



Safe Use of Internet Policy

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Policy Statement

Study Links is committed to protecting and promoting the wellbeing of all students under our guardianship. This policy outlines our expectations and guidance regarding the safe and responsible use of digital technology. It addresses the growing challenges of cyberbullying and online abuse and ensures that students, parents, and host families have clear information on how to manage digital risks.

Key Safeguarding Contacts

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) at Study Links is responsible for all safeguarding matters, including concerns relating to online safety. Contact details for the DSL and Deputy

DSL are shared with students, parents, host families, and schools upon registration and are also available on request.

Areas of Online Risk

Online risks can be grouped into four key areas:

- **Content:** Exposure to harmful material, including violent or sexual content, hate speech, or misinformation.
- **Contact:** Being targeted by or interacting with individuals who may pose a threat (e.g., grooming or coercion).
- **Conduct:** Inappropriate behaviour by the young person online, such as bullying others, oversharing, or accessing risky platforms.
- **Commerce:** Online fraud, scams, and pressure to make purchases or share payment information.

Understanding Online Abuse and Recognising Signs

Online abuse includes cyberbullying, online grooming, coercive behaviour, and digital harassment. Possible signs of online abuse include:

- Sudden avoidance of using digital devices
 - Becoming withdrawn, secretive or anxious
 - Mood swings or sleep disruption
 - Avoidance of school or changes in social interaction
- Students, parents, and host families should report concerns immediately to Study Links' team.

Setting Digital Boundaries

We promote healthy digital habits, such as:

- Agreeing limits on daily screen time
- Encouraging device-free zones (e.g. during meals, whilst sleeping, during revision)
- Supporting young people in identifying and reporting harmful behaviour
- Helping students understand what personal information is and how to protect it

Filters and Monitoring

While we do not control internet access in every environment, we advise host families and parents to:

- Regularly check the types of websites and apps students are accessing
- Enable safe search settings on browsers and platforms

Mobile Phones and Smart Devices

Students should be guided on how to:

- Use password protection and avoid sharing devices
- Disable location sharing features
- Avoid downloading unverified apps or engaging with unknown contacts
- Manage app permissions and understand data privacy

Social Network Sites

Students are supported to:

- Use privacy settings on platforms like Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, etc.
- Avoid accepting friend or connection requests from strangers
- Think carefully before posting photos, videos, or personal opinions
- Know how to block and report inappropriate users or content

Responding to Incidents of Sharing Nudes or Semi-Nude Imagery

If a young person shares or is pressured to share intimate images:

- Do not view, forward (this is a crime), or save the image
- Report the incident immediately to the DSL
- Provide emotional support and involve parents if appropriate
- Refer to external agencies (e.g. police) where necessary.

The Prevent Duty

Study Links is alert to online radicalisation and extremist content. Students will not be directed to any online material that promotes such content. If concerns arise, they will be reported to appropriate safeguarding or Prevent referral channels.

Remote Learning

In the event of remote learning:

- Students must use school-approved platforms
- Host families are asked to supervise sessions and ensure a safe learning environment
- Online lessons should be conducted in appropriate clothing and settings

- Students should not record or share sessions unless permitted

Training and Awareness

Here, at Study Links, we ensure:

- Our staff receive basic awareness training on digital safeguarding
- Parents and host families receive guidance and resources to support safe online use
- Students are given age-appropriate materials and support

Reporting and Support

All digital safety concerns must be reported to Study Links team. We will:

- Record all reports confidentially
- Liaise with parents, host families, and schools as necessary
- Offer practical support and referrals if the situation requires specialist help

Please see our [Anti-bullying policy](#) for further support on cyberbullying.

Policy Review

This policy is reviewed annually or following significant updates in digital safety guidance. It will be updated to reflect technological developments and emerging risks.