

NetSupport DNA - a 'no-brainer'

Meadowhead School Academy Trust - Adam Clarke, Network Manager



Overview

With nearly 2,000 students on roll, Meadowhead School Academy Trust is the largest school in Sheffield. Meadowhead is a secondary school and sixth form, providing education from ages 11 to 18. It has a diverse curriculum and expansive enrichment programme. The school's vision is to make a difference to the lives of their young people. Meadowhead was initially founded in 1987 as a merger of two schools: Jordanthorpe Comprehensive School and Rowlinson School. In 2009, Meadowhead set up a charity, Meadowhead Together, to create a wide range of opportunities for the students who attend the school and its feeder schools.

The school was looking for a safeguarding solution that had an up-to-date database of keywords so staff could be assured that concerning online activity was being flagged effectively. It also needed a smart solution that was able to provide context for safeguarding alerts to help them understand and best prioritise concerns. So, the school turned to NetSupport DNA...

Meadowhead School's favourite NetSupport DNA features

Keyword and
phrase monitoring

Contextual intelligence-
based risk index

Updated and customisable
keyword database

Interview

1. How many devices and what platforms do you have the software installed on?

We currently use NetSupport DNA around the building on our Windows 10 machines. We are looking at rolling NetSupport DNA out to laptops and, when we get some government-supplied laptops, we can reimage and redeploy NetSupport DNA around the building.

2. What previous challenges did you face and why did you choose NetSupport DNA?

As we all know, safeguarding is to keep all children safe.... What we found with [the previous solution] is we were only able to use keyword detection for any keywords that we entered; it wasn't automatically updated for us. We found, after testing and after discussions, that it would make a lot more sense if we could find a solution that automatically updated to help us keep the children safe here. Because, as anybody who's ever worked with children will know, the terminology that they use and the words that they use to describe things changes on a daily basis.

3. Are there any safeguarding features that are key to your efforts?

One of the things that we're going to be pushing in September is, as part of DNA, there's a way you can 'raise a concern', so that will come to the head of year or whoever we decide is the designated lead on it. Then, if you do have a child who has a worry in their classroom, they'll be able to let us know and we'll be able to respond and act on it.

4. What stood out in NetSupport DNA compared to your previous solution?

Our previous solution could sometimes be quite clunky and the fact the version we had didn't do the updating of the word lists was a major, major drawback for us. I can't even imagine the amount of time and effort it takes to build up a word list like that - and one that does it on its own... it's just a no-brainer for us.

5. What feedback have you had from staff?

They quite like it. They do find it quite an eye-opener to see what the children are searching for.

The added bit of the context that's given with the things that get flagged is something that you can't really do without, because you can differentiate between someone actually wanting to try to do something and somebody searching for legitimate learning materials on that said particular topic.

For instance, we had a whole class of children looking for 'suicide prevention.' Now, if there wasn't any of that context there, you could be thinking that, 'we've got 32 children wanting to harm themselves'. Whereas, actually, it was part of a lesson they were working on and we got that purely from the context given via the emails and the deals that were logged. Also, in the emails to staff, it sends a brief description of the program that the words have been typed on. Then it gives you a sentence or a short paragraph on what's actually been typed, and that's really useful.

6. How would you sum up the software?

Straight forward, simple, easy to use, quite intuitive. It's just everything that you want from a piece of software.

You don't want to have to spend half of your time learning what all the different nuances and parts of it are. You want it to be simple and straightforward enough that you can give someone minimal training and they'll be able to work with it.

7. How have you found working with the NetSupport team?

I find them great. I've sent a couple of tickets through and they've got back in touch with me promptly and they've been really professional, really nice, and we've been able to get any issues that I've had dealt with - or they had a work around to at least make it so the issue doesn't reoccur anymore.

8. Would you recommend NetSupport DNA to others?

Definitely, yes, I would recommend it to others 100%.



It's just a no-brainer for us.

