As many of the most popular social networking services do not allow children under 13 years of age to register for their services, we can be quick to dissociate ourselves, and our students, from the problems linked to the use of social networking services. However, two in five 11-12 year olds in Ireland have a social networking profile, while just under 30% have an account on a media sharing platform (such as Instagram or YouTube), according to Net Kids Go Mobile research published in February 2014.

Just as we help prepare students for the transition into post-primary school and the changes they will experience with the onset of puberty, we need to help students develop the skills to be responsible and effective online users before they sign up to these social networking and media sharing services.

What is Safer Internet Day 2015?

One way of helping your students to become better internet users is to celebrate Safer Internet Day (SID) in school on Tuesday, 10 February 2015. This is the 12th edition of the event, which started as an EU initiative and is now celebrated in more than 100 countries worldwide. Promoted in Ireland by the PDST Technology in Education and Webwise, the whole point of SID is to raise awareness of how we all can help create a better internet.

The theme for the 2015 event is ‘Let’s create a better internet together’ and the hashtags #Up2Us and #SID2015 will be used to help raise awareness online.

**SID and the Anti-Bullying Procedures**

Celebrating SID in school also provides an opportunity for your school to meet some of the requirements laid down by the Anti-Bullying Procedures for primary and post-primary schools in September 2013. The procedures require all school to implement “education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber bullying and identity-based bullying”. SID is the perfect chance to raise awareness around cyber bullying.

**New Anti-Cyber Bullying resource**

Webwise’s new anti-cyber bullying SPHE resource contains five lesson plans and three animations intended for use with fifth and sixth class pupils. The topic of responsible online photo-sharing, which is particularly relevant to students at Confirmation time and as they prepare to leave primary school, is addressed comprehensively throughout the resource. Other topics covered include the feelings that cause cyber bullying, exclusion as a form of bullying and the fact that one upsetting post can have lasting effects. The resource, which will be launched on Safer Internet Day, can be accessed free of charge through www.webwise.ie/myselfie

**What can we do to celebrate?**

Check out www.saferinternetday.ie for a list of events and suggested classroom-based activities for marking SID. If you are interested in focusing celebrations around the topic of cyber bullying, www.WatchYourSpace.ie has ideas on how to promote a more inclusive online environment. From interactive poster campaigns to RASK (Random Acts of Kindness) days, this site highlights examples of best practice from schools around Ireland.

**Share your SID plans and get rewarded**

Webwise would like to support schools’ efforts to mark SID. Share your SID plans through the online form at www.saferinternetday.ie and you’ll receive anti-cyber bullying wristbands and badges to distribute on the day.

**Try this with your class**

Watch the Webwise animation on photo sharing at www.webwise.ie/thephoto. The photo animation (and the following maths activity, which can be extended to explain the mathematical concept of indices to sixth class students) shows how picture sharing can easily get out of hand. Emphasise to the students that anything they share online can be shared and is no longer private.

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