

YouTube ban lifted but some learning materials still blocked for pupils

A blanket YouTube ban across Edinburgh's schools has been lifted by the council – but new measures introduced to limit online content available to pupils is now blocking teachers from accessing important lesson materials, it has emerged.

Access to the web's top video sharing site was shut off last month after pupils viewed "concerning material" on school devices, according to the council.

The move sparked a fierce backlash from students and staff who stressed the value of having YouTube available in classrooms – and called on the local authority to end the ban without delay.

Officials argued they had "no choice" but to block the site entirely to review online systems and "ensure safe access for pupils". This week, they confirmed the ban has now been lifted and a new firewall is in place.

However, it has emerged this extra layer of internet protection has created other problems for the city's schools – with teachers now unable to access some lesson resources.

Edinburgh City Council's Director of customer and digital

services, Nicola Harvey said: "YouTube was taken out of schools because of a safeguarding issue and a decision made across education. I do think it was the right thing to actually take YouTube out to make sure our children are protected."

Speaking at the education committee on Tuesday she added: "We have worked very closely with education colleagues to increase the safeguarding on YouTube and I can tell you today that YouTube has been rolled out back across all schools today.

"Some schools are saying the safeguarding that has gone in place is now restricting them from doing what they need to do but I do believe we have taken the right measures across schools to make sure our children are protected."

Ms Harvey said whilst some content on the site is age restricted 'you can still get thumbnails of information that does have inappropriate material,' adding this was the case with the initial parent complaint about YouTube which prompted the council to implement the blanked ban.

Euan Davidson, Lib Dem city councillor, said he was concerned to hear teachers aren't able to get on all the materials they need to teach lessons, asking officials if anything is being done to resolve the situation.

Ms Harvey said: "YouTube has been rolled out and safeguards are now in place and schools have access to that and all the material that we can.

"Following the parental complaint that came through where children were able to access material that they shouldn't we've now stepped up safeguarding.

"I guess the point I was making is we've subsequently had feedback that the safeguarding is restricting some material for schools."

by Donald Turvill

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