

St. Just Primary School

Healthy Schools Plus case study

Background

St Just Primary School draws its pupils, numbering about 185, from the town of St. Just and neighbouring villages and hamlets.

Priority areas

The school identified two areas of work, firstly, to improve pupils' healthy choices by growing and cooking produce and secondly, to help pupils to use the internet and mobile communications safely, to inform parents of the dangers of cyber-bullying and to equip them with the knowledge to keep their children safe online.

What was the need?

The school conducted surveys to determine baselines. Data showed that few children were involved in growing their own produce at home and also that although around 95% had access to the internet at home and 60% of children in Years 5 and 6 were using social networking sites there was a lack of understanding and knowledge among the children about the dangers of social networking on the internet.

The work

Growing and cooking project

The school council consulted and it was decided that each class should have its own planter. Four large planters, some smaller planters and trellises were purchased and the school collected "Let's Grow" vouchers and bought a greenhouse. Each KS 2 class has their own planter. The children sowed the seeds and planted out in early summer. They are responsible for care and regular watering. KS 1 have created a "secret garden". All children have had cookery lessons, many of which have used the produce grown by the children. The cookery club (with professional chef John Perry from the Tregenna Castle Hotel) further enhanced their skills and the whole school was involved in the Cookathon.

Online safety

The school created a team to manage the project which sought to educate and inform parents, carers and pupils. Local police youth officer, Tracy Fuller came into school to talk with the Year 5 and 6 pupils. The children were shown a video about a boy who was the subject of text message bullying. This video had a dramatic effect on the children who realised that text bullying is a serious form of bullying

that can have a devastating effect, that it is a punishable offence and that the police can take action. A second video showed how easy it is for an intruder to make contact through a social networking site, hiding true identity and age. The video prompted much discussion among pupils, who were amazed at the ease with which identity can be hidden. Further work took place in citizenship lessons.

The school also asked Tracy Fuller to run a workshop for parents. She showed parents both of the videos that were shown to the children as well as a further powerful video aimed at parents

What difference has the work made?

Growing and cooking project

A repeat of the baseline survey showed that an increased number of children in all years became involved in growing produce at home as a direct result of the growing work in school. During the summer months the produce from the garden (radishes, tomatoes, peppers, peas, beetroot, spring onions and many varieties of lettuce) was used in the school kitchen as part of the salad bar. Everyone involved developed a better understanding of where our food comes from. Children were encouraged to try new foods as part of their school lunches and in cookery sessions. The kitchen reported a steady uptake of school meals throughout the summer term, normally a time of decreasing numbers (the school's uptake of school meals is consistently above 90%). The school greatly developed and enlarged its growing area, gave the local community the skills to grow their own produce for use in their cooking and addressed the concern of childhood obesity by promoting healthy eating.

Online safety

By informing parents, carers and children, the school has raised awareness and helped to keep children safe. Further to the information sessions, the school decided to write a policy for cyber-bullying and this was distributed to all parents.

The words of those who took part

On Open Day, parents said:

"The garden looks lovely from the road."

"What a great opportunity for children to learn to grow!"

"How lovely! I'd like to sit on the bench and enjoy the garden."

After the Cookathon children said:

"We cooked the recipe at home. It tasted really good!" Stan, Year 3

"I cooked at home. I learnt how to chop vegetables." Elliot, Year 3

"The Cookathon was really good." Libby, Year 4

"It was really fun – the food was nice and tasty." Cameron, Year 3

"I helped my brother to cook the dish at home. It was good!" Jago, Year 3

"It was fun learning how to cook." Ollie, Year 3

Feedback from parents after the online safety workshop:

"It was an eye-opener."

"Not having Facebook at home it was good to be informed. What can happen is scary."

"I know what to discuss with my children."

Where next?

The school will continue the growing and cooking work and plans to take part in the Cookathon again.

Internet safety has become an integral part of the school's anti-bullying work and it will be re-visited annually.