



Why Digital Visibility is Critical for Student Wellbeing

A complete guide for school leaders and anyone with a student wellbeing responsibility.



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Introduction

The digital landscape has become a major battleground in recent times.

Children and young people are spending more and more time in virtual environments, socialising with peers and learning new things, making it increasingly challenging for schools to fulfil their mission of supporting and guiding students in life. Why? Because identifying warning signs or understanding why students are feeling the way they are can be incredibly difficult, further complicating efforts to manage students' digital wellbeing.



You may already be feeling or seeing some issues arise at your school and may be discussing how best to respond.

Digital wellbeing refers to the overall health and wellbeing of individuals in their digital environment and encompasses mental, physical, social, emotional, and academic wellbeing.

Managing digital wellbeing is not just about managing screen time or digital distractions; it's about considering the broader impact of experiences within and the relationship with the digital world, supporting and guiding individuals in their digital journey to support their overall wellbeing.

On and Offline Factors & Impact on Wellbeing

A young person's digital environment is indistinguishable from their **everyday, lived environment**.

When a student is exposed to online harm or vulnerability, there may be signs that parents or staff can detect through observation, with eyes and ears alone - changes in behaviour, mood, appearance, or academic performance being some examples. However, there are several more indications within the child's digital world that remain inaccessible to parents and schools, making them invisible.

The actions, words, and content shared by children online, and with whom they interact, can potentially expose them to harm. It can also indicate the emergence of early stage risk and behavioural patterns that could, without intervention, escalate into something far more serious.

Their behaviours can also reveal vulnerabilities in other areas of their lives. Mental health concerns or suicidal ideation are often discussed with friends in online forums or feelings can be expressed in a document then quickly deleted. Kids are rarely forthcoming about things like these with adults.

We call this 'see/can't see' phenomenon the Iceberg Effect. We believe it is one of the biggest barriers to managing a child's digital wellbeing and is a major blind spot in schools across Australia and globally.

Offline risks you can see



Changes in behaviour. Injuries/bruises, tip offs from peers, absenteeism.

Digital risks you can't see



Online bullying or conversations about drugs/extremism/being harmed, hidden bruises/ injuries, unspoken negative feelings and thoughts.

The Hidden Risks, and Where to Look

To **fully support the wellbeing** of children and young people requires consideration of both on and offline factors.

“Visibility” is the capacity to see and understand the digital habits, behaviours, and risks of and for children and young people. It is crucial for digital wellbeing as it helps schools negate risk by informing preventative measures to protect and support individuals based on their specific needs.

Visibility can help detect problems and respond to issues you were previously unaware of and help students who hadn't been shown to be at risk or struggling. By monitoring online behaviour such as searches and interactions, it is possible to identify patterns and behaviours that may be negatively impacting our wellbeing. Having visibility also gives more control over the digital environment and promotes online safety.

By understanding how devices and services work (including their associated risks), it is possible to make informed decisions about how to use them and to protect ourselves and our personal information. Schools can move from reactive cybersafety to proactive safeguarding practices.

Visibility is crucial for digital wellbeing as:

- It helps schools negate risk by informing preventative measures to protect and support individuals based on their specific needs.
- It can help detect problems and respond to issues you were previously unaware of and help students who hadn't been shown to be at risk.
- It reduces the need for intervention down the track, by preventing issues from escalating.
- It gives you more control over the digital environment, and promotes online safety.
- It enables you to make informed decisions in your school's digital safeguarding strategies and initiatives.
- It allows you to better understand the reasons behind your students feelings, and what help they need.

Vulnerable children can often be spotted through their digital behaviour.



The Downside of Traditional Methods

Eyes and ears only in the online world is hard.

Many schools rely on the observations and intuition of teachers to determine who is struggling and why. Though this is important, it is not always feasible for staff to supervise on-screen activities or to connect with every student individually on a daily basis.

Also, physical monitoring does not facilitate pattern building or trend analysis. One minor incident spotted and addressed can be quickly forgotten. But a joining up of seemingly innocent online actions can reveal previously invisible dangers.

Moreover, when students leave school grounds, they are exposed to unprotected online risks and unguided digital environments, increasing the expectations on schools to deal with issues wherever and whenever they occur.

While observation is an important tool for understanding and supporting a child's wellbeing, and intuition is almost always right, it is not sufficient on its own. Children may conceal their struggles, and some may not be able to recognise or articulate their issues. Having visibility can help address this.

How to Make The Invisible, Visible

To improve visibility in students' digital wellbeing, schools need to consider three key areas: **Feelings, Intentions, Actions.**

Feelings: Their perceived emotions and sensations

It's essential to check in with students about their emotional state and wellbeing. Their own perception of what's going on in their lives is a good indicator, so monitoring changes in mood or behaviour can provide insights into their wellbeing. Asking students regularly how they're feeling is a good starting point for addressing any concerns and getting on top of things.

Actions: How they are interacting

Lastly, it's crucial to know if students are having inappropriate conversations with adults online, having self-harm ideations, sharing personal and sensitive information. By monitoring their digital interactions and behaviour, schools can identify any potentially harmful activity, and put preventative measures in place to protect and support students based on their specific needs.

Intentions: What are they searching for

Understanding what students are searching for online can provide valuable information about their intentions, interests, concerns, and potential risks. Staying on top of searches can identify patterns and behaviours that may negatively impact their wellbeing. It can surface broad trends or issues, generally at an aggregated level, allowing you to guide your students towards effective use of technology.

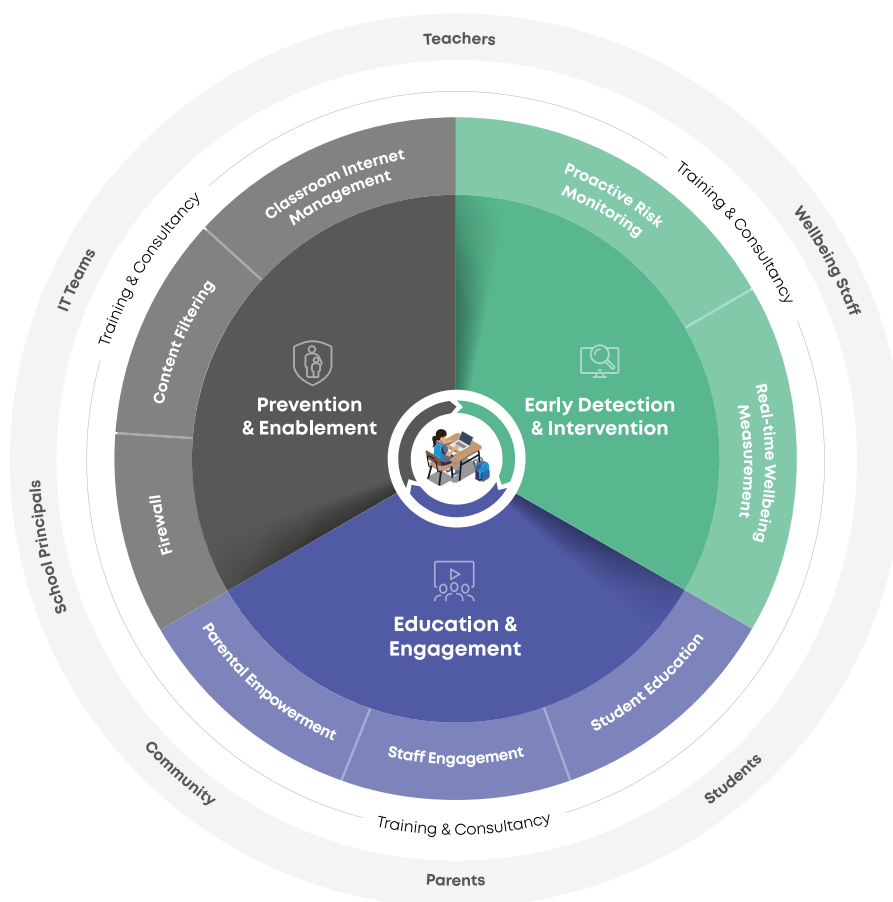
Engaging the Whole School Community

In response to a greater need for visibility to better support students' digital activity and their online journey we developed the **Linewize Digital Wellbeing Framework**.

It helps you assess your school's current digital safeguarding strategies and prioritise action areas where more visibility is needed for targeted support.

The right information. Right people. Right time.

The Framework allows schools to address their unique digital safety and wellbeing requirements with solutions that empower the whole school community. This allows everyone to play their part in increasing visibility, without any stakeholder carrying a disproportionate load, and transforming wellbeing.



Concluding Remarks

To wrap up, digital wellbeing is a **critical aspect of modern life**, particularly for children and young people.

It's crucial to promote responsible and ethical use of technology to support overall wellbeing. But the impact of technology on our mental, physical, social, and emotional health is far-reaching and complex, so we must consider the broader impact of digital experiences to support the overall wellbeing of students.

Visibility is key to promoting digital wellbeing by understanding digital habits, behaviours, and risks, and implementing preventative measures to protect and support students based on their specific needs.

By tracking and monitoring online usage, reviewing settings, teaching about digital safety, and promoting regular communication, we can become more aware of our habits and behaviours, make informed decisions about technology use, and support the wellbeing of young people.

By promoting digital wellbeing and visibility, we can help young people navigate the complexities of the digital world, and ultimately promote their overall wellbeing and success in life.





Linewize is a unique response to the challenge of today's connected learning environments, supporting the integration of technology, education and engagement to create cyber safe communities where students thrive.

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Linewize is part of Qoria, a global technology company, dedicated to keeping children safe and well in their digital lives. We harness the power of connection to close the gaps that children fall through, and to seamlessly support them on all sides - at school, at home and everywhere in between.

Find out more
www.qoria.com