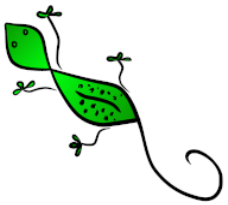
E Safety Policy



Gecko Community

Empower, Inspire, Educate

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1. Purpose

Gecko Community is committed to utilising technology to inform and support learning. We seek to embrace new developments that offer improved learning opportunities to students. Equally we are determined to ensure that all Gecko Community students and staff remain safe and free from the dangers implicit in the use of that technology.

Our aims are to ensure that:

- students do not access material that may be damaging or disturbing to them;
- students do not access material that might be considered to be politically inflammatory or lead them towards ‘extremist’ /’terrorist’ behaviour;
- students are not subject to cyber-bullying of any sort;
- students do not engage in the posting of any material that might be deemed offensive or threatening (to anyone, but particularly to other members of the Gecko Community);
- staff are professional in their online interactions, including use of social media and networking sites.

In line with Gecko Community aims, our intentions are that students:

- take responsibility for their online presence and acknowledge / understand that ‘virtual’ behaviour is akin to real world behaviour with the same rights and responsibilities attached;
- understand the safety principles of online content, conduct and contact;
- are well prepared for life beyond Gecko Community;
- make informed decisions for themselves.

Gecko Community seeks to enable students to navigate the online world safely, endorsing the following quote from E-Safety a Practical Guide for Schools (RM Education 2018) as a vision and guide for what we seek to achieve through this policy:

“Enabling pupils to take full advantage of technology and preparing them for the real world whilst providing a safe environment is a tricky balancing act. Locked-down systems that exert total control over what students can access online provide no opportunity for them to learn how

to become digitally responsible. Monitoring and filtering is essential to prevent access to inappropriate content but, for example, banning Facebook or social networking sites could actually leave students more vulnerable when they are outside the school gates if they don't get to learn how to use social media safely".

2. Scope

This E-Safety policy forms the basis for practice across Gecko Community. All students have "acceptable use of technology" agreements , signed by students and parents.

Given the nature of Gecko Community provision (ie that a significant part of student/teacher and student/counsellor contact takes place online), all staff are trained in e-safety and ongoingly supported to ensure that their practice minimises all risks to students and nurtures their wellbeing.

3. Policy statement and provisions

Gecko Community is committed to utilising technology to inform and support learning. We seek to embrace new developments that offer improved learning opportunities to students. Equally we are determined to ensure that all Gecko Community students and staff remain safe and free from the dangers implicit in the use of that technology.

Key factors within e-safety

- Online behaviour – understanding what constitutes cyber-bullying and sexting, how to behave safely and with respect for others;
- protecting online reputation – understanding both the risks and rewards of sharing personal information online (digital footprint);
- how to use social networking safely;
- understanding the reliability and validity of online information;
- data security – keeping personal information safe and being aware of viruses and hacking;
- knowing what to do if anything 'bad' happens.

In summary all staff will work to ensure that risk is minimised within the key 'danger' areas:

- **content** – what students may see or be exposed to (eg spam, misleading adverts, inappropriate sites, exposure to radicalisation);
- **contact** - who students have contact with;
- that students understand how to **conduct** (behave and present) themselves safely online, and

- **contract/commerce** risks through 'sign-ups' or sharing personal information.

By 'inappropriate content' we refer to material that is not suitable for a young person due to, for example, adult, violent, inaccurate, misleading or extremist content.

Gecko Community management is acutely aware of its responsibilities under the new 'Protect' guidance (see Safeguarding Policy) and will ensure all staff are trained to reduce the risk of any Gecko Community student accessing material likely to lead to radicalisation, but also that students are encouraged to discuss openly any concerns or worries they have regarding radicalisation.

Specific responsibilities

The (day-to-day practice may be managed by a nominated member of staff) will:

- ensure Gecko Community has an agreement (generated between students and staff) concerning the appropriate use of technology;
- ensure Gecko Community follows the recommendations and good practice within the Cyber Essentials certification;
- provide (either directly or through access to appropriate providers) high quality training for staff;
- provide clear guidelines for students regarding the consequences of online bullying and inappropriate use of technology;
- ensure all Gecko Community providers offer clear, open lines of communication through which students are able to report any incidents of concern;
- ensure procedures are in place for responding to e-safety incidents, whether via Smoothwall alerts and verbal or written reports, and reducing the likelihood of their recurrence;
- ensure Gecko Community staff provide training and support to students to help them become 'digitally responsible' and to stay safe online (initally through their e-safety module upon starting with our provision, and through ongoing discussion and training opportunities in PSHEE, online community sessions and mentor sessions);
- ensure Gecko Community IT staff monitor and filter online access through the use of Smoothwall safeguarding software to help keep students 'on task', to reduce the likelihood of harmful experiences online, and to flag up any online activities that might indicate potential harm to the student or others;
- ensure Gecko Community staff, particularly IT, safeguarding leads and Link Mentors, engage with parents to help them put e-safety procedures in place at home.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that:

- they have an up-to-date awareness of e-safety matters and of the current Gecko Community e-safety policy and practices;
- they have contributed to and comply with the local agreement re 'safe use of technology';
- they report any suspected misuse of technology or problem to the DSL
- all digital communications with students or their parents are only carried out using official systems;
- e-safety issues are embedded in all aspects of the curriculum;
- students understand and uphold copyright regulations;
- students are helped, by direct guidance and software, to access appropriate sites only;
- if inappropriate material is accessed, processes to ensure that the likelihood of repeated access is minimised are followed.

As a working professional unit, teachers and support staff must ensure that e-safety is embedded in general practice and taught as a cross-curricular theme.

The designated person for child protection (safeguarding lead) is trained in e-safety issues and the use of safeguarding software, and should be aware of the potential for serious child protection / safeguarding issues that may arise from arise from:

- sharing of personal data;
- access to illegal or inappropriate materials;
- inappropriate online contact with adults or strangers;
- potential or actual incidents of grooming;
- cyber-bullying.

·*NB It is important to emphasise that these are child protection issues, not technical issues. The technology simply provides additional means for child protection issues to develop.*

Students:

- are responsible for using technology systems at Gecko Community according to the

‘acceptable use’ guidelines;
- should uphold copyright regulations;
- need to understand the importance of reporting abuse, misuse or access to inappropriate materials and know how to do so;
- will be expected to be involved in the development of policies on the use of mobile devices,
digital cameras, and other technology;
- should be aware of the Gecko Community policy re bullying/cyber-bullying;
- should understand the importance of adopting good e-safety practice when using digital technologies outside of Gecko.

Parents *(NB ‘parents’ is understood to include carers)*:
Parents play a crucial role in ensuring that their children understand the need to use the internet / mobile devices in an appropriate way. Gecko Community staff will take every opportunity to help parents understand these issues through parents’ evenings, newsletters, letters, and resources on the Gecko Community website. Parents will be encouraged to support Gecko Community staff in promoting good e-safety practice and to follow guidelines on the appropriate use of:
- access to parents’ sections of the website and other online sites;
- their children’s personal devices whilst attending a Centre or engaging with online learning.

Use of digital / video images
Staff should inform and educate students about the risks associated with the taking, use, sharing, publication and distribution of images. In particular students should come to recognise the risks attached to publishing their own images on the internet (such as social networking sites).

Students are not routinely permitted to take photographs of their peers during Gecko Community activities. If there is a specific reason why a student may wish to take such a photograph(s), then it should be under the direct supervision of a member of staff or volunteer who takes full responsibility for ensuring the criteria (above) has been met and that any images have been deleted from personal equipment.

NB Staff must never circulate outside the organisation, by email or text, or post on social media sites, photographs of students taken at a Centre or elsewhere (for instance, in the home or on trips or visits).

‘Sexting’:

In the UK, it is against the law to share or distribute explicit images of anyone under the age of 18 - even if the person sharing them is the person in the photo. If caught, students can face police cautions or even arrest. Action taken will be based on the nature of the imagery. Any such action can lead to a criminal record and later failings of DBS checks. Staff will work to ensure that all students know the risks of sending x-rated photos from a personal, emotional and criminal perspective. However an agreement currently exists between the National Police Chiefs Council (formerly ACPO) and the Crown Prosecution Service that advises police forces NOT to prosecute young people sexting unless there are very good reasons to do so.

If it comes to a member of staff’s attention that students are exchanging explicit images across social media - whether invited or not - it is crucial that the situation is dealt with sensitively. Regardless of whether the sharing happens at home or on Gecko Community premises, if it involves Gecko Community students, it should be treated as a community matter, and the involved parties should be approached for advice. We are ‘allowed’ to deal with such matters internally, but will seek advice when deemed necessary. Referrals to the police will only be made if advice from the LSCB is that this is the appropriate course of action.

Staff postings

Gecko Community staff must ensure that:

- no reference is made by them on personal social media to students, parents / carers or individual Gecko Community staff;
- they do not engage in online discussion on personal matters relating to members of the community;
- personal opinions expressed online are not attributed to Gecko Community;
- security settings on their own personal social media profiles are such that students cannot access personal information that is posted there.

The use of live video for learning and teaching purposes
There is a separate policy document with a process for approval of these sessions and specific guidance regarding good practice. See Section 4.

4. Related legislation and documents

Legislation and guidance that inform this document

- The 4Cs: Classifying online risk to children (CO:RE 2021)
- Children Act (2004)
- The Safe Use of New Technologies (Ofsted 2010)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (Gov.UK July 2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Gov.UK Sept 2026)
- E-Safety a Practical Guide for Schools (RM Education 2018)

Other Gecko Community policies to be read in conjunction with this one

- Staff Code of Conduct
- Safeguarding
- Use of Live Video Policy
- Behaviour for Learning
- Anti-bullying
- Data Protection
- Whistleblowing

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