



HOMEBROOK WOODS

Independent Special School

Ages 5–11 | Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Associated SEND

ONLINE SAFETY POLICY

**Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
DfE Filtering and Monitoring Standards (2024)**

Document Control

Policy Title	Online Safety Policy
Provision	Homebrook Woods
Policy Owner	Vonika Shelley
Role	Proprietor, Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approved by	Proprietor
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Next Review	July 2027

Related Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Regulation and Positive Support Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Health and Safety Policy
- Data Protection and Privacy Policy

- Filtering and Monitoring Procedures
 - Acceptable Use Agreements
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1. Policy Statement

Homebrook Woods recognises that digital technologies provide valuable opportunities to enhance teaching, learning, communication and independence. Alongside these benefits, online technologies also present safeguarding risks which require effective management.

Homebrook Woods is committed to creating a safe digital environment in which pupils can develop the knowledge, understanding and skills needed to use technology safely, responsibly and confidently.

Online safety forms an integral part of the wider safeguarding culture at Homebrook Woods. In accordance with **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026**, online safety is considered a safeguarding issue rather than solely an information technology matter.

Effective online safety arrangements include:

- age-appropriate education;
 - robust filtering and monitoring systems;
 - clear staff responsibilities;
 - effective supervision;
 - appropriate reporting procedures;
 - partnership with parents and carers.
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2. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- safeguard pupils whilst using digital technology;
 - promote responsible digital citizenship;
 - reduce risks associated with online activity;
 - ensure compliance with statutory safeguarding guidance;
 - support staff in responding appropriately to online safety concerns;
 - establish clear expectations for the safe use of technology.
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3. Legal Framework

This policy has been developed with reference to:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
 - Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended)
 - UK GDPR
 - Data Protection Act 2018
 - Prevent Duty Guidance
 - DfE Filtering and Monitoring Standards (2024)
 - Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance
 - Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes Guidance
 - Equality Act 2010
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4. Roles and Responsibilities

Proprietor

The Proprietor is responsible for ensuring that Homebrook Woods has appropriate online safety arrangements, including effective filtering and monitoring systems, suitable staff training and regular review of online safeguarding arrangements.

Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Headteacher and DSL are responsible for:

- overseeing online safeguarding arrangements;
 - responding to online safety concerns;
 - ensuring filtering and monitoring systems are effective;
 - managing safeguarding referrals where required;
 - ensuring staff receive appropriate training;
 - reviewing online safety incidents;
 - promoting a strong safeguarding culture.
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Staff

All staff are responsible for:

- modelling safe and professional technology use;
 - supervising pupils appropriately;
 - teaching online safety through the curriculum;
 - reporting concerns immediately;
 - following Acceptable Use Agreements;
 - maintaining professional boundaries online.
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Pupils

Pupils will be supported to:

- use technology safely;
- ask trusted adults for help;
- treat others respectfully online;
- protect personal information;
- understand age-appropriate online risks.

Expectations will always be adapted to each pupil's developmental level and communication needs.

Parents and Carers

Homebrook Woods values partnership with parents and carers in promoting online safety.

Parents and carers will be encouraged to:

- supervise children's online activity at home;
 - support age-appropriate internet use;
 - report concerns to Homebrook Woods;
 - reinforce online safety messages shared by the school.
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5. Online Safety Education

Online safety is taught as part of Homebrook Woods' wider curriculum and safeguarding provision.

Learning opportunities are embedded across the curriculum and are adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils.

Teaching will include:

- staying safe online;
- protecting personal information;
- healthy online relationships;
- recognising unsafe behaviour;
- respectful communication;
- cyberbullying;
- gaming safety;
- online scams;
- misinformation;
- digital wellbeing;
- asking trusted adults for help.

6. Online Safety for Pupils with SEND

Homebrook Woods recognises that pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and associated SEND may experience additional vulnerability when using digital technology.

Some pupils may:

- interpret language literally;
- have difficulty recognising manipulation;
- be more trusting of others;
- find social interactions online confusing;
- experience difficulties recognising risk;
- become highly focused on particular online interests.

Online safety education will therefore be differentiated through:

- visual supports;
- repetition;
- structured teaching;
- social stories where appropriate;
- practical activities;
- close adult supervision;
- explicit teaching of social understanding.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to ensure that every pupil can develop online safety skills appropriate to their individual needs.

7. Filtering and Monitoring

Homebrook Woods will maintain effective filtering and monitoring arrangements in accordance with the **DfE Filtering and Monitoring Standards (2024)**.

Filtering systems will help prevent access to inappropriate or harmful online content.

Monitoring arrangements will support the identification of safeguarding concerns, inappropriate online behaviour and potential risks to pupils.

Detailed operational procedures are set out within the separate **Filtering and Monitoring Procedures** document.

Filtering and monitoring arrangements will be reviewed regularly by the Proprietor.

8. Use of Digital Devices

Homebrook Woods will provide pupils with supervised access to digital technology where this supports learning.

Use of devices will be:

- age appropriate;
- supervised;
- risk assessed where necessary;
- monitored by staff.

The use of personal devices by pupils during the school day will only be permitted where authorised by the Headteacher.

Staff must use school technology professionally and in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Agreement.

9. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emerging Technologies

Homebrook Woods recognises that rapidly developing technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI), generative AI tools and digitally manipulated content, present new safeguarding opportunities and risks.

Staff will remain vigilant to risks associated with:

- AI-generated images;
- deepfakes;
- manipulated audio and video;
- online impersonation;
- misinformation;
- inappropriate use of AI tools.

Where appropriate, pupils will receive age-appropriate teaching to help them understand that not everything encountered online is genuine, accurate or trustworthy.

10. Cyberbullying

Homebrook Woods recognises that cyberbullying can have a significant impact on a child's emotional wellbeing, self-esteem and mental health.

Cyberbullying may include:

- abusive messages;
- online harassment;
- exclusion from online groups;
- sharing embarrassing or inappropriate content;
- impersonation;
- threatening or intimidating behaviour.

Any incidents of cyberbullying will be taken seriously and responded to in accordance with the **Behaviour Regulation and Positive Support Policy** and **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

Support will be provided for both the victim and, where appropriate, the pupil responsible, recognising that pupils with SEND may require additional teaching and guidance to understand the impact of their online behaviour.

11. Online Abuse and Exploitation

Homebrook Woods recognises that children may experience a range of online safeguarding risks, including:

- online grooming;
- child sexual abuse and exploitation;
- criminal exploitation;
- coercion and control;
- online radicalisation;
- financial scams;
- sextortion;
- exposure to harmful or inappropriate content.

Staff will remain professionally curious and will respond immediately to any concerns in accordance with the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy**.

Where appropriate, referrals will be made to Children's Social Care, the Police or other safeguarding agencies.

12. Sharing Images and Videos

Pupils will receive age-appropriate education about the safe sharing of photographs, videos and personal information online.

Homebrook Woods will respond to incidents involving the creation or sharing of nude or semi-nude images in accordance with current Department for Education guidance and safeguarding procedures.

Staff must never:

- request or encourage pupils to share inappropriate images;
- store images of pupils on personal devices;
- use personal devices to photograph pupils except in exceptional circumstances authorised by the Headteacher.

All photographs and recordings of pupils will be managed in accordance with the school's Data Protection and Privacy Policy.

13. Mobile Phones and Personal Devices

The use of personal mobile phones and digital devices by staff will be managed in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use Agreement.

Staff must:

- use personal devices professionally;
- maintain appropriate professional boundaries;
- avoid personal communication with pupils through social media or messaging applications;
- ensure personal devices do not compromise safeguarding.

Pupils will only access personal devices where this has been authorised by the Headteacher and forms part of an agreed educational or communication plan.

Visitors may be asked to restrict the use of personal devices in areas where pupils are present.

14. Social Media

Homebrook Woods recognises that social media forms an important part of modern life but also presents safeguarding risks.

Staff must not:

- communicate with pupils through personal social media accounts;
- accept pupils as online contacts;
- share confidential information;
- post content that could damage professional relationships or the reputation of Homebrook Woods.

Any official social media activity undertaken on behalf of Homebrook Woods will be appropriately authorised and professionally managed.

15. Staff Training

All staff will receive online safety training as part of safeguarding induction and ongoing professional development.

Training will include:

- KCSIE 2026 updates;
- online safeguarding risks;
- filtering and monitoring arrangements;
- recognising online abuse;
- cyberbullying;
- artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies;
- reporting procedures;
- staff professional conduct online.

Training will be updated regularly to reflect emerging technologies and changing safeguarding risks.

16. Reporting Online Safety Concerns

Any member of staff who becomes aware of an online safety concern must report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Concerns may include:

- inappropriate online contact;
- exposure to harmful content;
- suspected online exploitation;
- cyberbullying;
- concerning online behaviour;
- misuse of school technology;
- filtering or monitoring alerts.

Homebrook Woods will respond promptly, proportionately and in accordance with statutory safeguarding guidance.

Where appropriate, external agencies including Children's Social Care, the Police, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) may be consulted.

17. Record Keeping

Homebrook Woods will maintain secure records of:

- online safety concerns;
- safeguarding referrals;
- filtering and monitoring alerts requiring action;
- staff training;
- risk assessments;
- parental communications where appropriate.

Records will be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and the school's retention schedule.

18. Monitoring and Review

The Proprietor will monitor the effectiveness of online safety arrangements through:

- safeguarding audits;
- review of online safety incidents;
- review of filtering and monitoring systems;
- staff training records;
- curriculum monitoring;
- annual review of this policy.

Filtering and monitoring arrangements will be reviewed at least annually and whenever there is a significant change to technology, safeguarding guidance or the school's digital provision.

19. Monitoring Compliance

Homebrook Woods is committed to maintaining a safe digital environment in which technology enhances learning whilst safeguarding children from online harm.

Online safety arrangements will be reviewed regularly to ensure continued compliance with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026;
- the Department for Education Filtering and Monitoring Standards;
- the Independent School Standards;
- wider statutory safeguarding guidance.

Homebrook Woods recognises that online safety is a shared responsibility. Through effective leadership, staff training, appropriate supervision, strong



partnerships with parents and carers, and a curriculum tailored to the needs of pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and associated SEND, Homebrook Woods will promote safe, responsible and confident use of digital technology.