any site that offers guidance or software for bypassing web filtering or gaining unauthorised access to areas of the web.	X	X	X	X
Recreation and hobbies	This category covers all recreational activities or interests, other than sport.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recruitment / Jobs	Sites for searching and applying for jobs, including employment agencies, recruitment consultancies and headhunters and contractors. Also included in this category are sites that offer career, interview and CV advice. Excluded from this category are recruitment sites with social media and/or chat functionality.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reference material	This category includes online encyclopaedias, dictionaries,	✓	✓	✓	✓

	thesauruses, atlases and other information resources available for research purposes.				
Religion and spiritual beliefs	This category includes all sites that promote or provide information about religious and spiritual beliefs or scepticism towards these. Extremist beliefs are categorised under 'Hate, discrimination, extremism and radicalisation'.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Search engines	Search engines, meta-search engines and web directories are all included in this category, provided safe search is enforced.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sex education	This category is for sites that discuss sex and sexuality in an informative and non-voyeuristic way. Sites may contain information about human reproduction and contraception, advice on preventing infection from sexual transmitted infections and abstinence.	X	✓	✓	✓
Shopping / e-commerce	Sites that offer goods for sale (whether online or offline) and provides comparisons between goods. Please note that exceptions are made in the case of sites covered by the other categories.	✓	✓	✓	✓

SMS and mobile telephony services	Sites for creating and sending SMS text messages fall under this category as well as sites for downloading ringtones, games and videos. Mobile telephone retailers are listed under 'Shopping'.	X	X	X	✓
Social media	Social media sites are defined as those that allow users to generate personal profiles or personal content and view and connect with the profiles of others.	X	✓	✓	✓
Software download (new)	All sites whose main purpose is to allow users to download new software, whether on a free or commercial basis.	X	X	X	X
Software updates	Domains used to download updates to existing software e.g. Windows updates, Antivirus.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sport	All official, un-official, media and fan related sport websites fall under this category, except those related to gambling.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Spyware / malware / ransomware	Web sites hosting software that attempts to get hold of personal or secret information without the user's knowledge.	X	X	X	X
Streaming media and media downloads	Any site with the primary function to allow users to download media content, whether streamed or not. Please also see the 'Film and Television' category.	✓	✓	✓	✓

Tobacco and e-cigarettes	Sites that promote the use of tobacco or sites of manufacturers and distributors. This also includes sites that promote the use of e-cigarettes and vaping.	X	✓	✓	✓
Translation	Sites that translate a web page from one language to another fall under this category due to the use of a proxy. Online dictionaries are not included in this category.	X	X	X	✓
Travel	All travel related sites including travel agents, travel guides, transport operators, hotels and holiday rental accommodation, travel advice, travel regulations, timetable information and car hire.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Unified communications	All sites that offer internet communication products and services including telephony and voice over internet protocol (VoIP).	X	X	✓	✓
Violence	Any site that displays or promotes violent related content falls under this category. Sites that advocate means of harming oneself fall under the 'Self harm' category.	X	X	X	X
Weapons	Any site that sells weapons or ammunition or advocates the use of weapons. This includes weapons manufacturers' sites.	X	X	X	X

Web chat	Web-based chatrooms. Please note that some advocated services with web chat such as Meic and Childline, among others, may need to be whitelisted.	X	X	X	✓
Webmail	Any sites offering web-based e-mail services fall under this category.	✓	✓	✓	✓