



Online Safety Policy

September 2025

The Oaks Specialist College: Online Safety Policy

Applicability of Policy	All staff and learners at The Oaks
Location and Access to the policy	▪ The College website – https://www.theoaks.ac.uk/ ▪ It is available on the College One drive\Policies\Online Safety Policy ▪ Hard copies are available, on request, from the Administration Team
This policy links with the following policies	Safeguarding Policy Prevent Policy Anti-Bullying Policy Bring Your Own Device Agreement Behaviour Policy (including searching and confiscation)
Review and edition of policy	April 2021, November 2022, April 2023, July 2024, September 2025
The Rationale and Purpose of this policy	The College is committed to providing a safe learning environment for all learners. All staff and learners have the right to use online technology and to be supported to use it safely.

Principles

All learners at The Oaks have access to a range of technology for learning and communication purposes. It is essential that all learners are safe, and they understand that the safety principles to be considered when online are the same as those used in the physical world around us.

The Oaks provides a highly successful digital and accessibility curriculum which requires learners to use their phones to access their learning programme. We make use of the digital aids our learners use every day in order to increase their accessibility to the world around them and to develop their own social and communication skills.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- empower learners to safely use and manage their online activity.
- educate learners and parents about their moral and legal responsibilities when using the internet at College.
- safeguard the publishing of our learners' details.
- promote the importance of online safety to our learners and their parents and the risks and consequences of unacceptable use.

Related Policies

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following related policies:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Bring Your Own Device Agreement
- Behaviour Policy (including searching and confiscation)

Teaching and Learning

- The Oaks has a duty to provide learners with quality internet access as part of their learning experience. Internet use is part of The Oaks' curriculum and a necessary tool for staff and learners.
- The internet is essential in order to contribute to learners' education, social interaction and their pathway to employment.
- Learners' access to the internet is designed for educational purposes and will include filtering that is appropriate to our learners' ability and in line with our Acceptable Use Policy.
- Learners are taught what internet use is and is not acceptable and are given clear objectives for internet use.
- Learners are educated in the effective use of the internet in regard to research, including the skills of knowledge location, retrieval and evaluation.
- The Oaks will ensure that the use of internet materials by staff and learners complies with copyright law.
- Learners will be taught to be critically aware of the materials they read and shown how to validate information before accepting its accuracy.

Safeguarding online

- The Oaks recognises that there are 4 areas of online safety risk:
 - **Content:** being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful material
 - **Commerce:** Online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, financial harm
 - **Contact:** being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users
 - **Conduct:** personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm.
 - **Commerce:** risks such as online gambling, financial scams, inappropriate advertising and or financial scams.
- In accordance with the prevention of radicalisation all staff are mindful of the need to be alert to any potential radicalisation and should in the first instance report it to a senior member of staff who will take the appropriate action. This may be in discussion with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).
- All resources and learning materials are quality assured to ensure that the potential for radicalisation is minimised.

- Further information can be found in our Prevent Policy.
- Learners, where appropriate, are encouraged to recognise and report inappropriate material to a member of staff.
- Learners, parents/carers and staff can find further information about online safety at [Think You Know](#) and [CEOP](#).
- Learners are not permitted to use live chat rooms whilst at College.
- Sexting, sexual harassment, cyberbullying and any other forms of harassment or abuse will not be tolerated and will be reported to the DSL who will decide on the course of action.
- Learners will be educated in the signs of online abuse and will be encouraged to report any concerns they may have.
- Each learner will be provided with individual login credentials to access the internet whilst attending The Oaks. The College can monitor each login and the activity belonging to it whilst using the internet.

Information System Security

- College ICT systems' capacity and security will be reviewed regularly.
- Virus protection will be installed and updated regularly.
- The Oaks' technical infrastructure is to be secure and systems put in place and monitored regularly to ensure that this it is not open to misuse or malicious attack.

Email

- Learners may only use approved external email accounts on the college system.
- Learners must immediately inform a tutor if they receive an offensive email.
- Learners must not reveal personal details of themselves or others in email communication or arrange to meet anyone without specific permission.
- Emails sent to an external organisation should be written carefully and authorised before sending, in the same way as a letter written on college headed paper.
- The forwarding of chain letters is not permitted.
- Learners must check who sent the email before reading. They should report any emails they are unsure of.

Social networking and personal publishing

- Learners will be advised never to give out personal details of any kind which may identify them or their location.
- Learners must not place personal photos on any social network space owned by The Oaks without permission of the Principal.
- Learners should be advised on security and encouraged to set passwords, deny access to unknown individuals and how to block unwanted communications. Students should be encouraged to invite known friends only and deny access to others.

Managing filtering

- The Oaks work in partnership with the Local Authority, DfE and the internet service provider to ensure systems to protect learners are reviewed and improved.
- If staff or learners discover an unsuitable site, it must be reported to the DSL.
- The authority to allow/block access to certain social sites (e.g Facebook, Twitter) will remain with the Senior Leadership Team, in consultation with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- The Oaks is aware that access to IT systems is vital for the delivery and access to our learning programmes.
- As such, we deliver a comprehensive and wide-ranging curriculum that places online safety at the heart of our digital learning offer.
- We work with our learners to empower them to make good choices when online, take responsibility for their own safety, whilst providing them with a safe environment in which they can seek support should they need it.

Managing Emerging Technologies

- Emerging technologies will be examined for educational benefit and consideration to suitability will be carried out before use in college is allowed.

Mobile phones

- Mobile phones are a crucial element to The Oaks' provision. Learners will have access to their devices as per the learning objectives set by the teacher.
- During lesson time learners are not permitted to use their phones for any other purpose than the intended outcome of the session.
- The sending of abusive or inappropriate text and picture messages is forbidden.
- All learners must sign an agreement that sets the parameters to enable them to bring their own device into College.
- The purpose of this agreement is to minimise risk to both learners and the College network.

Protecting personal data

- Personal data will be recorded, processed transferred and made available according to the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018.

Remote Learning

- There will be times when learners may carry out their learning from home, and therefore accessing the college networks remotely.
- Learners will be permitted to use college equipment for remote learning with the expectation that it will be treated with respect as outlined in this policy.

Assessing risks

- The College will take all reasonable precautions to prevent access to inappropriate material through appropriate monitoring and filtering. However, due to the international scale and linked internet content, it is not possible to guarantee that unsuitable material will never appear on a college computer.
- The college cannot accept liability for the material accessed, or any consequences of internet access. However, we

Handling e-safety complaints

- Complaints of internet misuse will be dealt with by a senior member of staff.
- Any complaint about staff misuse must be referred to the Principal.
- Complaints of a safeguarding nature must be addressed in accordance with The Oaks Young People's Safeguarding Procedures.
- Learners and parents will be informed of the complaint's procedure.

Online Safety Rules

These online safety rules help to protect learners and the college by describing acceptable and unacceptable online use.

- The Oaks owns the computer network and can set rules for its use.
- It is a criminal offence to use a computer or network for a purpose not permitted by The Oaks.
- Irresponsible use may result in the loss of network or internet access for individuals who knowingly misuse the The Oaks' systems.
- Network access must be made via the user's authorised account and password, which must not be given to any other person.
- All network and internet use must be appropriate to education.
- Copyright and intellectual property rights must be respected.
- Messages shall be written politely and carefully, particularly as emails could be forwarded to unintended readers.
- Messages and images must not be shared without the permission of the original sender.
- Anonymous messages and chain letters are not permitted.
- Users must take care not to reveal personal information through email, personal publishing, blogs or messaging.

- The college ICT systems may not be used for private purposes unless the Senior Leadership Team has given specific permission.
- Use for personal financial gain, gambling, political activity, advertising or illegal purposes it not permitted.

The Oaks may exercise its right to monitor the use of the computer systems, including access to websites, the deletion of inappropriate materials where it believes unauthorised use of the college's computer system may be taking place, or the system may be being used for criminal purposes or for storing unauthorised or unlawful text, imagery or sound.

The college is also authorised to collect and examine any device that is suspected of causing technology problems or was the source of an attack or virus infection.

Staff reserve the right to examine any device suspected of causing a potential safeguard issue towards the learner themselves or others.