Case Study:

Building a Safer Digital Environment: St. John the Apostle Primary School's Digital Journey.

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> **Simon Dundan**
> Principal

This case study explores how St. John the Apostle Primary School addressed digital challenges, specifically issues stemming from students' online activities, and how they emerged stronger through proactive measures, highlighting a united front of staff and parents.

The problem and its context

St. John the Apostle Primary School grappled with a digital dilemma. The school had limited insight into their students' online activities, both at school and at home. The knowledge gap became evident as issues of and emotional struggles surfaced on the playground.

Conversations with concerned parents during cyber safety education sessions revealed that excessive late-night device usage led to fatigue and sleep deprivation among students. In some instances, offensive language and behaviour observed on the playground seemed to originate from the digital space.

This behaviour might have been influenced by online games or interactions where students were exposed to or participated in offensive language.

Despite the school's commitment to nurturing social learning skills, new challenges emerged in guiding students to effectively navigate their emotions and resolve conflicts online. The school recognised the need to adapt and respond to the dynamics introduced by the digital world.

While such issues were not frequent, they underscored the necessity of a more comprehensive approach to understanding and managing students' online activities. The school sought to ensure their safety and promote positive behaviour, both in the offline and online realms.

Linewize
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The Linewize journey

The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic posed a unique challenge. Melbourne faced extensive lockdowns, and rapid adaptation to remote learning was imperative. Every student was provided with a device, becoming an integral enabler of their learning and socialising.

In response, the school recognised the importance of a comprehensive digital online safety approach and implemented steps to better protect students online. This involved community education sessions, staff professional development sessions on student digital online safety, and educational efforts for parents regarding social media and online safety.

These efforts revealed that the school needed to address network settings and real-time monitoring of students' online activities to ensure their safety. Before Linewize, the school had to manually comb through Google admin data to uncover students' search activities, a time-consuming and often ineffective process.

With Linewize, they could effortlessly configure filters and settings, enabling real-time notifications and alerts tailored to their students' and schools' specific needs.

As soon as we partnered with Linewize, we gained better insights into what kids were searching for online. This provided us with a deeper understanding of the types of content they might be attempting to access at home, similar to what they tried at school but couldn't access"

Simon Dundan
Principal

Picking up invisible online cues with Linewize Monitor

Linewize Monitor has been instrumental in providing unique insights into students' online behaviours. It offers a clear view of their online activities, interactions, and trends while alerting the school to intervene when necessary.

This solution has unveiled instances where students accessed Google Docs or slides to type mean content about other students, which they subsequently shared or showed to peers before deleting it. The ability to gain visibility in such situations has helped the school uncover incidents occurring behind the scenes that might have otherwise gone unnoticed.

"It goes to show that you can think that your school's running beautifully, but there's all these little things you're unaware of happening behind the scenes." - Simon Dundan

In addition, its screenshot capabilities have provided the school with concrete evidence in cases where students or parents were in denial or required more context regarding online activities, enabling more informed conversations.

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Prevention and focused learning in the classroom with Linewize Classwize

St. John the Apostle Primary School is dedicated to ensuring safety and a productive learning environment for its students. Growing online distractions in the classroom, such as opening nonacademic browser tabs, disrupted the learning process.

To address this challenge, the school adopted Linewize Classwize. This platform allows teachers to monitor students' screens in real-time, even in open and contemporary learning spaces. Teachers may not always have a clear view of individual computer screens, but Linewize Classwize solves this issue by allowing them to stay on top of what students are doing on their devices, ensuring they remain focused and engaged in their learning activities.

"If they want them to look at certain YouTube clips, they can go and send that out through Classwize. So it just helps us manage what kids are accessing and to be able to monitor what they're doing when they're on their computer out of sight from us." - Simon Dundan

Classwize also enables teachers to communicate seamlessly with students, whether they need to redirect them to the classroom, share educational resources, or guide them to relevant online content. This functionality has helped the school enhance the overall learning experience by facilitating effective classroom management.

The biggest thing is the alerts and monthly reports on what kids were searching and what was being blocked."

Simon Dundan
Principal

Promoting positive online behaviour education for better wellbeing

Linewize has played a crucial role in enhancing the school's wellbeing program and providing tailored support to students who may require additional guidance in understanding what constitutes appropriate online behaviour.

Linewize Monitor has unveiled unintended actions by students. For instance, there have been cases where students have unwittingly typed racial terms without comprehending the offensive nature of their words. These incidents present valuable teaching moments for educators. The school has seized the opportunity to engage with these students, explaining the impact of their words and helping them grasp the significance of responsible online conduct.

Promoting a deeper awareness of online consequences

This educational process has not only promoted a deeper awareness of the consequences of one's actions but has also fostered a culture of empathy and respect within the school community. It exemplifies the school's commitment to not only ensuring online safety but also nurturing the social and emotional growth of its students.

Positive parental engagement and clear boundaries all around

St. John the Apostle Primary School's implementation of Linewize solutions was met with a strong and positive response from parents. A key factor in the successful integration of this digital safety solution was the information sessions run with staff and parents.

These sessions served as a wake-up call, shedding light on the extent of students' online activities, gaming, and social media interactions. Many parents left these sessions with a newfound awareness of the digital landscape and the vital role they play in the digital journey their child is on.

Advice for other schools

St. John the Apostle Primary School recognises that as technology advances, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, as if things are spiraling out of control. This sentiment was shared among the staff at the school. While they celebrated their students' achievements in the digital world, they also recognised the importance of establishing clear boundaries to prevent potential issues from escalating.

Their recommendation is to adopt a proactive approach. Engaging parents through professional development sessions proved to be a highly effective strategy. These sessions allowed parents to better understand the school's concerns, and in return, they felt comfortable sharing their own concerns. This collaborative approach fostered unity and a deeper understanding within the school community.

As a result of uniting parents and school staff, St. John the Apostle Primary School has established more robust digital safeguarding solutions that enable them to confidently address any issues that may arise within the school. Previously, there might have been incidents that went unnoticed, but now they can respond promptly and take appropriate actions. This unity has provided them with greater peace of mind, knowing they have a stronger and more informed community dedicated to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their students in the digital age.

Impact

The school's limited visibility of the digital space was a wake-up call, but it became a catalyst for change. The implementation of Linewize not only enhanced the way technology is used in the classroom but also equipped the school with tools to deal with issues before they become critical. This, in turn, strengthened their commitment to promoting responsible online behaviour and fostering a culture of empathy and respect among students.

The school's story serves as a valuable example for other schools, emphasising the need for unity, clear boundaries, and ongoing engagement to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students in an ever-evolving digital landscape.

Contact us

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About Linewize

Linewize create school communities that free our kids to get the best out of the digital world, while protecting them from harm. We empower school communities with the tools, expertise and support they need to ensure students are safe and prepared for their digital futures.

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