

## Case Study: United Learning Trust

# United Learning Trust Keeps Devices Safe at Home and in School With Lightspeed Filter™

## United Learning Trust

United Kingdom

Customer Since  
2020

Schools  
90

Age Range  
5-18

Devices Used  
Chromebooks  
Windows Laptops

Products Used  
Lightspeed Filter™  
Lightspeed Alert™

United Learning is the largest multi-academy trust in the UK with 75 primary and secondary academies and a further 15 independent schools.

Dave Munro has worked as a Senior Technology Specialist at United Learning for 18 months, helping to procure new academies, as well as giving them any necessary assistance with IT. “We have a team of technology specialists throughout the trust who provide guidance, advice, and support to the IT teams on-site or to third parties,” he tells us. “We’re there as an extra layer above the schools helping with projects, procurements, and any initiatives that are being pushed out.”

## New Problems

One project that Dave and his team didn’t foresee was the COVID-19 pandemic which forced schools around the country to close and create impromptu plans for remote learning and 1:1 deployments. This was a simpler task for individual schools, but for a trust of United Learning’s size, they were going to need the right solutions for scalability and safety.

The first hurdle was finding the right devices for students to continue learning at home and, after researching the available platforms, they decided that Chromebooks were the simplest and most cost-effective option. “When we went through this process, we wanted to find a solution which would have as little impact on the IT teams on-site as possible” Dave recalls. “We went for Chrome devices because we knew we could centrally manage them and we knew the filtering would need to be centrally managed as well.”

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## New Solutions with Lightspeed Filter

United Learning was impressed by the unique Smart Agent technology that powers the Lightspeed Filter which could be immediately deployed to all of the Chromebooks. This allows them to customise the filtering rules appropriately without having to involve every individual school's IT department.

"During the trial, we were looking at other solutions, but we decided to stick with Lightspeed Filter because it does everything we need and it's just been absolutely brilliant" David proclaims. "The fact we could roll it out so quickly and safeguard out students off-site centrally meant we didn't have to impact the local IT teams, which was one of our main concerns."

Since lockdown ended for schools in the UK, United Learning continued to use Lightspeed Filter for their schools. By utilising it for a mixture of on-site and online lessons they soon discovered that it has many educational features, beyond what's required for remote learning.

As it stands, all of the schools are managed at trust level which means any changes to policies and features are controlled by Dave's team, but this probably won't be the case moving forward. "We put all of the devices into one central United Learning Google tenancy, so even though we have the separate schools tiered, it's all controlled centrally" Dave shares. "Going forward we're looking to delegate access to each school, which was another thing about the Lightspeed Filter that we know works."

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## Education-Focused Features

Dave was also keen to utilise the other features of Lightspeed Filter that could help schools enhance learning: one of them being Smart Play for YouTube. Schools under the trust advocated the use of YouTube as a tool for learning but were always worried about the potentially inappropriate material students could access when using it unfiltered.

Smart Play enables them to filter YouTube directly and customise it for different students, ensuring they could still safely access educational content. "We've got Smart Play activated and appreciate the aspects it blocks like all the comments and related videos." he notes.

With devices now being used at home and in school, the customisable time-based policies in Lightspeed Filter allows United Learning to prioritise students' well-being. "We limit internet access overnight from 8:00 PM to 8:00AM. We didn't want them on the device 24 hours a day" Dave declares. "What it does mean is we can change the limitations and access based on whether it's for primary or secondary schools. We can have separate policies for different schools."

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## Protecting Against Self-Harm

Another problem schools will face when students have more access to devices is the increase in cyberbullying and other harmful behaviour. Fortunately, **Lightspeed Alert™** utilises advanced AI technology and alerts to notify schools in real time when students attempt to access dangerous sites or show worrying behaviour. “We’ve got Lightspeed Alert set up to notify us on behaviours relating to self-harm” Dave explains. “If there’s a notification for instance that a student has searched something concerning to do with self-harm, then we get a flag centrally, we report that down to the DSL in the school and forward all the details.”

Fortunately for United Learning, they haven’t had too many alerts come back so far, but to be able to be proactive and get a full activity log with screenshots of students’ behaviour is a great way to ensure they are protected.

## Conclusion

For any technical assistance or fixes United Learning have needed during the deployment and beyond, they’re able to contact our support team who are available 24/7 to help with any issues and guide them through the process. “When we’ve spoken to the tech support guys they’ve fixed any issues, when we’ve had them, pretty rapidly” Dave declares.

Ultimately, what started off as a solution to an unprecedented lockdown has evolved into the right platform to keep multiple schools and students safe, whether they’re working from home or back in school. Dave and his team are able to add new schools on to the trust and get the Lightspeed Filter deployed almost instantly. “When it came to the ease of deployment of Lightspeed Filter on Chrome devices, and how easy it was to manage, it was the right solution for the situation we were in” Dave concludes. “If any school would ask me about a filtering solution I’d recommend it wholeheartedly. It gives you the same level of filtering on-site and remotely; it’s been really easy to set up and configure and it just works.”

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