



Benchmarking Your Digital Safeguarding

How to create an improvement strategy for Ofsted

A practical guide for school/college Headteachers, Principals, DSLs and anyone responsible for digital safeguarding in an education setting.



Contents

1.0	Introduction.....	3
2.0	The New Ofsted Inspection Framework.....	4
3.0	The Evidence Ofsted Expects to See When Reviewing Safeguarding in Your School/College.....	7
4.0	Inadequate v Outstanding The Types of Safeguarding Issues That Can Affect Your Grade.....	12
5.0	Digital Monitoring and Filtering - Questions You May Be Asked.....	17
6.0	Evaluating Your Monitoring and Filtering Where Are You Now? Where Do You Need To Be?.....	20
7.0	How To Plan For Improvement.....	24

Appendices

Further reading.....	28
About Smoothwall.....	25
Contact us.....	30
References.....	30

1.0 Introduction

Digital safeguarding is one of a number of key priorities for Ofsted.

The inclusion of “appropriate monitoring and filtering” within schools was added to the statutory guidelines in 2016. It appears in the essential school safeguarding document, ‘Keeping Children Safe in Education’ (KCSIE) and in the specific safeguarding Ofsted inspection guidance, ‘Inspecting Safeguarding in the Early Years, Education and Skills Settings’.

Although the new Ofsted inspection framework¹ sets out a radical shift in the way schools are inspected, the requirements for safeguarding remains top of the agenda. If safeguarding isn’t deemed to be effective, even with the best academic outcomes, a school may struggle to achieve anything more than an ‘inadequate’ rating.

The significance of online safety has risen greatly in recent years. Most pupils, these days, are immersed in a 24/7 digital world. They are also exposed to the risks that go with it.

It is essential that schools teach students about the dangers they face and how they can protect themselves and their peers. Schools also have an obligation to protect students from illegal and inappropriate content, contact, and conduct, without limiting a broad and balanced curriculum that equips students with the digital skills necessary for the contemporary world. Over protection and locking down systems, for example, can restrict effective digital education and leave students ill-informed and vulnerable.

A well-considered and executed digital safeguarding provision within your school will help to protect pupils and prepare them to deal with the dangers that exist online. It will also satisfy Ofsted’s requirements to ensure your school is successfully identifying students at risk and directing them to the best help at the earliest possible opportunity.

About this document

This document is a practical and focused guide to understanding Ofsted’s approach to inspections as they relate to digital safeguarding. It specifically examines:

- The new changes to the Ofsted inspection framework and the accompanying updated safeguarding requirements.
- The questions your school/college may be asked during an inspection.
- The evidence Ofsted will require from you during an inspection.
- Extracts and comparisons from real Ofsted reports receiving ‘inadequate’ and ‘outstanding’ grading.
- How to evaluate your current digital safeguarding policies and procedures, identify gaps and fix them.

Essential reading for: School/college leaders, DSLs and anyone responsible for ensuring digital safeguarding within an educational organisation.

smoothwall[®]

Note: This document has been written by Smoothwall’s online safety experts. It is based on our understanding of statutory information, Ofsted reports, guidance, and school insights. It is intended as a focused and practical guide and not intended to replace your own research and understanding. It does not constitute legal advice.

2.0 The New Ofsted Inspection Framework

In the new school inspection framework, Ofsted plans to move away from judging schools by performance data and outcomes in favour of putting a child's needs first.

School leaders, teachers and pupils should create an environment where bullying, peer-on-peer abuse or discrimination are not tolerated. "Teachers create an environment that allows pupils to focus on learning", appropriately equipping them with the skills for future learning and employment.

By focusing on a child's needs, safeguarding remains crucial in the Ofsted inspection criteria. Safeguarding is either effective or it is not. A school may not even be given a 'requires improvement' rating if its safeguarding does not meet inspection expectations. It is crucial therefore that schools/colleges have the right policies in place, and that these policies can be implemented successfully to ensure the best outcome for every child. 'Tick in a box' policies will not suffice.

New framework requirements

- Those with responsibility for governance ensure that the provider fulfils its statutory duties, for example in relation to the 'Prevent' strategy and safeguarding.
- The provider has a culture of safeguarding that facilitates effective arrangements to: identify learners who may need early help or who are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming or exploitation; help learners reduce their risk of harm by securing the support they need, or referring in a timely way to those who have the expertise to help.

Key elements that Ofsted look for in relation to digital safeguarding:

- The identification of children at risk for child protection/ mental health issues.
- An effective strategy for tackling bullying including cyberbullying.
- School DSL responsible and trained in safeguarding.
- A safe digital environment.
- Staff understanding of the risks of the digital environment.
- Pupil understanding of the risks of the digital environment.
- The views of parents of the school approach to safeguarding.
- The approach of school governance to safeguarding.

Ofsted will look for evidence that your school/college is using the statutory guidance provided in KCSIE³ 2018, Working Together to Safeguard Children⁴ (WTSC) and the Prevent duty⁵ guidance. They will use Inspecting Safeguarding for the early years⁶, education and skills settings alongside the new Education Inspection Framework⁸ from September 2019.





During an Ofsted inspection, Ofsted will check that school/college policies include appropriate online safety provision.



2.1 Inspecting safeguarding in the early years, education and skills settings - the key areas related to online safety

This advisory document which was last updated in May 2019 sets out the expectations of what inspectors need to look for when evaluating safeguarding in a school. Key references in this include:

What schools should be protecting against

(paragraph 10):

- Sexual abuse
- Bullying and online bullying
- Racist abuse
- Disability and homophobic or transphobic abuse
- Peer on peer abuse
- Radicalisation and/ or extremist behaviour
- Child sexual exploitation
- Child criminal exploitation and county lines
- Risks linked to using technology and social media including online grooming, radicalisation, and the accessing or creating of inappropriate content such as sexting
- Teenage relationship abuse
- Issues that may be specific to a local area or population, for example gang activity and youth violence

What makes safeguarding successful?

(paragraph 13):

“Leaders oversee the safe use of technology.. and take action immediately if they are concerned about bullying or children’s well-being.”

Evidence for early intervention (paragraph 16)

Leaders effectively identify those in need of “early help or are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming or exploitation”.

Looking for evidence (paragraph 19) (Online Specific)

“Staff, leaders and managers oversee the safe use of electronic and social media.. and take action immediately if they are concerned about bullying or risky behaviours.”

“Appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place to protect learners from potentially harmful online material.”

“Staff, leaders and managers understand the risks posed by adults or young people who use the internet to bully, groom or abuse children, learners and vulnerable adults; there are well-developed strategies in place to keep learners safe.”

“There is a clear approach to implementing the Prevent duty and keeping children and learners safe from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.”



3.0 The Evidence Ofsted Expects to See When Reviewing Safeguarding in Your School/College

Key evidence related to filtering and monitoring

The new inspection framework still allows for some inspections to take place with as little as 15 minutes notice if safeguarding concerns have been raised. It is therefore essential you are aware of all the evidence required and how to find it quickly.

The following checklist outlines what you need to have ready and why.

Evidence type	Evidence	Why is this important in evidence for online safeguarding?
Adherence of statutory guidelines	<p>Ofsted will check closely that your school/college has followed the advice in KCSIE (updated Sept 2018), WTSC (July 2018) and the Prevent duty.</p> <p>Adhering to all statutory guidelines for safeguarding.</p>	<p>Appropriate filtering and monitoring has been part of KCSIE guidance since 2016. You should make sure you have both currently functioning effectively.</p>
Policies	<p>The Education Act 2002⁹ requires your school/college to safeguard children. Policies should be in place to evidence this.</p> <p>Check that your relevant school/college policies, which may include a child protection policy, an anti-bullying policy, and an online safety policy, are up to date.</p> <p>Child protection policy Your school must have an individual child protection policy. Areas that should be protected from include:</p> <p>Online child abuse Peer on peer abuse Child sexual exploitation</p>	<p>Schools/colleges showing good practice will be able to show how online safety is integrated into numerous safety policies.</p> <p>Schools/colleges with good practice will be able to show how monitoring can play a part in their child protection policy as a method of identifying children at risk in the key areas listed.</p>

Evidence type	Evidence	Why is this important in evidence for online safeguarding?
Policies (continued)	<p>Child criminal exploitation Mental health issues Bullying Drug abuse Radicalisation and extremism Contextual safeguarding Sexting</p> <p>Anti-bullying policy Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires your headteacher to ensure all forms of bullying are prevented.</p> <p>With only a small minority of students feeling able to talk to a teacher if they are experiencing online bullying, your school can show Ofsted it has measures in place to identify risks by using an effective online reporting system.</p> <p>Online safety policy All-encompassing policy covering the whole digital environment in school.</p>	<p>Active monitoring will pick up on any bullying behaviour across the digital environment in real-time, whether this be the online digital environment or offline, i.e. Word documents. It is completely discreet and only records evidence when it is triggered.</p> <p>An effective online safety policy will show Ofsted that you understand the importance of online safety in school and update it regularly. KCSIE advises using an online safety tool such as the 360 safe tool to help you create your online strategy.</p>
Record keeping of child protection concerns	<p>Clear record keeping of child protection concerns is of vital importance to Ofsted. They need to see that you are tracking, following up and resolving safeguarding concerns.</p>	<p>Good practice could include online incidents relating to child protection appearing in your child protection records. You could also show the identification of patterns and trends you may have identified through your online solutions.</p>
Reducing workload for staff	<p>The new Ofsted framework requires your school to show how you make efforts to reduce workload for staff.</p>	<p>A fully managed monitoring solution is a significant time saving capability for a DSL and is evidence to Ofsted that you have made efforts to reduce workload.</p>

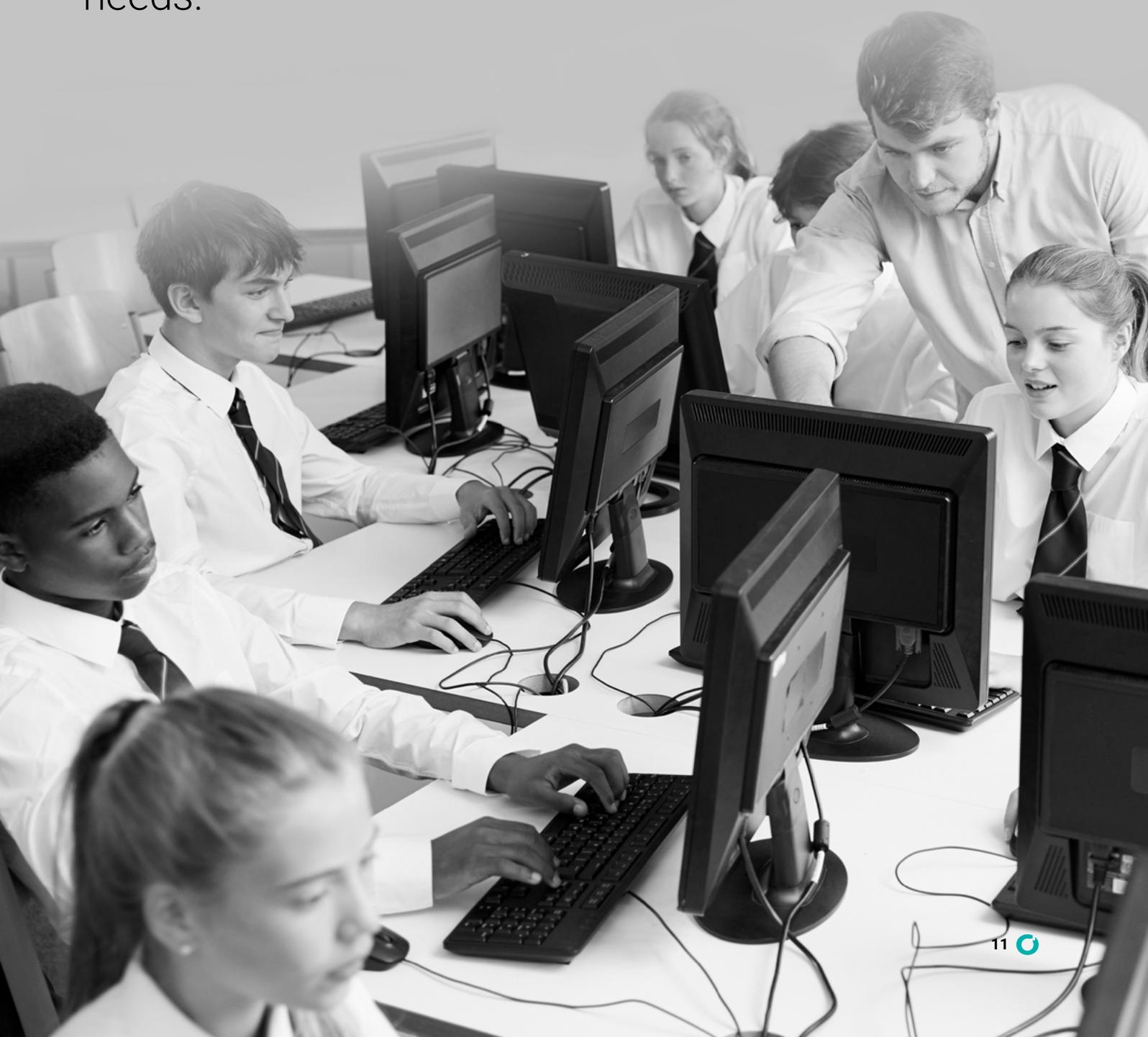


Evidence type	Evidence	Why is this important in evidence for online safeguarding?
<p>The Prevent duty</p> <p>(Some schools will mention their individual approach to the Prevent duty within their child protection policy, others will have a separate policy.)</p>	<p>The Prevent duty was introduced as part of the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 and all schools are legally required to implement it. Last updated in April 2019, the Prevent duty Guidance¹⁰ advises that schools must ensure; “children are safe from terrorist and extremist material when accessing the internet in school, including by establishing appropriate levels of filtering”.</p>	<p>Your school must be able to show that it protects students from accessing content that could help them research and partake in extremist activity. Filtering and monitoring is a crucial demonstration of this.</p> <p>If you have an effective filtering system, it will be continuously updated and integrate with lists issued by the home office. A good filtering system will use real-time content analysis.</p> <p>Effective monitoring works as a safety-net to pick up any activity not detected by filtering and for any online behaviour that shows signs of extremist views.</p>
<p>Illegal online content</p>	<p>Your school must show that pupils are unable to access illegal online content such as child abuse images.</p>	<p>Good practice would be to follow the UK Safer Internet Centre guidance by checking your filtering provider is a member of IWF and block access to child abuse images and content (CAIC). They will also integrate lists published by the home office to block illegal terrorist content.</p>
<p>Inappropriate online content</p>	<p>The UK Safer Internet Centre guidance¹¹ linked in KCSIE advises schools to protect access from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discrimination Drugs/substance abuse Extremism Malware/hacking Pornography Piracy and copyright theft Self-harm 	<p>Ofsted understands that every school is unique and wants to know that your school understands what types of inappropriate content should be controlled for your pupils.</p> <p>An effective filtering system will be agile and will not be reliant on block lists that could become out of date quickly.</p> <p>Due to new websites coming up all the time, no filtering system can be 100% guaranteed. An effective monitoring system will monitor the words on a website and send an alert to a DSL if a pupil accesses content they shouldn't.</p>

Evidence type	Evidence	Why is this important in evidence for online safeguarding?
Digital curriculum	<p>Evidence that filtering is age appropriate, granular and that the curriculum is not restricted by a locked down internet.</p> <p>It was recognised by Ofsted in 2010¹² that pupils who access digital systems through managed networks have safer outcomes than those with locked down systems. More recently, KCSIE has added to its online safety section,</p> <p>“Whilst it is essential that governing bodies and proprietors ensure that appropriate filters and monitoring systems are in place, they should be careful that “over blocking” does not lead to unreasonable restrictions.”</p>	<p>Filtering enables schools to allow access to the internet so that pupils can receive a wide and fulfilling curriculum.</p> <p>Providers will vary but often schools can achieve a granular approach so that children of different key stages receive a different experience.</p>
Digital safeguarding lead	<p>KCSIE 2018 clarified the DSL has responsibility for online safety.</p> <p>Ofsted will expect to see how your school is managing online safety and how you are following up on incidents.</p>	<p>It is important that your school DSL understands how filtering and monitoring is carried out in the school and that they take responsibility for any reports of misuse and activity that could highlight risk concerns.</p> <p>DSLs reflecting good practice will be trained appropriately and be up to date in understanding issues such as peer on peer abuse and sexting.</p>



By shifting the focus away from outcomes, Ofsted hopes to reverse the incentive for schools to put overall results ahead of individual children's needs.²



4.0 Inadequate v Outstanding

The Types of Safeguarding Issues That Can Affect Your Grade

It's important to reflect on how Ofsted might regard your policies, procedures and processes for safeguarding, and your implementation of each.

A useful exercise is to view the comments made from real Ofsted reports¹³ for schools inspected in the last 12 months and compare those made for inadequate and outstanding ratings. These comments will give you an idea of the types of reasons Ofsted give for each rating and help you benchmark your own provision.

Note: All comments have been included for learning purposes only and have been anonymised to protect confidentiality.

Approach to bullying/discrimination

Ofsted graded: **Inadequate**

Inspections that received an inadequate rating showed concern that pupils do not feel safe nor do they feel able to report their concerns to a teacher. Some reports mentioned that although bullying was a recognised problem amongst parents and students, the school leadership and governance did not identify it as a problem. The reports also suggest that the reluctance of pupils to come forward can mean that even when schools have an effective policy, the strategy is not implemented since it hasn't been identified as a problem in the first place.

"Some pupils and parents express concern about bullying and fights at the school. The school's records and inspection evidence do not indicate that this is a significant problem."

"Senior leaders lack oversight of whole-school issues such as exclusions, racist incidents, bullying and behaviour. This limits their ability to identify and tackle patterns of concern."

"Bullying incidents are too frequent."

Ofsted graded: **Outstanding**

School records show that bullying is very rare. An electronic reporting system records behaviour incidents. Leaders monitor and analyse reports closely to check for trends in behaviour. Pupils say that they are safe at school, that there is no bullying.

"Pupils say that they feel safe. They know about different forms of bullying, including those presented by technology and social media."

How could digital safeguard monitoring and filtering help?

Digital safeguard monitoring helps schools to detect bullying/discrimination they may be unaware of. Smoothwall's research found that only 5% of pupils would tell a teacher if they were being bullied yet 95% of teachers would rely on a pupil to tell them.

Many Ofsted reports mentioned that when schools are aware of a situation of bullying, they are able to manage the situation effectively. Digital safeguard monitoring can help identify the risk in the first place. Alongside that, web filtering can effectively restrict the access to areas pupils commonly use to bully students online.



Approach to identifying risk/protecting from harm

Ofsted graded: **Inadequate**

Recent reports from schools rated inadequate often do not have the necessary vigilance to keep children safe. They are often lacking in robust systems to keep pupils secure. Schools need to identify students at risk more effectively.

“Leaders are not sufficiently vigilant in identifying when pupils may be at risk of abuse or neglect.”

“Safeguarding is ineffective. Pupils are not supervised well enough. Not all pupils learn how to be safe, including when online and when out in the community.”

“Pupils are exposed to avoidable risk of harm. The culture of safeguarding is weak.”

“Leaders have not considered the well-being and safety of staff in their improvement plans.”

“As a matter of urgency, leaders and trustees should make sure that pupils are safeguarded by: assessing risks to pupils’ safety, including those related to extremism and radicalisation.”

Ofsted graded: **Outstanding**

In schools rated outstanding, reports often talk about robust systems being in place and safeguarding staff being trained effectively. The school understands how to detect risk and act on it effectively.

“The systems to safeguard pupils are robust and rigorously monitored by leaders. Safeguarding concerns raised by staff result in swift actions by leaders.”

“They are vigilant about potential risks.”

“The designated safeguarding leader has established effective systems which put the safety and well-being of pupils at the centre of the school’s work.”

“The policy clearly identifies roles and responsibilities and provides detailed guidance on how to recognise signs of neglect and abuse, and how to raise safeguarding concerns.”

How could digital safeguard monitoring¹⁵ help?

Digital safeguard monitoring can help identify students at risk. Often students are unable to voice their thoughts to a teacher or a peer and problems may only come out through secondary issues such as self-harm.

Effective digital safeguard monitoring uses an intelligent approach to flag alarming behaviour of children and adults. By identifying risks at an early stage, a DSL can be alerted and the necessary help secured for the individual much sooner than might otherwise be the case.

Alongside that, filtering will ensure that pupils are protected from accessing harmful online content. An effective system will include content analysis in real-time and be able to report if access has shown a safeguarding risk.

Approach to statutory guidelines/policy

Ofsted graded: **Inadequate**

Schools receiving an inadequate rating in this area often fail to appropriately include statutory guidelines in their safeguarding culture. Some schools do not appear to be up to date with statutory guidelines and others, although up to date, are not implementing them properly through their policies. Pupils are deemed to be at risk of harm from a lack of safety.

“Leaders have not made sure that their safeguarding policies meet statutory requirements and that safeguarding procedures promote the welfare of all pupils.”

“The school’s ‘Prevent’ duty policy states that a risk assessment would be carried out. This had not been done.”

“Leaders and managers have failed to ensure that the school’s safeguarding policies and practices meet statutory requirements and are rigorously followed by all staff.”

"They should promote the safety of all pupils, including those who are vulnerable and need early help, by ensuring that all safeguarding practice follows statutory guidance."

Ofsted graded: Outstanding

In schools rated outstanding, statutory guidelines are carefully followed. The school's policies are up to date and meet recent requirements. They are checked regularly by senior staff.

"Governors take their statutory responsibilities very seriously. The governor with oversight of safeguarding has been instrumental in ensuring that policies and procedures are tight and that any issues brought to her attention are dealt with immediately."

"School policies reflect the latest requirements."

"You and the trustees recently revised the child protection and safeguarding policy to make sure that it reflects the latest published guidance. The policy clearly identifies roles and responsibilities and provides detailed guidance on how to recognise signs of neglect and abuse, and how to raise safeguarding concerns."

"The safeguarding director makes regular visits to the school and ensures that policies and procedures are adhered to and that all statutory responsibilities are met."

The importance of statutory guidelines

KCSIE³ introduced filtering and monitoring into school and college requirements in September 2016. The DfE recognise that filtering and monitoring can be vital in keeping students protected from harm. Schools showing good practice will have integrated the UK Safer Internet Centre's guidance in their appropriate monitoring¹⁴ and appropriate filtering¹⁰ checklists.

Approach to recording of incidents

Ofsted graded: Inadequate

The lack of effective record keeping is a common theme amongst Ofsted reports of schools rated inadequate. Leaders lack evidence in showing oversight of allegations and incidents of bullying. Child protection records are not maintained at an appropriate level.

"Should ensure that child protection records are well maintained, including details of actions taken and any resolution or necessary next steps."

"Need to use the information contained within records to build up an overview of the circumstances of individual vulnerable pupils and to plan appropriate actions in order to meet their needs."

"Due to fragmented recording systems, it was not possible for leaders to readily build a clear picture of the case histories and risks relating to individual vulnerable pupils."

"There is no evidence that senior leaders have effective oversight of allegations or incidents of bullying."

Ofsted graded: Outstanding

Schools rated outstanding have detailed child protection records which are reviewed regularly. The schools show evidence of behaviour logging and responding quickly to identified trends.

"School records show that bullying is very rare. An electronic reporting system records behaviour incidents. Leaders monitor and analyse reports closely to check for trends in behaviour. Leaders respond quickly and effectively when trends are identified."

"Logs of behaviour incidents and analysis of behaviours show that the use of physical interventions has significantly reduced."

"Safeguarding records are thorough, detailed and reviewed regularly to ensure that they meet statutory requirements."

"Records relating to child protection are detailed and include a chronological list of events and actions taken."

Recording monitoring and filtering child protection incidents

Monitoring and filtering can help you to record online incidents and identify trends. This includes picking up on individual risk concerns and keeping a profile of student incidents over time so that changes in behaviour can be recognised and recorded. All incidents of child protection and mental health that are picked up through a schools digital safeguarding system should be recorded in the school child protection records. Some online safeguarding solutions are able to provide detailed evidence including screenshots of incidents that have occurred. These can be useful for evidence in disciplinaries/safeguarding meetings.

Approach to leadership

Ofsted graded: **Inadequate**

Often schools rated inadequate by Ofsted show that leaders have not been vigilant in safeguarding. They are not able to identify patterns or trends and are not able to identify risk effectively. Some leaders do not follow appropriate safeguarding procedures and are sometimes not suitably trained.

“Leaders with responsibility for safeguarding and pupils’ welfare have not been sufficiently vigilant in using recorded concerns to identify pupils who are at risk of abuse.”

“Senior leaders do not analyse and evaluate key aspects of the school’s performance, including behaviour, bullying, racist incidents and exclusions. They are therefore unable to identify patterns and unable to act to address issues which recur.”

“Pupils’ welfare is compromised because leaders do not understand or assess potential risks thoroughly.”

Ofsted graded: **Outstanding**

In schools rated outstanding, leaders have established a strong safeguarding culture, they act on concerns very quickly, and have effective systems in place.

“Leaders have established a strong culture of safeguarding in the school. The designated safeguarding leader has established effective systems which put the safety and well-being of pupils at the centre of the school’s work.”

“The school’s ‘15 minute’ rule means that safeguarding concerns are promptly raised with the designated safeguarding leader.”

“The systems to safeguard pupils are robust and are monitored rigorously by leaders, who take swift action when safeguarding concerns are raised.”

Why is this important for digital safeguarding?

KCSIE provides clarity that the school DSL is responsible for online safety concerns and training. It is important that a school DSL has the correct training to understand the risks of online safety to pupils and has a good understanding of how monitoring and filtering is used effectively. The UK Safer Internet Centre guidance linked in KCSIE 2018 reminds schools that it is the responsibility of the DSL to make sure any concerns shown in the digital environment are acted upon effectively.

“Monitoring systems are there to safeguard children and the responsibility therefore should lie with the school leadership/governors and Designated Safeguarding Lead.”¹⁴

Approach to governance

Ofsted expects governors to have a full understanding of the safeguarding requirements for their school and that they are being implemented effectively. Inspectors look for evidence of governors challenging school leaders on their safeguarding arrangements and ensuring protection is maximised.

Ofsted graded: **Inadequate**

In schools rated inadequate, governors are not checking safeguarding effectively and are not challenging school leaders in the effectiveness of their safeguarding approach.

"Governors have not checked that the school's systems and practices to safeguard pupils are effective."

"Governors do not have a clear enough understanding about the significance of some local safeguarding risks, and the dangers these pose to pupils, including drug-dealing and gang-related ('county lines') activity."

"Governors are not doing enough to hold leaders to account for the effectiveness of their work to minimise the potential risks to the school community."

"Trustees have failed in their duty of care for pupils."

Ofsted graded: **Outstanding**

In schools showing outstanding practice, governors are fully aware of the policies and procedures required for safeguarding and check that they are being implemented. Governors have up to date training and challenge leaders to ensure their school approach is working.

"Staff and governors undertake appropriate training which is up to date. This includes training about keeping pupils safe from radicalisation and extremism, child sexual exploitation and neglect."

"Governors are proud and ambitious for the school and provide strong and effective leadership. They analyse information in detail and challenge leaders robustly."

"The governor with oversight of safeguarding has been instrumental in ensuring that policies and procedures are tight and that any issues brought to

How does this relate to online safety?

Governors should be aware of all the statutory information that relates to online safety. They should be aware that Ofsted Safeguarding in the early years, education and skills settings, and the requirements for schools set out in KCSIE state they must have an appropriate level of monitoring and filtering. They should be able to see that digital systems are working effectively. They should be mindful of how effectively schools are detecting pupils at risk of harm and the level of safety for pupils in the online environment.



5.0 Digital Monitoring and Filtering - Questions You May Be Asked

Monitoring and filtering can have an impact on many different aspects of an Ofsted inspection. Find below a handy list of the kind of questions Ofsted could ask you and why.

Monitoring

- Is safeguarding practice effective in implementation?
- How often is your school/college's safeguarding policies and related policies reviewed?
- Are your leaders aware how to identify and respond to online safety concerns?
- Are your staff trained to identify when a pupil may be at risk of neglect, abuse or exploitation and do they know how to report concerns? Do they evidence those concerns?
- Are your children safe from discrimination and bullying?
- Do your children understand how to stay safe online?
- Do your leaders understand how to identify if children are at risk of County Lines?
- How does your school/college monitor for incidents of peer on peer abuse?
- How effectively does your school/college protect children from extremism and radicalisation?
- Does your DSL have enough time, training and resource to fulfil the demands required of the role?
- Looking at your child protection record, can you tell me how this incident of peer on peer abuse was dealt with in more detail? (Your school will be expected to show a record of incidents, and evidence of how they were acted upon, which external agencies were involved etc.)
- How do your leaders identify children and learners who may need early help or are at risk of neglect, abuse, grooming or exploitation? Give examples.

Reasons why Ofsted may ask these questions

Ofsted want to ensure your school safeguarding is effective, including the online aspect of safeguarding. They expect to see a correct understanding of statutory guidelines and that correct policies are in place to implement them. They want to see evidence that your school effectively identifies risk and checks that effective action has been taken.

Monitoring helps identify students at risk. Effective solutions are up to date and understand the risks that schools need to detect. They can categorise risk and work at speed so that serious concerns can be raised and actioned quickly. Monitoring can identify students at risk by their online behaviour and can pick up concerns that a school may not otherwise be aware of.

Ofsted are likely to talk to a range of staff members, governors, and pupils and will ask for feedback through parent view or sometimes speak to parents directly.

Sometimes there can be a disconnect between what the school thinks the safeguarding culture is and the reality experienced by pupils and teachers. For example, teachers may feel there is no bullying in the school, but parents and pupils may see it as a problem. Digital monitoring systems can be effective in identifying bullying without pupils having to tell anyone.

Monitoring in action – Outstanding v Inadequate responses

Example	Level of safeguarding: Inadequate	Level of safeguarding: Outstanding
A child types to a friend at school that they're going to attack another classmate after school.	<p>This incident is logged by the digital school monitoring system.</p> <p>The child attacks the classmate after school.</p> <p>The school DSL discovers the log 5 days after the incident.</p>	<p>This incident is logged by the digital school monitoring system in real-time.</p> <p>The school DSL is alerted and takes action.</p> <p>The incident is recorded as a concern, but the attack is prevented.</p> <p>The school follows up with the school discipline policy and the students involved are carefully monitored.</p>

Filtering

- What are your school/college's procedures for ensuring filtering is kept up to date?
- Do your school/college's filtering systems protect students from accessing online radicalisation content?
- Do your governors understand how filtering is used within the school?
- How does your school ensure students can access the internet in an age appropriate way?
- Describe how your school educates children and young people to build knowledge, skills and capability when it comes to online safety? How do you assess its effectiveness?
- How does your school effectively protect vulnerable children from accessing harmful content?
- How are the risks of social media tackled within your school?
- How does your school protect children with special educational needs from the dangers of online actions?
- How is data held securely?
- Does your school have an acceptable use policy in place?
- What policies does your school have in place to ensure the internet is used safely?
- How does your school enforce acceptable use?
- How do your pupils learn about their digital footprint and what should they be aware of online?
- Do your pupils know how to stay safe from online predators?

Reasons why Ofsted may ask these questions

Ofsted inspectors want to ensure that your school is effectively keeping children away from inappropriate and illegal content. They will look for a balanced curriculum that integrates effectively with technology. Schools with effective filtering use a granular approach by age so that the curriculum does not become restricted by over-blocking.

Ofsted wants to assess how your pupils are taught to stay safe online and how effective your policies are in reality.

A locked down system has shown to not be as effective in keeping pupils safe as a system that is managed properly.¹⁵

It is a legal requirement for schools to protect students from access to extremism and radicalisation. Effective filtering is vital in fulfilling this requirement. Systems will only be effective if they are kept up-to-date, integrate with Home Office issued lists and use real-time content analysis.

Filtering in action – Outstanding v Inadequate responses

Example	Level of safeguarding: Inadequate	Level of safeguarding: Outstanding
A child tries to view far-right extremist content on their school computer system.	<p>The child is able to view the content and the school is not aware.</p> <p>This could lead to the child becoming aware of ways to action far right views such as finding meetings to attend outside school.</p>	<p>The child is unable to view the extremist content.</p> <p>A log shows that the child was trying to view extremist content.</p> <p>The school actions the Prevent protocol to establish if this is a child in need of help.</p>

6.0 Evaluating Your Monitoring and Filtering

Where are you now? Where do you need to be?

KCSIE advises every school/college to complete a self-evaluation of their online safety. Below is a practical guide to help you evaluate your monitoring and filtering together with a template to help you plan the improvements you need to make.

What to consider when evaluating your monitoring and filtering.

1. Responsibility for online safeguarding
2. Policies for online safeguarding
3. Recording of online incidents
4. Acceptable use policy
5. Digital literacy
6. Data protection
7. Filtering (technical aspect)
8. Monitoring (technical aspect)

Where are you now?

Using the digital safeguarding checklist on pages 22 and 23, map where your school/college currently sits in successful digital safeguarding.

Rate each question between 1-4. 1= low, 4 = high.



The demands placed on the physical eyes and ears of teachers far exceed their ability to identify all but the most obvious risks, and puts the organisation at odds with both student needs and statutory guidelines.



Digital safeguarding checklist

Rate each question between 1-4. 1= low, 4 = high

Responsibility for online safeguarding		1-4 Grading
1.	Have you defined the responsibilities of online safeguarding within your school/college?	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	Is your DSL trained sufficiently in online safety to manage any issues that arise?	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	Are all staff trained in online safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	Is there an online safety group within school?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governance		
5.	Would your governors have a good understanding of how your monitoring and filtering work in school?	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	Have your governors reviewed your policies and procedures in online safeguarding?	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	Do the governors challenge leaders sufficiently in online safeguarding?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies for online safeguarding		
8.	Do your policies incorporate online safety in their procedures for identifying students at risk?	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Do your policies incorporate how monitoring and filtering will be used effectively to protect the school online environment?	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	Do your policies have a clear procedure for tackling bullying including cyber-bullying?	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	Do your policies have a clear procedure for protecting children from radicalisation and extremism by implementing the Prevent duty?	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.	Have your policies been updated to ensure the risks of peer-on-peer abuse, county lines and other issues raised in KCSIE?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting of online incidents		
13.	Are online incidents recorded effectively in school records and is there evidence of successful follow-up?	<input type="checkbox"/>
14.	Have the relevant agencies been informed if a child has shown signs of risk e.g. viewing extremist material or visiting websites about suicide?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acceptable use policy		
15.	Is there a clear acceptable use policy used within your school/college so that all members of the community are aware of correct usage?	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Does the school/college community understand the sanctions that might be used in times of misuse?	<input type="checkbox"/>



Digital literacy **1-4 Grading**

- 17. Do pupils learn how to use the internet effectively while staying safe?
- 18. Do pupils understand the risks they may face online?
- 19. Do pupils understand their digital footprint and how it is difficult to erase?
- 20. Do pupils access the internet in an age appropriate way?

Data protection

- 21. Is all online data both digitally and physically secure?
- 22. Does the school community all understand that GDPR rules should never stop a safeguarding concern being followed up appropriately?

Filtering

- 23. Do your filtering systems effectively protect children from accessing illegal content such as extremist content and illegal images?
- 24. Do your filtering systems effectively manage access to inappropriate content or websites that could involve harmful communication?
- 25. Is internet use logged effectively?
- 26. Does your filtering solution stop users from circumventing the acceptable use policy using anonymous proxies?
- 27. Is your filtering working from real-time analysis looking at the content, context and construction of a page rather than block lists that could be out of date?
- 28. Does your filtering have granular access?

Monitoring

- 29. Is a safeguarding leader monitoring any concerning digital activity that suggests there may be a risk concern?
- 30. Are risk concerns monitored in an appropriate time-frame for response?
- 31. Does your online monitoring check for a range of risk concerns including both child protection concerns and mental health concerns?
- 32. Is activity monitored closely to identify any trends or patterns that build up over time?

Social media

- 33. Does the school have a social media policy?
- 34. Are the filtering and monitoring settings used together effectively to restrict or monitor any activity that might put/show signs at/of risk?

Evaluation results

1 = Outstanding practice
2 = Good

3 = Improving
4 = Early stages

7.0 How to Plan For Improvement

Using the results from your evaluation, use the table below to roadmap your journey to improved safeguarding. You can share your completed roadmap with Ofsted to evidence your commitment and progress.

	Early stages Stage 4	Improving Stage 3	Good Stage 2	Outstanding practice Stage 1
Responsibility for online	<p>There is no designated lead for online safeguarding.</p> <p>The school/ college has not given online safety training to all.</p> <p>There is no online safety group in school.</p>	<p>There is a designated person for online safeguarding.</p> <p>Leaders are aware that online safety needs to be considered within the school.</p>	<p>There is a designated online safety person in the school and an online safety committee.</p> <p>Staff have all received online safety training. Online safety is sometimes included in parent newsletters/ information evenings.</p> <p>The DSL understands how the online systems are effective in safeguarding.</p>	<p>There is a designated safeguarding person, an online safety committee that meets regularly and all staff are regularly trained in online safety.</p> <p>Parents and pupils are also regularly updated and aware of their responsibility in keeping the community safe.</p> <p>The DSL plays a lead role in checking the digital safeguarding systems in school.</p>
Policies for online safeguarding	<p>No online safety policy is in place. Online safety is not mentioned in other school policies.</p>	<p>Online safety is referred to in relevant policies such as the child protection policy, the anti-bullying policy or the Prevent policy.</p> <p>References are made to monitoring and filtering. No independent online safety policy.</p>	<p>A clear online safety policy is in place that outlines how all the school community is included and responsible for online safeguarding.</p> <p>The policy shows how monitoring and filtering protect pupils from harm.</p>	<p>A well-defined online safety policy is in place that incorporates all aspects of online safety including appropriate monitoring and filtering.</p> <p>The policy has been created by involving all areas of the school/ college community including pupils, parents, governors, school leaders, safeguarding staff and other staff.</p>

	Early stages Stage 4	Improving Stage 3	Good Stage 2	Outstanding practice Stage 1
Recording of online incidents	There is no clear method of recording incidents of inappropriate access, searches or activity that is identifying risk.	Some online incidents are recorded in safeguarding records but there is no clear strategy for follow up or identification of trends.	Online incidents are treated in the same way as other safeguarding incidents and are followed up in a suitably time appropriate way. Some tracking of trends and patterns of behaviour occurs.	Online incidents are treated in the same way as other safeguarding incidents and are followed up in a suitably time appropriate way depending on the incident. The school successfully identify trends and patterns of behaviour. They update their procedures regularly based on recent activity.
Acceptable use policy	There is no acceptable use policy in place.	A basic acceptable use policy is in planning or in place. Pupil understanding of the policy is limited.	A clear acceptable use policy is in place. Pupils and staff understand the policy and revisit it regularly. A number of staff have been involved in creating the policy.	A clear acceptable use policy is in place. Pupils and staff understand the policy and revisit it regularly. Parents have been involved in creating the acceptable use policy and have agreed to its implementation.
Digital literacy	Digital literacy is limited. The internet is locked down to avoid any risks. This limits the teaching options available.	Digital literacy is beginning to improve with cross-curricular links being used to maximise the most effective resources.	Pupils are fully engaged with the online world as an aid that extends their learning within school. They understand risks that they face online and know to be mindful of their digital footprint. Filtering is used in a granular way so that children can have access to age appropriate resources.	The school have explored the framework, 'Educated for a connected world' ¹⁶ or similar and pupils cover the use of the digital world thoroughly.

	Early stages Stage 4	Improving Stage 3	Good Stage 2	Outstanding practice Stage 1
Data protection	School/college has not checked the data protection advisory for their monitoring and filtering and other systems they use.	School/college has started to write to providers to check their data protection policies.	School/college has checked that their provider has a data protection policy in place.	School/college has checked their provider has a data protection policy and the DfE recommended self-certification for data protection. ¹⁷
Monitoring	Online safety monitoring has not been implemented or is planned for the future.	The school/college has a basic form of monitoring in place. In small settings it may be a teacher checking over the shoulder. In larger settings it may be the checking of logs with low priority or risk attached to the information.	The school has digital safeguard monitoring that checks for risks in the digital environment. Risks are prioritised by severity. DSLs may have to check through a lot of data and remove many false positives.	The school has a managed digital safeguarding solution. Monitoring of the digital environment occurs all day in real-time and DSLs are informed of any incidents. False positives are removed.
Filtering	There is no/ limited filtering in the school/college.	Filtering is implemented using recommended block lists. Content could be categorised more effectively.	Filtering of illegal and inappropriate content is successfully implemented. Pupils are able to access the necessary resources to access the whole curriculum without unnecessary blocking.	Filtering is effective in managing illegal and inappropriate content successfully. Operating at a granular level, pupils are able to access the resources they need at the appropriate age. Anonymous proxies are blocked to prevent pupils from circumventing acceptable use.
Social media	Pupils can access social media freely with no management or monitoring.	Pupils are unable to access any social media in school. Filtering is able to block some forms of social media.	All access to social media is blocked to prevent harmful communication.	A managed social media system is in place with older years being able to have read-only access. Monitoring picks up any activity that shows risk.

7.1 Creating a strategy for improvement

Map out your Monitoring and Filtering School Improvement Plan by using the table below. You should be able to highlight what your school needs to do to improve your monitoring and filtering systems.

	Current stage and evidence	Future plan for improvement	Time-frame	Target stage
Responsibility for online safeguarding				
Policies for online safeguarding				
Recording of online incidents				
Acceptable use policy				
Digital literacy				
Data protection				
Technical monitoring				
Technical filtering				

Appendices

Further reading

You may also wish to download:



Safeguard Monitoring: A Complete Guide to Active Monitoring for Schools

What is monitoring, why do Ofsted require it, and how can you integrate it into a busy safeguarding strategy.

Available at: <https://smoothwall.com/active-monitoring-schools>



Safeguard Monitoring: How to Prepare Your Case for Funding

A step by step guide for DSLs, Head Teachers, Principals and anyone responsible for ensuring a compliant digital monitoring provision within their School.

Available at: <https://smoothwall.com/how-to-create-a-case-for-funding>



Web Filtering in Education: Cloud, On-premise or Hybrid?

A complete guide designed to give IT Leaders in Education thorough insight into the many deployment options available to best suit their network needs.

Available at: <https://smoothwall.com/web-filtering-deployment>



About Smoothwall

Smoothwall is the leading digital safeguarding solutions provider in UK Education. 10,000 schools, colleges and academies depend on our filtering and monitoring technologies to keep their students safe and their education organisations compliant.

From our humble beginnings in 2000 we have been dedicated to empowering educational organisations to digitally safeguard the young people in their care. Our solutions are innovative and pioneering and developed from the ground up to meet and exceed the legislative requirements set out by the Department for Education, as outlined in the Prevent duty and Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Digital safeguarding solutions were historically seen as security products to be selected, deployed and managed by a school/college's ICT department. And while the ownership remains generally true, the meteoric rise in the use of the internet as a vital tool for learning has firmly placed digital safeguarding on the agenda of most educational stakeholders.

Web filters today are not tools for blocking content. They are a means of improving learning outcomes by enabling students to freely access rich internet content, protected by granular filtering, controls and alerts to ensure any risks and safeguarding issues are quickly and accurately identified. Schools/colleges favour Smoothwall because of our understanding of this core concept and our pioneering solutions that support it.

Where Smoothwall Filter dynamically analyses content and intelligently blocks harmful content, Smoothwall Monitor is installed onto the school/college's computers where it analyses on-screen content and any keystrokes made.

Words or phrases indicating the user may be at risk of harming or being harmed are captured in a screen shot and sent to the DSL for analysis (or the Smoothwall team if it's a managed service). Behavioural profiling by monitoring words over time provides an added level of vigilance to enable an early stage help intervention.

As digital learning becomes more commonplace in the classroom, so does safeguarding issues such as mental health, cyberbullying, radicalisation, child sexual exploitation and others. The demands placed on the physical eyes and ears of teachers far exceed their ability to identify all but the most obvious risks, and puts the organisation at odds with both student needs and statutory guidelines.

Smoothwall's robust filtering and monitoring provision work in tandem to keep your young people safe and your organisation compliant with the legislation, guidelines and recommendations placed upon it.

Our partners

Smoothwall are members of the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and implement the Child Abuse Image Content list of domains and URLs. Smoothwall also implements the police assessed list of unlawful terrorist content, produced on behalf of the Home Office.

Smoothwall exclusively partners with National Online Safety to offer customers their award-winning e-safety training for the whole school community. We also partner with EduGeek and regularly consult Headteachers, Teachers, DSLs, IT leaders and a range of supporting bodies across UK Education.

Contact us

If you would like an informal discussion about any aspect of your monitoring or filtering, or would like to arrange a no obligation demonstration, our specialist team are on standby to help.

Please contact us.

Tel: +44 (0)870 1999 500

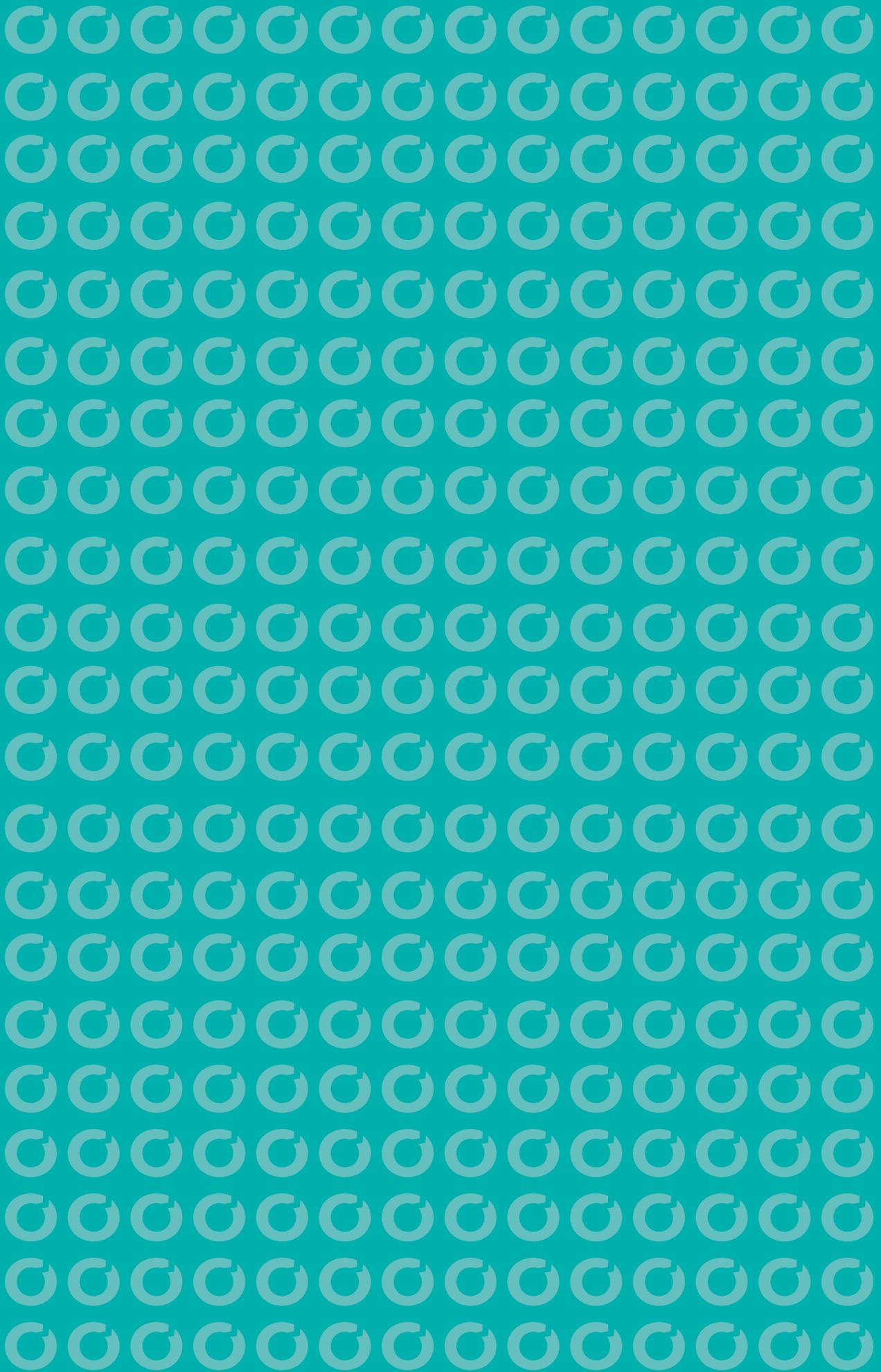
Email: enquiries@smoothwall.com

Web: www.smoothwall.com/contact-us

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Smoothwall

Avalon House
1 Savannah Way
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS10 1AB

Tel: 44(0) 870 1999 500

Email: enquiries@smoothwall.com

smoothwall.com

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