



SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

WITH DR SANDRA WISEMAN

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AI is making cybercrime easier: What schools need to know

Artificial Intelligence is transforming education in many positive ways. However, it is also changing the way cybercriminals operate and schools need to be aware of the growing risks. A recent report from Anthropic analysed more than 800 AI accounts that had been banned for malicious cyber activity. The findings revealed a significant shift: AI is increasingly enabling individuals with relatively little technical expertise to carry out cyber attacks that previously required advanced skills. For schools, this is more than just an IT issue, **it is a safeguarding issue.**

Why does this matter?

Schools hold vast amounts of sensitive information, including:

- **pupil safeguarding records**
- **SEND information**
- **medical information**
- **staff and HR records**
- **financial data**
- **parent contact details**

As AI lowers the technical barriers to cybercrime, more individuals can generate convincing phishing emails, automate malicious code, identify network weaknesses and support increasingly sophisticated attacks. Anthropic's analysis found that while phishing remains common, AI is increasingly being used to assist with activities after a network has been compromised, such as identifying user accounts, moving across systems and locating valuable data. **In simple terms, attacks are becoming both easier to launch and more sophisticated.**

Why safeguarding leaders should be concerned

Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) may naturally view cyber security as the responsibility of IT teams. In reality, the consequences of a cyber attack can have direct safeguarding implications. These may include:

- **Loss of access to CPOMS or other safeguarding recording systems**
- **Exposure of highly confidential child protection information**
- **Inability to contact families during emergencies**
- **Disruption to attendance, behaviour and welfare systems**
- **Financial losses affecting school operations**
- **Increased emotional distress for pupils and staff following a significant data breach**

Keeping Children Safe in Education continues to emphasise that safeguarding includes protecting children both online and offline. Effective filtering, monitoring and cyber resilience all contribute to creating a safe learning environment.

Schools continue to be attractive targets

Education remains one of the most targeted sectors for cyber attacks. The Department for Education's Cyber Security Hub reports that ransomware, phishing and supply chain attacks continue to affect schools across England. During 2024-25, education was among the UK's three most targeted sectors, with phishing featuring in the vast majority of reported school cyber incidents.

Recent government survey findings also show that almost three-quarters of secondary schools identified cyber breaches or attacks during the previous year.

What should schools do now?

Every school should review whether cyber security is fully embedded within its safeguarding culture.

Questions to consider include:

- **Does the governing body receive regular cyber security updates?**
- **Are staff trained to recognise increasingly convincing AI-generated phishing emails?**
- **Is multi-factor authentication enabled wherever possible?**
- **Are filtering and monitoring systems regularly reviewed and tested?**
- **Are safeguarding records securely backed up?**
- **Does the school have an incident response plan if systems become unavailable?**
- **Are pupils taught about AI-enabled scams, fake messages and online manipulation as part of their online safety curriculum?**

This is no longer just an IT problem

Perhaps the most important message from Anthropic's research is that AI is lowering the barrier to entry for cybercriminals. Activities once limited to highly skilled attackers are becoming accessible to individuals with far less technical knowledge.

For schools, cyber resilience should therefore be viewed as an integral part of safeguarding. Protecting children today means protecting the systems that hold their information, ensuring staff can recognise evolving digital threats and maintaining the resilience needed to continue safeguarding even during a cyber incident. As AI continues to evolve, safeguarding practice must evolve alongside it.

Read:

https://www.helpdeskschools.com/2026/06/05/anthropic-ai-cyber-activity-analysis/?utm_campaign=Security&utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtg-70B6u5MPCUa0G6A8prie5_7QHuA9p_TG18u0U4FZ_mw74shf732eqyU23uB0m_gjYabg0pV0U0u0gG0I-sR0dC84J0h0u0Uz0y0B6s_hsmi-427507123&utm_content=427507123&utm_source=hs_email

New statutory allergy guidance for schools: What safeguarding leaders need to know

From 1st September 2026, schools in England will be expected to comply with new statutory guidance, Allergy Safety in Schools, published by the Department for Education. The guidance marks one of the most significant changes to supporting pupils with allergies in recent years and strengthens schools' responsibilities to keep children safe.

Whilst allergies have traditionally been viewed as a medical issue, this guidance makes it clear that allergy management is also a safeguarding responsibility. A severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) can become life-threatening within minutes, meaning every member of staff has a role to play in recognising risks and responding quickly.

Why has the guidance changed?

The new guidance follows the introduction of provisions within the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, often referred to as 'Benedict's Law', following the tragic death of Benedict Blythe, who suffered a fatal allergic reaction at school. The legislation aims to ensure that every school adopts a consistent, whole-school approach to allergy safety. The message is simple: **Children with allergies should be able to attend school safely, confidently and without unnecessary barriers to learning.**

What are the key changes?

The statutory guidance introduces several important expectations for schools.

- **A whole-school approach**
- **Managing allergies is no longer the responsibility of one individual**
- **Schools should ensure that allergy safety is embedded across the whole organisation, including leadership, teaching staff, lunchtime supervisors, office staff, catering teams, wraparound provision and educational visits**
- **Everyone should understand their role**

A published Allergy Safety Policy

Schools are expected to have a clear allergy safety policy setting out:

- **how pupils with allergies are identified**
- **how risks are assessed and managed**
- **emergency procedures**
- **staff responsibilities**
- **communication with parents**
- **arrangements for trips, clubs and activities**
- **medication management**
- **review arrangements**

The Department for Education has published a template policy to support schools.

A designated Allergy Lead

Schools should identify a member of staff to coordinate allergy management. This person does not carry sole responsibility but should oversee procedures, coordinate reviews, support colleagues and help ensure policies remain effective.

Annual staff training

One of the most significant changes is the expectation that all staff receive regular allergy awareness training. Staff should understand:

- **common allergens**
- **recognising allergic reactions**
- **recognising anaphylaxis**
- **when and how to administer adrenaline auto-injectors (AAIs)**
- **emergency procedures**
- **reducing risk across the school day**

This is important because an allergic reaction could occur anywhere, not simply in classrooms or the dining hall.

Read more:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/allergy-safety-in-schools>

Summer term 2 - 5-minute 'bitesize' and audio version safeguarding refresher videos

Cybercrime - Tuesday 14th July

Everything you need for September 2026:

<https://www.services4schools.org.uk/cpd-zone/safeguarding/safeguarding-everything-you-need-for-september-2026>

Safeguarding Network Meeting - TBC

KCSIE 2026: Your questions answered

By October, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 will have been in force for over six weeks. This free Safeguarding Network Meeting will provide an opportunity for Designated Safeguarding Leads, Deputy DSLs and senior leaders to reflect on how the changes are working in practice, discuss emerging issues and ask any questions that have arisen. The session will be practical, interactive and discussion-based, and will include:

-  **KCSIE 2026 - Frequently asked questions**
-  **Interactive safeguarding scenarios based on real-life situations schools are facing**
-  **Discussion around professional curiosity, online safety and AI, Family Help, child-on-child abuse, information sharing, record keeping and decision making**
-  **Sharing safeguarding challenges, ideas and good practice with colleagues from across our schools**

More information and booking details will be shared in September. **Free to schools subscribing to our Safeguarding SLA.** I hope you can join us.

Just a reminder that I will be on **annual leave after Monday 20th July**, returning on **Tuesday 1st September 2026**. If you have an urgent query during this period, please don't hesitate to contact **Lauren via email: Lauren.Jones@services4schools.org.uk or telephone 07908 530783**. This is the final safeguarding update for the current academic year.

I sincerely appreciate your presence and dedication. Schools in general, and particularly you, continue to have a profound impact on the lives of the young children you support every day. As the holiday season approaches, I hope you find the time to relax and recharge. I eagerly look forward to being of assistance once more when September 2026 arrives.

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