

Headteachers of Sandwell Primary Schools



Friday, 11 June 2010

Filtering of Internet Content on the Sandwell Schools Broadband Network

Dear Colleague,

You may be aware of work that was undertaken on infrastructure upgrades to upgrade the Sandwell Schools Broadband Network over the past few months to improve the service offered to schools and to remove potential bottlenecks.

Following on from this work, we are now in a position to put in place extra "features" that may assist the school in its use of Internet resources.

The new infrastructure makes it easier for us to make changes to the web filtering policies such that it will be possible to roll out individual school filtering policy for your school. This will mean that where changes to the policies are needed by the school, these can be permitted without the change affecting other schools. A number of teachers have, for example, requested access to sites like Facebook and Youtube, while other schools have asked us to block these websites.

Please note that where content is currently blocked on the schools broadband network, this is for a small number of reasons:

- e-safety: where the resource may lead to undesirable activities: we block web chat in this category
- network security: to block known virus sites, intrusions and phishing
- non educational: where the resource is known to cause students to waste time or cause disruption

We aim to put processes in place to separate each school from the current "default" policy, in order to make it easier for schools to access resources that they need.

As well as unblocking individual sites, we will also be able to unblock categories, such as web chat, if this is felt appropriate by the school.

The change of policy is a manual process and is quite involved. Broadband Sandwell staff will carry out this change over the coming weeks. We will call to advise you before making the change, but the end result of this work should initially leave things as they are, i.e. there should be no more or less access to web resources following the work. The only difference that you will notice is the policy name will change when viewing the Netsweeper block page. (you can check this by browsing to www.knives.com, which is blocked, and so displays the "page blocked" message).

Once we have applied your school's individual web filtering policy, you may request changes from us either by using the unblocking request form, available on our website, or by email from a school manager using a .sch.uk email address.

You may wish to consider e-safety aspects of any changes that you ask us to make. E-safety advice and training is available from Broadband Sandwell or from Sandwell's e-Learning Service; call for more details.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Chandler".

Keith Chandler
Broadband Sandwell