



South Hunsley School



South Hunsley School are spotting and helping at-risk students earlier with Smoothwall Monitor.

As a leading school and sixth form college within The Education Alliance MAT, South Hunsley is dedicated to providing a nurturing environment where students can be inspired and are able to aspire.

Challenges

Chris Major is South Hunsley's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), and has a strong focus on digital safety across the school. South Hunsley had used Smoothwall Filter for some time but Chris and his team knew that filtering, though essential, was not a catch all in digital safety. They knew that a monitoring solution would enable them to spot children in

need of help much earlier and in turn provide the right support and avoid escalation.

Explains Chris: "We were blocking harmful content with filtering and that was working very well but filtering doesn't allow us to instantly see children who may be at high risk. With filtering there will always be a delay between information being recorded and our ability to login and see it. We became concerned that students could fall through the gaps and that important warning signs may be missed."

Trialling Smoothwall Monitor

The team reviewed the monitoring solutions on the market but with budget and time being key considerations, it was important that the end solution could be proven and justified to the senior team. Chris decided to trial Smoothwall Monitor for a limited period. The trial was initially rolled out across the school's sixth form college, with a view for further expansion if the solution proved effective.

Continues Chris: “We needed a solution that would integrate into our existing systems, whilst also monitoring for any concerning behaviours automatically. Smoothwall Monitor promised to do just that, so we were keen to trial it and see if it delivered.”

As a busy safeguarding lead, Chris needed a solution that would flag high level issues and concerns in real-time.

The effectiveness of Smoothwall Monitor became apparent almost immediately when an at-risk student was identified – a student who may otherwise have gone unnoticed.

Chris explains: “During the trial period an incident was flagged via Smoothwall Monitor. In this particular situation a student typed some concerning thoughts into their machine. Smoothwall picked this up and flagged it as a high-level concern. Within minutes of the content being typed I received a phone call from the Smoothwall monitoring team. This meant we were able to get a member of staff on the ground to this individual and provide them with the support they needed quickly and efficiently.

“Without Smoothwall Monitor in this instance, we would have missed the warning signs and failed to effectively safeguard that child. When notified of the situation, the student’s parents were hugely grateful for the support we were able to offer. This incident within the trial period demonstrated the huge value monitoring offered for South Hunsley. Simply put, as a school we can’t afford to not invest in this service.”

An holistic approach to digital safeguarding

Shortly after this incident, Chris presented a case and secured funding for Smoothwall Monitor to be rolled out across the whole school and college.

Monitoring is now part of South Hunsley’s digital safeguarding strategy, and works in conjunction Smoothwall

Filter, with e-safety lessons and with an annual e-safety conference held by Chris and his team. These measures combine to ensure the school and college provide students with a safe online environment from which they can flourish and grow.

Chris adds: “What Smoothwall Monitor offers over and above anything else is its ability to sift through the noise and highlight real concerns – whether they’re online or simply just being typed into a device via notes or on a word document.

“We’re busy and so when high alert items are flagged we need more than just a notification. We need an email, we need a phone call. It is this added value that Smoothwall Monitor offers. I know that causes for concern will be flagged and urgent safeguarding risks won’t fall through the gaps.”

Protecting students and digital devices both online and offline

Chris is now a huge advocate for Smoothwall Monitor and encourages other schools, academies, colleges and trusts to consider the benefits of investing in digital monitoring.

He concludes: “Schools have to have filtering to block inappropriate content. But I’d also urge other DSLs to consider active monitoring too.

“The key for me is that I know that this product is flexible and offers more than just online monitoring. I’m impressed by its ability to review and pre-grade keystrokes as they happen, allowing the team to promptly identify concerns. This also includes capturing any concern that takes place on a computer including text chat and a Word document – whether offline or online. That kind of visibility is invaluable.





“We feel like we can trust Smoothwall with our safeguarding needs. The outcome really does match the promise.”

Smoothwall is a leading provider of digital safeguarding solutions. For more information, visit our website or get in touch with our team of experts.

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