



Online Safety Policy

September 2025

(to be reviewed September 2026)

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Larches High School will adhere to the Online Safety Policy at all times and is committed to keeping children safe online. The school recognises that addressing online safety issues should form an integral part of the school’s safeguarding arrangements.

Online Safety encompasses the use of new technologies, internet and electronic communications such as learning platforms, mobile phones, tablets, video conferencing, collaboration tools and personal publishing. It highlights the need to educate students about the benefits and risks of using technology and provides safeguards and awareness for users to enable them to control their online experience.

As part of a broad and balanced curriculum, all pupils will be made aware of online risks and taught how to stay safe online.

The school will ensure that suitable filtering systems are in place on **ALL** ICT equipment to mitigate opportunities for children to access inappropriate material. This system will be regularly monitored and reviewed with any inappropriate behaviours or searches being followed up appropriately.

- When school become aware of an online safety issue that has occurred outside of school, it is managed in accordance with the school Online Safety Policy, Acceptable Computer & Internet Use Policy and Behaviour Policy.

Staff will be aware that ongoing in-person monitoring is required in addition to the software in place as it is vital staff don’t rely solely on IT systems as this may leave some children vulnerable.

Staff will be aware of the filtering and monitoring systems in place and will know how to escalate concerns where they are identified. Staff will be made aware of their expectations and responsibilities relating to filtering and monitoring systems during their induction. Weekly filtering and monitoring of our IT systems takes place by Larches High School IT manager Bowker IT.

Staff receive relevant CPD in relation to this policy and the policy is reviewed annually.

No member of staff or pupil is able to access our IT systems until they have signed the acceptable use agreement.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School AI Policy.

	Content	Contact	Conduct
	Student as a receiver (of mass productions)	Student as participant (adult initiated activity)	Student as actor (perpetrator / victim)
Aggressive	Violent / gory content	Harassment, stalking	Bullying, hostile peer activity
Sexual	Pornographic content	“Grooming” sexual abuse on meeting strangers	Sexual harassment “sexting”
	Racist, biased information / advice	Ideological persuasion	Potentially harmful user generated content. Providing advice eg suicide / pro anorexia

Commercial	Embedded marketing	Personal data misuse	Gambling, copyright infringement
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Larches acknowledges its responsibility to foster informed discussion and protect pupils from the potential harm caused by extremist attitudes of all sorts.

Risk Assessment

As the quantity and breadth of the information available through the Internet continues to grow it is not possible to guard against every undesirable situation. Larches High School accepts that it is difficult to remove completely the risk that pupils might access unsuitable materials via the school system however will work proactively to maintain high standards of online safety for all pupils and staff.

- *In common with other media such as magazines, books and video, some material available via the Internet is unsuitable for pupils. The school will take all reasonable precautions to ensure that users access only appropriate material. However, due to the international scale and linked nature of Internet content, it is not possible to guarantee that unsuitable material will never appear on a school computer. Neither the school nor Lancashire County Council can accept liability for the material accessed, or any consequences of Internet access.*
- *Methods to identify, assess and minimise risks will be reviewed regularly.*
- *The head teacher will ensure that the Internet policy is implemented and compliance with the policy monitored.*
- *The use of computer systems without permission or for inappropriate purposes could constitute a criminal offence under the Computer Misuse Act 1990.*
- *Staff and pupils should make the Head teacher aware if they receive any offensive electronic communication*
- *Misuse of the school IT systems by pupils will be managed via the school behaviour policy*

Learning Platforms

An effective learning platform (LP) or virtual learning environment (VLE) can offer schools a wide range of benefits to teachers, pupils and parents, as well as support for management and administration. Larches High School uses platforms such as Teams as well as curriculum based programmes. See Remote Learning Policy for additional details in relation to learning platforms.

- *All users will be required to use an age appropriate password to access the relevant content of the LP which must not be shared with others.*
- *SLT and staff will regularly monitor the usage of the LP by pupils and staff in all areas, in particular message and communication tools and publishing facilities.*
- *Pupils/staff will be advised about acceptable conduct and use when using the LP.*
- *Only members of the current pupil, parent/carers and staff community will have access to the LP.*
- *All users will be mindful of individual and intellectual property and will upload only appropriate content to the LP.*
- *When a user leaves the school their account or rights to relevant content areas will be disabled or transferred to their new establishment.*

Managing e-mail

E-mail is an essential means of communication for both staff and pupils. Directed e-mail use can bring significant educational benefits and interesting projects between schools. However, the use of e-mail requires appropriate safety measures.

- *Pupils and staff may only use approved e-mail accounts on the school system.*
- *Pupils must immediately tell a responsible adult if they receive offensive e-mail.*
- *Staff must report immediately any offensive or fraudulent email to the Head teacher and School Business Manager – see Acceptable Computer and Internet Use Staff Policy*
- *Pupils should use email in an acceptable way. Sending images without consent, explicit images, messages that cause distress and harassment to others are considered significant breaches of school policies and will be dealt with accordingly via the Anti-Bullying Policy.*

On-line communications and Social Media.

On-line communications, social networking and social media services may be filtered in school by their ISP but are likely to be accessible from home.

Pupils should be encouraged to think about the ease of uploading personal information, the associated dangers and the difficulty of removing an inappropriate image or information once published. Schools have a key role to teach young people about the importance of how to communicate safely and respectfully online, keeping personal information private.

- *Users will be taught about how to keep personal information safe when using online services. Examples would include real name, address, mobile or landline phone numbers, school attended, IM and email addresses, full names of friends/family, specific interests and clubs etc.*
- *Users must not reveal personal details of themselves or others in online communication, including the tagging of photos or video, or to arrange to meet anyone. Staff wishing to use Social Media tools with students as part of the curriculum will risk assess the sites before use and check the sites terms and conditions to ensure the site is age appropriate.*
- *Staff will obtain documented consent from the Senior Leadership Team before using Social Media tools in the classroom.*
- *Staff official blogs or wikis should be password protected and only operate with approval from the SLT.*
- *Personal publishing will be taught via age appropriate sites that are suitable for educational purposes. They will be moderated by the school where possible.*
- *Pupils will be advised on security and privacy online and will be encouraged to set passwords, deny access to unknown individuals and to block unwanted communications. Pupil will be encouraged to approve and invite known friends only on social networking sites and to deny access to others by making profiles private.*
- *No member of the school community should publish specific and detailed private thoughts about the school, especially those that may be considered threatening, hurtful or defamatory.*
- *Parents wishing to photograph or video at an event should be made aware of the schools expectations and be required to comply with the schools policies as a condition of permission to photograph or record.*
- *Concerns regarding students' use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites (in or out of school) will be raised with their parents/carers, particularly when concerning students' underage use of sites.*

- *Staff personal use of social networking, social media and personal publishing sites will be discussed as part of staff induction and safe and professional behaviour will be outlined in the Larches High School Acceptable Computer and Internet Use Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.*
- *In line with, 'Guidance for Safer Working Practice for Adults who Work with Children and Young People' it will not be considered appropriate for staff to engage in personal online communications with children and young people, parents or carers. Express care is also to be taken regarding the use of social networking sites.*
- *Staff will be responsible for their use of AI and emerging technologies and work in line with this policy.*

Personal Electronic Devices

The use of personal electronic devices, including mobile phones, smartwatches and cameras, by staff and pupils is closely monitored by the school, in accordance with the Mobile Phone Policy / Behaviour Policy.

Where photographs and videos will involve pupils who are CLA, adopted pupils, or pupils for whom there are security concerns, the headteacher will liaise with the DSL to determine the steps involved. The DSL will, in known cases of pupils who are CLA or who have been adopted, liaise with the pupils' social workers, carers or adoptive parents to assess the needs and risks associated with the pupils.

Staff will report any concerns about pupils' or other staff members' use of personal electronic devices to the DSL, following the appropriate procedures. Larches High School is committed to keeping pupils safe by ensuring that electronic devices such as cameras, phones and tablets are used in an appropriate manner.

School will therefore ensure that:

- informed parental consent is obtained to take and use photographs and/or videos of children, for use in school, to market the school or to share on social media / internet
- staff, visitors, volunteers and students do not use their own mobile phones or devices to take or record any images of children

Larches High School has a mobile phone protocol which is shared with all pupils on admission to the school. All pupils hand in their mobile devices unless there are specific medical reasons as to why they need to have access. See Mobile Phone protocol, Staff Code of Conduct.

- *Mobile devices that are brought in to school remain the responsibility of the user. The school accepts no responsibility for the loss, theft or damage of such items. At Larches High School all pupil mobile devices are handed in and stored in secure manner.*
- *School staff authorised by the Head teacher may search pupils or their possessions, and confiscate any mobile device they believe is being used to contravene school policy, constitute a prohibited item, is considered harmful, or detrimental to school discipline. If it is suspected that the material contained on the mobile device relates to a criminal offence, the device will be handed over to the Police for investigation.*
- *Sending abusive or inappropriate messages or content is forbidden by any user within the school community.*

Cyber Bullying

The DCSF define **cyber bullying** as "The use of Information Communication Technology, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to deliberately hurt or upset someone".

For most, using the internet and mobile devices is a positive and creative part of their everyday life. Unfortunately, technologies can also be used negatively. It is essential that young people, school staff, parents and carers understand how cyber bullying is different from other forms of bullying, how it can affect people and how to respond and combat misuse. Promoting a culture of confident users will support innovation and safety.

Cyber bullying (along with all other forms of bullying) of or by any member of the school community will not be tolerated. Full details are set out in the school's behaviour, anti-bullying and Safeguarding policies, which include:

- *Clear procedures set out to investigate incidents or allegations of cyber bullying.*
- *Clear procedures in place to support anyone in the school community affected by cyber bullying.*
- *All incidents of cyber bullying reported to the school will be recorded on Behaviour Watch*
- *The school will take steps to identify the bully, where possible and appropriate. This may include examining school system logs, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the ISP and the police, if necessary.*
- *Pupils, staff and parents/carers will be required to work with the school to support the approach to cyber bullying and the school's e-Safety ethos.*

See school Safeguarding Policy for further details re upskirting and sharing of nudes and semi-nude images.

Data Protection

The quantity and variety of data held on pupils, families and on staff is expanding quickly. While this data can be very useful in improving services, data could be mishandled, stolen or misused. The Data Protection Act 1998 gives individuals the right to know what information is held about them and provides a framework to ensure that personal information is handled properly. It promotes openness in the use of personal information.

- *Personal data will be recorded, processed, transferred and made available according to the General Data Protection Regulations.*

Implementation

Policy in Practice - Pupils

Many pupils are very familiar with Internet use and the culture that surrounds it. As part of the school's e-safety teaching and awareness-raising it is important to discuss the key features with pupils / students as appropriate for their age. Pupils may need to be reminded of the school rules at the point of Internet use.

- *All users will be informed that network and Internet use will be monitored.*
- *Online Safety teaching should be integral to the curriculum and raise the awareness and importance of safe and responsible internet use amongst pupils. All pupils in KS3 have ICT lessons.*
- *Online Safety teaching will be included in PSCHE and ICT and cover safe use at school and home.*
- *Online Safety rules and/or copies of the Responsible Use Policy will be on display in all rooms with Internet access.*
- *Safe and responsible use of the Internet and technology will be reinforced across the curriculum and subject areas.*

Policy in Practice – Parents

Parents need to be aware of the potential dangers that are associated with online communications, social networking sites and mobile technologies to help ensure their children are not putting themselves at risk.

Schools may wish to refer parents to websites referred to in the references section of this document.

- *Parents' attention will be drawn to the Online Safety Policy and Responsible User Policy in the school prospectus and Website.*
- *Regular information will be provided to parents about how to ensure they can work with the school to ensure this resource is used appropriately both within school and home.*
- *Internet issues will be handled sensitively to inform parents without undue alarm.*
- *Advice on filtering systems and educational and leisure activities that include responsible use of the Internet will be made available to parents.*

Handling of complaints

Parents and teachers must know how and where to report incidents in line with the school complaints policy and complaints of a child protection nature must be dealt with in accordance with the LA Child Protection procedures. Prompt action will be required if a complaint is made. The facts of the case will need to be established; for instance whether the Internet use was within or outside school. A minor transgression of the rules may be dealt with by the teacher as part of normal class discipline. Other situations could potentially be serious and a range of sanctions will be required, linked to the school's behaviour policy. All records of the incident should be kept, e.g. e-mails saved or printed, text messages saved etc.

- *Responsibility for handling incidents will be delegated to a senior member of staff.*
- *Any complaint about staff misuse must be referred to the head teacher.*
- *Pupils and parents will be informed of the complaints procedure and it is available on the Larches High School website*
- *Parents and pupils will need to work in partnership with staff to resolve issues.*
- *There may be occasions when the police must be contacted. Early contact could be made to establish the legal position and discuss strategies.*
- *Any follow up learning and guidance will be shared with staff as required.*