

Proxy Caching – What are schools allowed to do?

Schools can use proxy caches for free and without the permission of the copyright owner, if certain criteria are met.

What is proxy caching?

Caching is a technical process that improves the responsiveness of the Internet for users and reduces network traffic. Caches copy and store web pages accessed by users so that when other users want to access the same web pages, they access them from the cache, rather than from the originating server. The copies are stored in the cache temporarily. This speeds up Internet connection times and reduces bandwidth costs.

A proxy cache is a cache that is set up on an organisation's firewall or proxy server and is shared by all system/network users. When a system/network user accesses a web page, that page is temporarily stored in the proxy cache. Then, when a subsequent user requests the same web page, they access the copy in the proxy cache, rather than having the web page sent again from the originating server.

Who can rely on the exception?

Schools and those operating computer systems/networks on behalf of schools can rely on the exception. The exception relates to computer systems/networks operated for the primary purpose of enabling staff and students to use the Internet and intranets for educational purposes.

What does the exception cover?

The new exception allows the making of temporary copies of online material in order to make later access to the same material more efficient.

The exception ***only*** applies where a school's computer system/network:

- *automatically* makes temporary copies of material,
- where those copies are made *in response to* actions by system/network users.

(ie, where the cache automatically copies and stores a web page upon a user accessing that web page).

The exception does not apply to any storage initiated by the system operator or network manager (eg, storage to an intranet or local area network (LAN)) as this storage is not automatic, and is not in response to the action of a staff member or student viewing a webpage.

How long can material be kept on the proxy cache?

To be covered by the exception, the copies made must be *temporary*. Copies made in a proxy cache are temporary as a proxy cache will automatically overwrite stored copies when the space those copies are taking up is required for storing web pages more recently accessed. That is, as the proxy cache becomes full, each new web page accessed will be copied in place of other stored web pages.

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