

This document outlines policy and practice considerations when implementing SWGfL Whisper anonymous reporting tool to ensure that it is used most effectively, covering

- School reporting routes: a safeguarding perspective
- Establishing effective practice:
 - Policy
 - Staff Development
 - Managing incidents
 - Sanctions
 - Auditing and monitoring
 - Assessing impact and informing practice
 - Technical considerations
- Further Links

School reporting routes: a safeguarding perspective

Many schools will be familiar with the processes around developing effective strategies for managing behaviour that are both preventative and reactive.

Preventative measures may include:

- Progressive and effective education
- Awareness raising opportunities
- Listening to needs of young people
- Good data gathering
- Effective analysis and use of data
- Professional development
- Structured local networking between schools

Reactive strategies might be:

- Clear and effective reporting routes
- Clear sanctions and intervention programmes
- Reward and celebration strategies to reinforce positive behaviours
- Engaging and communicating with parents
- Managing and agreeing parent contracts

- Establishing alternative provision
- Restorative justice processes

However, with the rapid adoption by both young people (and often their families) of online social network mechanisms like Facebook and Twitter, schools have seen their safeguarding remit broaden “beyond the school gate”. Issues that have occurred outside physical school boundaries and hours can impact on the well-being and safety of pupils and schools are increasingly having to deal with the fallout of those events as they cascade back into the school environment.

There is evidence to suggest that many online social networks for teens are extensions of the physical social network they have in school and as such the interaction is very school-centric.

One Yr 10 girl told us *“We don’t fight as much in school as we used to. We save it all up for when we get home!”*

Another commented *“If you don’t have Facebook in this school, then you haven’t got a life!”*

In conversation with schools, particularly during online safety audit, school leaders and safeguarding staff identify the strong connection between the behavioural incidents with which they deal and the social networks online. They mirror what happens in school: except no one is on playground duty.

Whilst it is unreasonable to suggest that a school is responsible for mediating in **every** single aspect of a child’s development, there is an expectation that the school has an accountable role in offering support and guidance particularly where the child is acting as “a pupil of the school” rather than just a “child of their parent” If the capacity does not exist to mediate then the school may need to offer signposts to resources and organisations that may be able to help.

Understanding the issues, the behaviours that drive them and the trends they suggest requires good data gathering and effective analysis of that data to inform practice.

Clear, respected and rigorous reporting routes are a clear way to capture that intelligence: not only to act upon but to inform strategy.

Reporting

SWGfL Whisper is not intended to be a sole solution and can often be most effective when offered with a range of reporting routes.

Schools can encourage pupils to report bullying in confidence using a variety of methods.

- Bully Boxes, which are emptied daily and acted upon
- Confidential web-based reporting systems like **Whisper**
- Buddies who are stationed at a known location every day;
- Think books

- Peer mentors
- Confidential phone numbers
- Adult counsellors or drop-in facilities to talk with home-school workers/mentors

These reporting routes are most valuable when:

- pupils have confidence that their concerns will be treated promptly and seriously and that action will be taken which will not make their situation worse;
- pupils can access reporting routes easily
- pupils know who will deal with their concerns and have trust both in them and the systems which the school uses
- pupils are aware that malicious reporting, relating to pupils or staff, will be taken seriously and could incur a disciplinary sanction.

Whisper is easy to access, confidential and involves the staff best able to deal with issues

Whisper also provides a reporting gateway for the wider school community, in particular parents. Parental reporting mechanisms have proved to be most effective when:

- staff have been trained in school systems and procedures and are clear about steps to be taken
- staff are sensitive to the emotional needs of parents making contact with a school about incidents of bullying
- parents have confidence that staff will act promptly, take the concern seriously and not take action which makes the situation worse for their child;
- staff take actions to agreed timescales and report progress to parents
- parents are clear about how to take further action if they do not feel that their concern has been properly addressed.

It is therefore critical that the staff behind the school **Whisper** service are not only prepared and trained to manage the role but are backed by clear policy and process.

Establishing effective practice

Policy

Policy around reporting online issues needs to be clear and well communicated and needs to be consistent with other policies that may be in place that are linked: eg behaviour, child protection etc

Policies also become more meaningful and therefore easier to implement if there has been a wide group of stakeholders contributing to their creation. Consider establishing an esafety group consisting of a school leader; safeguarding staff; technical staff; curriculum leader; safeguarding

governor; even young people or a parent. Give them the role of reviewing and ratifying the policy before it goes to Governors.

There is excellent advice on setting up policy and reporting procedures in the former DCSF guidance document “Safe to Learn”. Whilst the focus is on bullying, the principles may be extended to managing wider issues that arise as a result of **Whisper** reporting processes.

“Safe to Learn” can be found at:

<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/bullying-and-law/dcsf-safe-learn-guides>

South West Grid for Learning has available online-safety policy templates for schools that may be freely adapted to cover the types of issues that may be reported through the **Whisper™** service.

These can be found at:

<http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/Creating-an-E-Safety-policy>

For schools and colleges in England, a link to a useful publication from the DfE that outlines the policies and documentation that governing bodies and proprietors are required to have by law.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-policies-for-schools>

Staff Development

It is important that staff directly involved in receiving and assessing messages from **Whisper** are have a familiarity with managing reported issues and trained to manage the role or have the existing skill set to allow the role to be effective.

It is good idea to ensure that they have an understanding of the wider consequences and impact of technology on behaviour and relationships in the context of their safeguarding role.

As an example with regards online safety, South West Grid for Learning provide online safety specialist training modules as part of the European Pedagogical ICT Scheme accredited training programme. This online moderated training opportunity develops specific esafety expertise and can contribute towards a Masters.

Details can be found at www.swgfl.org.uk/epict

There also needs to be a wider staff discussion around **Whisper**; how it works, what the expectations are; what are the intended benefits and outcomes? This may need awareness raising of across all staff to establish a “level playing field” and an exploration of the **Whisper** mechanism itself. Some of the associated advice provided alongside this document may help in engaging staff and raising awareness?

South West Grid for Learning provide a whole range of training opportunities with regards online safety and managing associated issues via in-school sessions through to online webinars. Details can be found at: www.swgfl.org.uk/esafetytraining or contact esafety@swgfl.org.uk to discuss tailoring sessions for your school.

Managing Incidents

Having an additional reporting route often means developing a consistent and rigorous way of dealing with incidents that are reported. User confidence in a reporting system will only grow if users know that their report is going to be taken seriously, managed consistently and provides a level of resolution that they value.

Whilst it is difficult to provide a rule set for every eventuality, South West Grid for Learning have included the **Incidence Response Toolkit** as part of their Online Safety **BOOST** suite of tools, of which **Whisper** is part.

The Incident Response tool comprises an interactive incident flowchart that runs through the process of managing an incident that involves online technologies. When each step of the flowchart is clicked, it presents the user with advice and information on what to consider when dealing with the issue and also links to the appropriate form to record evidence or commentary.

Students / Pupils	Actions / Sanctions								
Incidents:	Refer to class teacher / tutor	Refer to Head of Department / Head of Year / other	Refer to Headteacher	Refer to Police	Refer to technical support staff for action re filtering / security etc	Inform parents / carers	Removal of network / internet access rights	Warning	Further sanction eg detention / exclusion
Deliberately accessing or trying to access material that could be considered illegal (see list in earlier section on unsuitable / inappropriate activities).		✓	✓	✓					
Unauthorised use of non-educational sites during lessons									
Unauthorised use of mobile phone / digital camera / other handheld device									
Unauthorised use of social networking / instant messaging / personal email									
Unauthorised downloading or uploading of files									
Allowing others to access school network by sharing username and passwords									
Attempting to access or accessing the school network, using another student's / pupil's account									
Attempting to access or accessing the school network, using the account of a member of staff									
Corrupting or destroying the data of other users									
Sending an email, text or instant message that is regarded as offensive, harassment or of a bullying nature									
Continued infringements of the above, following previous warnings or sanctions									
Actions which could bring the school into disrepute or breach the integrity of the ethos of the school									
Using proxy sites or other means to subvert the school's filtering system									
Accidentally accessing offensive or pornographic material and failing to report the incident									
Deliberately accessing or trying to access offensive or pornographic material									
Receipt or transmission of material that infringes the copyright of another person or infringes the Data Protection Act									

The Incident Response Toolkit can be found as part of the BOOST package available at www.swgfl.org.uk/boost

Sanctions

Appropriate and consistent response in dealing with issues that are reported is often about ensuring that sanctions are clearly communicated and respected.

Again a useful way to ensure sanctions are understood is if they have been established through broad stakeholder contribution and consent. One way to achieve this is through a behaviour group that has broad representation; another is to ensure staff have the opportunity to contribute.

SWGfL have developed a set of simple sanction matrices for online safety issues that could form the basis for a school set of sanctions for issues that have come through the **Whisper** system.

These are meant to be shared and discussed amongst staff (perhaps on a whiteboard during a staff meeting) and then annotated

to inform policy; an example matrix is shown opposite.

Auditing and monitoring

Recording incidents that have been reported is much more than just accountability. If recorded in the right way they can be used to affect changes in practice and inform procedures that could actually be effective in reducing those risks that translate to harm.

Whilst **Whisper** does not store any details of the reports sent to you, you do have email records of the content of the messages and associated date stamps. Transferring this information into a spreadsheet or database will allow that information to be analysed in a way that might inform practice eg filtering for key words or dates in reports.

Reporting Log Group.....						
Date	Time	Incident	Action taken		Incident Reported by	Signature
			What?	By whom?		

Incidents could also be recorded on a simple word table an example of which is shown here.

The important aspect of reporting must be that the data collected is collated and informs practice. It is also valuable in assessing the impact of the mechanisms that have been put in place.

Measuring Impact: is Whisper making a difference?

So what? So you have all of these systems in place? How do you know that it is making a difference?

- Do young people feel safer knowing that they have a way of getting confidential help and support?
- Do they value the service you have provided?
- Do staff feel empowered to deal and advise with the issues that come through **Whisper**?
- Do parents value the service you provide? Does it reassure them that you are providing the most effective mechanisms to support the well-being of their children?

Measuring the impact of what you do requires a school to assess or survey opinion around the processes it provides. There are a number of online mechanisms that will allow you to gather that information relatively painlessly in the shape of online surveys or forms:

The two most popular ones are currently:

- **Google Forms**, part of the wider suite of Google Applications for Education. This allows you to create online forms that can be signposted by a simple URL, link or QR Code that then reports back to an online spreadsheet that can later be analysed. Google Apps for Education Suite can be found at <http://www.google.com/enterprise/apps/education/>

- **Survey Monkey** is a popular online survey tool. that can send free surveys, polls, questionnaires, parent feedback etc with access to survey questions and professional templates. It can be found at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/>

South West Grid for Learning has also developed an Impact Assessment Tool as part of its suite of tools for children's settings. Whilst this is not yet a standalone tool, it can be accessed through our self review tool for children's settings **Online Compass**.

(It is important to note that Online Compass has not been designed for schools. Schools needing a more appropriate self review tool should visit 360 Degree Safe www.360safe.org.uk)

The Impact Survey Tool allows the user to create on-the-fly likert-scale surveys for either parents, students or staff that are automatically collated, date stamped and presented in a clear interface. You can find Online Compass at www.onlinecompass.org.uk

Technical considerations

In implementing **Whisper** effectively, there may be a number of practical considerations that will need to be addressed or communicated with users.

- Consider who has access to nominated school email address?
- Does the nominated email account use profanity checking that can block the receipt of reports?
- Consider sending a regular test report to ensure everything is working correctly
- Think about where the button can be placed in addition to a website - html newsletter for example?

Further Links

If you are having difficulties struggling to resolve issues that affect staff or students then the following links may provide a line of additional support or guidance.

South West Grid for Learning
www.swgfl.org.uk

UK Safer Internet Centre
www.saferinternet.org.uk

Professional Online Safety Helpline
www.saferinternet.org.uk/helpline

[Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre](#) - The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is dedicated to eradicating the sexual abuse of children

[ChildLine](#) - ChildLine is a counselling service for children and young people. If you are an adult and are worried about a child.

[NSPCC](#) - The NSPCC's vision is to end cruelty to children in the UK. They campaign to change the law, provide ChildLine and the NSPCC Helpline, offer advice for adults, and much more

[Barnardos](#) - Barnardo's is the UK's leading children's charity. They run over 400 projects across the UK that transform the lives of children and young people every day.

[Childnet International](#) is a non-profit organisation working with others to help make the Internet a great and safe place for children. They are a partner in the UK Safer Internet Centre.

[Internet Watch Foundation](#). The IWF works with British internet service providers to remove child pornography and other potentially illegal content.