

Update from Clare Kilkeer, Health and Wellbeing Champ from St Joseph's PSC.

Information from last West Lothian Family Champs meeting on 27 November 2024

Hello all!

I attended the West Lothian Family Champs meeting on 27 November 2024 where the following information was shared:

- The **Positive Connections Action plan** has been rolled out and is visible in all schools
- The **Mental Wellbeing pathway** has been rolled out, the team are taking it to school visits and fire stations, police stations etc., and the roll out continues across the county. This resource points children in the right direction should they find themselves experiencing any health or wellbeing concerns. This should be increasingly visible in the next few months, including at our own school.
- The **Active Travel** focus groups are still working on developing this theme, particularly trying to remove barriers to children walking or cycling to school.

There followed two presentations. The first was by Laura Harkins from the **Digital Learning Team** at West Lothian Council. She spoke about the DLT's role in promoting digital literacy ('Why Digital Matters' - they see it as equally important as reading, writing, numeracy in the world we live in). They acknowledge the dangers of the internet but take a balanced approach, seeking to limit the risks, and to take advantage of the learning opportunities available in the digital world. They aim for children to develop softer skills such as critical analysis, problem solving, how to use the internet safely and responsibly.

She explained that technology is not a standalone subject but is applied across all areas of the curriculum. She talked about web filtering, which blocks topics and specific websites so that children won't get exposed to inappropriate material. The level of filtering is appropriate to the age range of the setting. It is not a 100% foolproof method and so children are asked to sign up to responsible use agreements (ie they won't search for inappropriate things), and these should be done in partnership with families too. Google is always set to Safe Search Mode; if you search for a body part you will get a result, but it will be from a source eg a catalogue rather than an inappropriate website. [the family champs meetings are open to families from both secondary and primary schools]

The team will be distributing more literature to families soon, and they are promoting knowledge of the following four resources: Respect Me (an anti-cyber bullying and real life bullying service), Safer Schools (this sounds very useful: how to check the security settings of the apps your child is using. This service monitors national trends and provides real-time guidance). The UK Safer Internet Centre (they influence policy in this area) and CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection - AKA Think You Know, linked to the national crime agency).

11 February 2025 is Safer Internet Day, the theme is Protecting yourself and others from scams online, as many children have reported anxiety around scams. Around that time, a Safer Schools app will be launched which will inform parents about apps such as Snapchat, Minecraft... - it will give an overview of the app, the risks inherent in using that app, and how they can be reduced.

The top tips offered by Laura were to encourage open communication with your child, checking in regularly with them. Setting boundaries and rules about screen time and age-appropriate apps. Not giving in to peer pressure. Staying informed and involved - educate yourself about the apps they're using. Remember the internet is a place- don't let them wander around on their own.

Laura advised that use of phones at school is at the Headteacher's discretion.

Lastly, the Family champs from **Low Port and Springfield** (the 2 schools share a management team), spoke about how they promote health and wellbeing in their schools. They produced a whole calendar of events and activities including Healthy Habits sessions, RSHP. They ran Feelgood Fortnight in May during which local yoga teachers / tennis club / local shops contributed various activities to promote good health and wellbeing and all the pupils benefitted. They send out their calendar with the school newsletter and included links to GIRFEC, Childrens Mental Health resources such as Family Thinglink.

I would be very happy to answer any questions anyone has about any of the above, or about health and wellbeing issues in general, so don't hesitate to email me on clare_kilkerr@outlook.com.

All the best,

Clare