The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Online Safety Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Online Safety Policy	**Version**	V1
Issue date	08 May 2026	**Next review**	08 May 2027
Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Online life is real life for our pupils. PACE shapes our online safety work — we are curious about what our pupils do online, accepting of their mistakes when they happen, and empathic about how hard the digital world can be:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This policy is in line with KCSIE Part 2 and Annex C, the DfE's Filtering and Monitoring Standards, the DfE's Cyber Security Standards, the Online Safety Act 2023, the Education Act 2002 and the UK GDPR. It should be read alongside the Acceptable Use Agreements (Pupil and Staff) and the Safeguarding Policy.

4. The four Cs

Online risks at The New Walk School are understood through the four Cs framework set out in KCSIE: content, contact, conduct and commerce. Staff and pupils are taught to recognise risks in each category.

5. Filtering and monitoring

The school deploys filtering and monitoring solutions that meet the DfE digital and technology standards. The DSL has lead responsibility for filtering and monitoring. Filtering is reviewed annually with IT support; monitoring alerts are reviewed daily by the DSL or Deputy DSL.

6. Curriculum

Online safety is taught explicitly through PSHE, RSHE and Computing, and is reinforced across the curriculum. Topics include: managing personal information; recognising grooming and exploitation; sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (handled in line with UK Council for Internet Safety guidance); cyberbullying; misinformation and disinformation; mental health impacts of social media; and the law on online conduct.

7. Use of personal devices

Pupils' mobile phones are handed in at the start of the school day and returned at the end. Staff use of personal devices in pupil-facing areas is restricted to safeguarding and emergency use. Staff do not photograph pupils on personal devices.

8. Responding to online incidents

Online safety incidents are recorded on the safeguarding system and triaged by the DSL. Incidents involving sharing of nudes follow the UKCIS Sharing Nudes and Semi-nudes guidance. Where a criminal offence is suspected, the police are informed.

9. Working with parents and carers

The school provides regular online safety guidance to parents/carers — through the school newsletter, family workshops and signposting to resources such as Internet Matters, NSPCC and the UK Safer Internet Centre.

10. Roles and responsibilities

- DSL — overall responsibility for online safety, including filtering and monitoring.

- Headteacher — ensures the policy is implemented and adequately resourced.
- All staff — model safe online behaviour, follow Acceptable Use, report concerns.
- Pupils — follow the Pupil Acceptable Use Agreement.
- Parents/carers — partner with the school in supporting safe online lives.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.