



November 2007

Raising Awareness: Latest Whole School Advice. Safe use of ICT Systems in Schools and the Use of Restraint in Schools

Introduction

You will be aware from the national media, that there have been a number of high profile cases recently regarding child protection and the abuse of the Internet and mobile phones. Also the use of restraint has been raised by Schools in terms of child protection.

At a local level this has been found to be no different, where there has been an increased caseload of allegations against staff, which may have been averted at an earlier stage before following the normal child protection procedures.

Overview-The Safeguarding Children Board (SCB)

The Safeguarding Children Board is a multi agency arrangement which replaced the Area Child Protection Committee's. The Board members represent their organisations at the most senior level and were established under HM Government's "Working Together to Safeguard Children" and the "Every Child Matters", "Change for Children" agenda. The SCB has approximately 35 signed up member organisations. Every Local Authority had to have a SCB in place by April 2006. Officers of the board are charged with investigating allegations against all staff where there may be child protection concerns.

Action

After discussions about recent cases at a local level with the School Community, Telford & Wrekin Council Officers, Union Officials and Officers from the Safeguarding Children Board, it is felt that you all should be aware of this advice.

Review of policies and awareness within the Whole School Community

In view of the latest growing incidents around IT, Cyberbullying and issue of restraint, it suggested Schools may wish to review/refine their existing policies and procedures to reflect this increase and make them more robust for the protection of all. It is suggested that all staff on a whole school basis are made aware of the following advice.

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Safe use of ICT Systems

Please:-

- Under no circumstances should staff give personal mobile numbers or e mail addresses to students. If tuition is to take place via computer make sure this is done through school based computer equipment. Never involve yourself in personal text messaging
- Under no circumstances should staff take a note of students' mobile numbers or e mail addresses other than for school records
- Never knowingly give permission for students to take your photograph with their own mobile phone
- Remember that if you, or others, load images of yourself on the Internet, they will remain there and may find their way into Internet searches prior to interview. Staff should be cautious about publishing photographs or other sensitive information on social networking sites such as My Space, Bebo or Facebook. Also, it would be unwise to accept offers to be on "lists of friends" on social networking sites, even if a child may have left the school, this could lead to false interpretation.
- Always keep passwords secure and limited to those on a "need to know" basis. Remember that if you leave a computer running and leave the room it can be tampered with by students and may leave you open to exploitation. Wherever possible, good practice would be to lock the computer by pressing Ctl-Alt-Del and press K for the duration of your absence
- Be very careful what you store on your mobile phone, if it is taken by students they may get information which could be embarrassing in a number of ways
- All School ICT systems are monitored. If you are surfing the Internet it will be recorded. If you visit inappropriate sites, this could lead, in the worst cases, to a criminal prosecution and disciplinary action. For avoidance of doubt please acquaint yourself with the Telford & Wrekin ICT Code of Practice and the Acceptable use Policy. Also if sites are visited inadvertently make your Senior Management Team aware and seek advice from the ICT Team at Civic Offices.
- In relation to this, the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency (BECTA) have produced "E-safety Developing whole-school policies to support effective practice". It is recommended ICT Advice and provides useful flowcharts for quick reference.