Pivot

CYBER SAFETY PROJECT

Evidence & Impact Report 2025

New Insights into Effective Online Safety Education

Executive Summary

The impact of the online world on Australian children is a matter of urgent concern for educators, schools, parents and policy makers. The responsibility of schools to deliver high quality, effective online safety education is now a national priority as incidents of online bullying, online exploitation, and digital addiction continue to impact students.

Two educator-lead Australian companies, the Cyber Safety Project (CSP) and Pivot, collaborated to test the impact and efficacy of CSP's online safety pilot program on the skills, behaviours, attitudes and wellbeing of upper primary students in Australian schools. By bringing together CSP's expertise in online safety education and Pivot's strength in educational data and analytics, a compelling story emerged for empowering students and educators through digital literacy.

This powerful partnership is committed to contributing to national policy and practice: providing data that can influence how online safety is taught in schools across Australia, and supporting school communities with actionable insights to improve for implementing a strong, sound online safety strategy.

Our findings show:

1. **We *can* teach online safety effectively in school settings:** Online safety education can have a large and positive impact on students skills, behaviours and attitudes.
2. **Student-teacher relationships are critical to online safety learning:** Overall wellbeing and teacher connectedness are important parts of effective successful online safety education.
3. **To achieve maximum impact, online safety programs must be well designed:** The CSP approach is a validated, robust and reliable program supporting online safety learning for students across a range of year levels.

The Australian Federal Government has recently enacted legislation prohibiting individuals under the age of 16 from creating accounts on certain social media platforms, with these laws set to take effect by November 2025. This is a significant step that reflects community concern in relation to protecting Australian students' wellbeing and safety. This legislative requirement also reinforces the high expectations on schools to maintain the safety and wellbeing of students when online, including as part of curriculum delivery, and the importance of well-researched and rigorously tested education programs such as CSP's Online Safety and Digital Citizenship Curriculum.

Our analysis of the pilot program has resulted in key insights relating to the effectiveness of the CSP approach. We make six key recommendations for schools and policy makers when considering the delivery of online safety curricula. Our analysis has resulted in CSP and Pivot better understanding the impact of their respective tools, and how each can work to reinforce the benefits of the other.

About the Pilot

Participants were drawn from diverse demographic contexts, with six schools from Victoria and one from Queensland contributing to the study. The participating schools included rural and metropolitan contexts and represented all sectors of the Australian education system (Government, Catholic, and Independent).

The online safety program involved a weekly 45-minute instructional lesson delivered over eight weeks. Educators received pre-training via a digital platform to ensure consistent and effective implementation. The intervention was facilitated by qualified educators, whose roles included classroom teachers and digital specialists. A total of 881 students participated in the study, with 1563 student responses recorded.

The program's effectiveness was assessed using three pre- and post-intervention methods:

- **Cyber Safety Knowledge and Skills Quiz:** A 10-question quiz directly aligned with the program content to measure students' knowledge and skills.
- **Student Perception Survey:** A 30-item survey combining 25 questions on evidence-based elements of effective teaching practice with 5 targeted questions on shifts in student knowledge, skills, behaviours, and attitudes.
- **Student Wellbeing Survey:** A 15-item survey, including a question specifically addressing online safety, to gauge student wellbeing.

The implementation of the pilot project occurred between 17 June 2024 and 21 October 2024. Participating schools were provided with complimentary access to all program resources, including instructional materials, surveys, and professional development inputs.

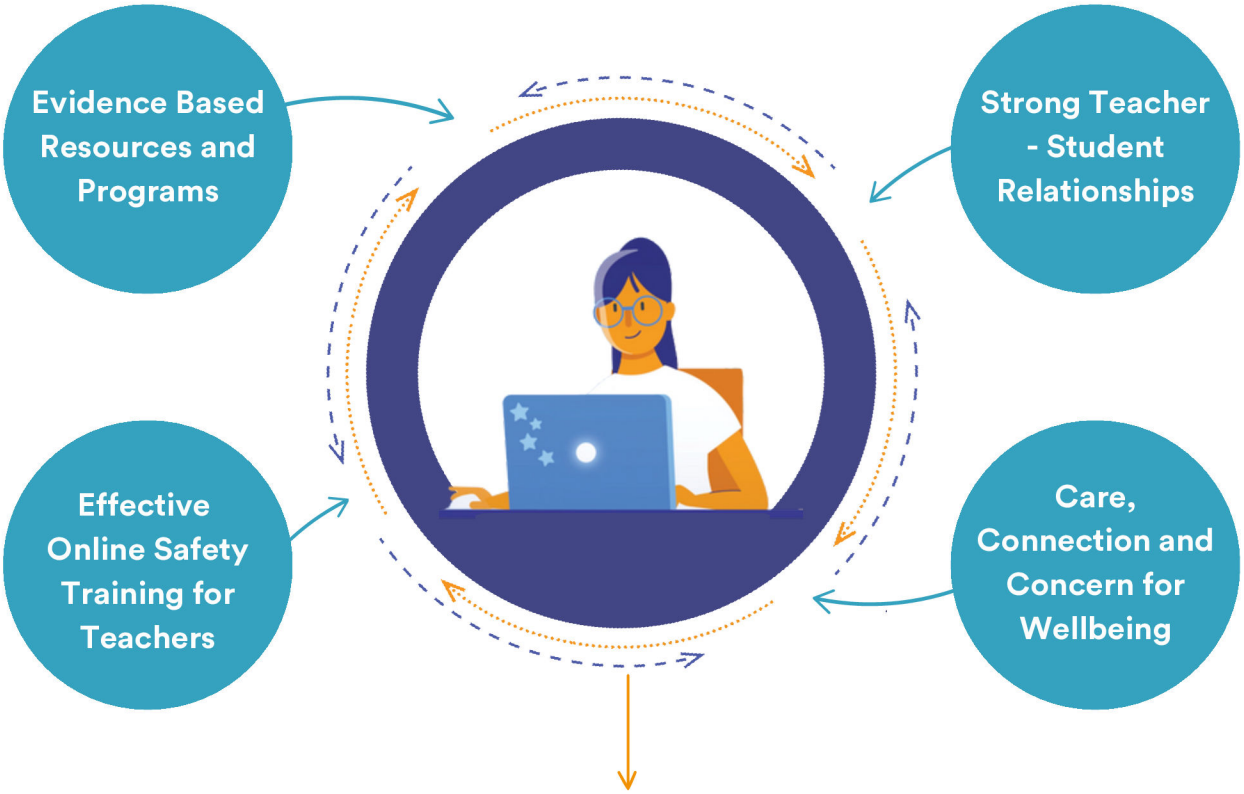
Key Insights

Insight #1: Cyber safety can be effectively taught when teachers are provided with effective training and evidence-based resources. In this study, we found that the CSP was effective in lifting teacher capability, and this lifted students' online safety knowledge. This supports cyber safety education being a part of every teacher's training and toolkit. When teachers are effectively trained in online safety the impact on student's knowledge of online safety will be greater.

Insight #2: The role of the teacher cannot be underestimated: A teacher's current and contemporary knowledge of online safety has as much impact as their connection with the student. Students quickly assess a teacher's credibility and knowledge of the topic, and this likely leads to better quality teaching and learning outcomes in this area. We also found care, connection and relational trust with a teacher positively contributes to the impact of online safety learning.

Insight #3: Pivot's statistical analysis found that the design and structure of CSP's online safety program was a robust, valid and reliable measurement of online safety knowledge. The five items used to assess teachers' development of online safety were moderately to strongly correlated. We also found that the CSP program is effective with students across different grade levels. This finding statistically supports the thoughtful design and research that underlies the CSP program.

These insights collectively drive our emerging understanding of 'what works' in online safety education in Australia.



Recommendations

Our recommendations fall broadly into two spheres: for **system leaders and policy-makers**, and for **stakeholders in school settings**. School settings encompass a broad range of stakeholders, from students and their families, to educators and school leaders.

For School Settings

Recommendation One: Embed hands-on practice for online safety skills and continue to reinforce more abstract concepts.
Knowledge acquisition was greatest where the content was 'concrete', such as teachers equipping students with strategies to protect personal information (+14.2%) and teaching students how to create a long, strong and secure password (+30.6%). More 'soft' or abstract skills, such as recognising online risks, benefit from longer-term and regular exposure and reinforcement in line with students' development.

Recommendation Two: Monitoring student wellbeing provides a baseline for understanding where students are 'at', that can support their online safety
Our pilot schools noted the potential impact of tracking student wellbeing, in particular resilience, through more regular check-ins or surveys. By monitoring students' emotional resilience and safety perceptions across a range of contexts (digital and physical) timely interventions can be put in place (including identifying individual at-risk students).

Recommendation Three: Help seeking is a vital (but difficult) element of online safety training that is enabled when students trust and respect their teachers and should be continually reinforced.
Research shows child self-disclosure improves with empathetic, responsive learning environments. Our pilot suggests that students' overall impressions of teaching quality predict their comfort in raising problems related to online safety with their teacher. However, students may still be reluctant to seek help from adults at school, even when they viewed teachers as encouraging and supportive.

The CSP program will continue to reinforce the importance of active listening by teachers. Schools can also measure students' perceptions of their teachers effectiveness through Pivot's Student Survey on Teaching. Both measures can support stronger relationships which support students to seek help when they need it.

For Systems Leaders and Policy Makers

Recommendation Four: Seek out high quality online safety education programs
Not all online safety education is equal. We recommend the highest expectations of online safety education providers - meaning an evidence-based, well-constructed, proactive, sequenced curriculum that offers multiple exposures to key security, safety and wellbeing concepts. Ideally, pre and post measures are taken, and refinements made consistently over time as the online safety landscape changes.

Pivot's research found that the CSP approach is both valid and reliable, and this pilot indicates CSP's willingness to test and improve their offering in response to evidence.

Recommendation Five: Provide guidance for schools in tailoring online safety programs to unique school contexts
Throughout the pilot, we noted each participating school's appetite to better understand and implement contextualised online safety programs. With the right mix of educator and e-safety expertise, school-specific data becomes a powerful information source to identify distinct challenges and strengths in online safety practices. Incorporating additional data for triangulation, such as online safety incidents, enhances context-specific understanding. Tailoring interventions using these insights can support online safety programs to more effectively address gaps, and deliver targeted support to each unique school community.

Recommendation Six: Build teacher capacity and confidence and invest in system-wide professional learning
Provide targeted professional development and embed accessible, practical resources to empower teachers in delivering effective online safety education that meets them 'where they are'. Regular, evidence-based training programs should focus on building teachers' understanding of digital risks and equipping them with intervention strategies, while keeping them informed about emerging trends. Crucially, online safety must become a permanent 'agenda item' for system leaders alongside developing responsive, dynamic toolkits available to all educators from Foundation to school completion.

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Introduction

Project Scope

Digital technology is an integral part of childhood, offering young people opportunities for learning, connection, and growth (Fokides & Kefallinou, 2020; Moyer-Packenham et al. (2019); Wu et al., 2023). However, it also presents significant challenges, particularly around safety, wellbeing, and ethical online behaviour. As young people increasingly navigate these digital spaces, teachers play a critical role in guiding safe and responsible online practices (Rahman et al., 2020; Saglam et al., 2023; Kritzinger, 2017). To fulfil this role effectively, educators need the right tools, resources, and training to foster trust, confidence, and proactive engagement with students in the digital world.

This pilot project sought to understand effectiveness of CSP's structured online safety resources and measure the impact these tools have on student online safety outcomes and perceptions of their educators. The project sought to examine whether and if so, to what extent, the Cyber Safety Project's online safety program contributed to changes in student online safety knowledge and skills, student online safety behaviours (e.g. reportable incidents) and student self-reported wellbeing, the quality of teacher-student relationships, and teacher knowledge and confidence in teaching online safety.

Using data from Pivot's surveys and the Cyber Safety Project's digital citizenship framework, the study highlights the importance of empowering teachers to foster positive and safe online behaviours. Specifically, it explores how a well-implemented curriculum can create supportive environments where students feel confident seeking help for online challenges—an essential factor outlined in the Young and Resilient Research Centre eSafety report (2021), which states: "Young people want to be confident that adults have the knowledge to help them and won't punish or patronise them for seeking help."

The Best Practice Framework for Online Safety Education (2020) advocates for a multi-dimensional strategy centred on equipping teachers with competencies in digital citizenship and social-emotional literacy, addressing the growing complexity of online risks. Our collaborative approach aligns with this recommendation, emphasising education as a transformative tool for behaviour change.

The urgency for understanding 'what works' with respect to online safety training can also be found in the Australian Curriculum V9 (2023) Digital Literacy Capability which outlines that, while digital technologies enhance learning and connection, they also pose unique mental health and safety risks. Empowering teachers with informed strategies will help students navigate these challenges.

The Cyber Safety Project's solution builds on the principles of responsibility, integrity, strength, and empathy. By equipping educators with practical teaching strategies and explicit guidance on ethical ICT use—aligned with AITSL standards—the program helps teachers create environments where students feel empowered, supported, and prepared to navigate their online safety journey responsibly.

The Pilot Project

We conducted a pilot project to evaluate the impact of a structured program (CSP) aimed at fostering online safety skills, attitudes, and behaviours in upper primary-aged students. This initiative sought to address both teacher preparedness and student outcomes by integrating targeted professional development for educators with a comprehensive learning program for students.

The pilot study was focussed on both teachers and students:

- For Teachers (n=34): Professional development sessions were designed to enhance teachers' knowledge, confidence, and skills in delivering effective online safety education. This included dedicated training sessions, practical resources, and ongoing support to empower educators in creating a safe and informed digital learning environment.

- For Students (n=881): The program comprised eight online safety lessons tailored to Year 3, 4, 5 and 6 students, designed to build their understanding of online safety and foster responsible digital behaviours. The curriculum emphasised real-world or hands-on applicability, equipping students with the skills and attitudes necessary to navigate online spaces confidently and ethically.

Data collection focused on measuring key indicators of success for both groups. For teachers, the study tracked changes in knowledge, confidence, and the perceived utility of the training. For students, the research examined shifts in knowledge, attitudes, perception of teacher 'skill' in delivering the online safety program, and self-reported behaviours related to online safety. By aligning these measures with our theory of change, this pilot study aimed to generate actionable insights and inform future iterations of the initiative and potential research.

This report presents the findings of the pilot study, organised into sections that describe the findings, analysis, and recommendations for scaling the program and online safety education more broadly.

Program Description: Cyber Safety Project

Professional Learning (PL) for Teachers

In Term 2, 2024, participating teachers and school leaders attended a 60-minute online professional learning session. This session focused on:

- Providing background to all participating teachers and relevant leaders on the importance of online safety education. A recording was provided to all participating schools to share with colleagues and for repeat viewing.
- Key insights into the latest digital trends and the challenges faced by young people.
- An induction to the Cyber Safety Project Educator Hub curriculum and resources.

Participating classroom teachers were provided access to the Cyber Safety Project Educator Hub, a resource comprising 16 lessons that target cyber security, online safety, and digital wellbeing. These lessons are underpinned by four core values of digital citizenship: Responsibility, Integrity, Strength, and Empathy.

For the pilot, educators were tasked with delivering eight (of the sixteen) lessons over eight weeks. These lessons focused on the values of Responsibility (addressing topics such as protecting personal information and creating effective passwords) and Integrity (promoting safe and respectful online behaviours).

Student Cyber Safety Curriculum

Educators delivered eight (of the sixteen) lessons of 45-minute duration over eight weeks. These lessons focused on the values of Responsibility (addressing topics such as protecting personal information and creating effective passwords) and Integrity (promoting safe and respectful online behaviours). Each 45-minute lesson included:

- A "Tuning In" video to engage and focus students.
- Lesson guides following the Instructional Model to facilitate classroom discussions.
- Student activities to authentically reinforce key concepts.

Students were provided with a developmentally appropriate curriculum, based on grade level, focused on **Responsibility** and **Integrity**. A high-level outline of each lesson is provided below.

Unit	Grade	Learning Focus
Responsibility	3 & 4	• Students explain ways they can protect themselves online by identifying their own personally identifiable information. • Students learn to classify the spaces they live, learn and play in online into Personal, Private and Public. • Students discover types of information safe to share online and what information should be kept personal. • Students discover strategies to create and remember unique and complex passwords.
	5 & 6	• Students establish strategies to create strong passwords to keep their accounts and digital spaces secure. • Students categorise commonly accessed digital applications and platforms into personal, private and public. • Students create every day digital reminders to maintain safety when learning, connecting and playing online. • Students develop skills to scrutinise published media and evaluate the credibility of online information.

Unit	Grade	Learning Focus
Integrity	3 & 4	• Students consider responses to online ethical dilemmas and when they need to give or seek consent. • Students determine ways to identify dishonest people online and develop strategies to use if they do. • Students consolidate how to identify email communication as spam and develop strategies to protect this personal space. • Students develop strategies to identify valid and credible information before believing something to be true.
	5 & 6	• Students evaluate types of information that can place one's safety, privacy and digital reputation at risk. • Students consider the perspectives of a range of people who can view their online profile. • Students identify the most ethical, sensible and respectful ways to overcome online challenges. • Students explore the ethics and ramifications behind intellectual property, plagiarism and defamation online.

Other resources available to educators via the Cyber Safety Hub included:

- Cyber Safety Project Emotions Cards to develop students' social and emotional learning
- Classroom Posters reinforcing key topics and promoting continuity of care
- Engaging interactive resources aligned to specific lessons
- Curriculum Maps aligning each lesson to the state and Australian curricula
- Report comments to support educators in reporting to families
- Certificates of recognition to celebrate and highlight student achievements in online and cyber safety, and digital wellbeing

The remaining eight lessons in the Cyber Safety Educator Hub were available to educators but not implemented during the eight week program. These lessons are focused on the Cyber Safety Project core values of Strength (developing strategies for a healthy digital balance and positive role modelling online) and Empathy (considering others and acting as an upstander in online situations). These complement and build upon the initial eight lessons included in the project scope.

Post-Program Interviews with School Pilot Leads

At the conclusion of the pilot, one-on-one interviews were conducted with school leaders and relevant stakeholders to collect qualitative data. A total of 7 x 60-minute interviews, one with each participating school, were held and attended by both the Pivot and Cyber Safety Project teams. These interviews provided valuable insights into the project's implementation and outcomes from the perspective of school leadership, and these insights have informed the key findings and recommendations.

Pilot Project Timeline

1 March 2024
School Recruitment Phase
Broad outreach conducted to gather interested participants

14 March 2024
Online Safety Measures Design
Pivot and CSP teams designed survey items and knowledge and skills assessment

School Term Break

19 April 2024
Expressions of Interest Video Call
Online video call briefing outline the pilot conducted for interested participants

26 April 2024
Participating Schools Confirmed
Final sample of 7 schools selected

28 May 2024
Webinar for Participating Schools
Information, timelines and requirements shared with participating schools

17 June 2024
Wellbeing for Learning Survey Baseline
Baseline survey administered

15 July 2024
Cyber Safety Knowledge Check Pre-Quiz
Students completed knowledge and skills assessment prior to CSP program

15 July 2024
Student Survey on Teaching Cycle 1
First cycle of Student Survey on Teaching administered with online safety questions

9 August 2024
Cyber Safety Knowledge Check Post-Quiz #1
Part #1 of post-quiz administered, addressing Responsibility Lessons

12 August - 12 September 2024
Wellbeing for Learning Survey Check-In Cycles
Check-In Cycles administered

6 September 2024
Cyber Safety Knowledge Check Post-Quiz #2
Part #2 of post-quiz administered, addressing Integrity Lessons

School Term Break

7 October 2024
Student Survey on Teaching Cycle 2
Second cycle of Student Survey on Teaching administered with online safety questions

24 October 2024
Post-Pilot Interviews
Post-pilot interviews conducted with participating schools

November 2024
Statistical Analysis
Statistician-led analysis of data insights to formulate findings and recommendations

January 2025
Pilot Findings and Recommendations

Pilot Design

This pilot design was designed as a small-scale, preliminary study to inform the potential preparation of a more comprehensive investigation (Cadete, 2017). Our mixed-methods design is typical in evaluating pilot programmes, whereby a focus remains on the 'key ingredients for success' for implementation and processes as well as suggesting early findings regarding impact. Findings from the pilot may be indicative of the potential for future research in assessing impact on student outcomes (knowledge and skills, behaviours and attitudes).

School, Teacher and Student Sample

34 teachers and 1001 students were involved in the pilot project from seven participating schools, located across two states: six in Victoria and one in Queensland. The seven primary schools had not previously implemented Cyber Safety Project programs or participated in Pivot surveys to explore the impact of structured online safety education. A diverse representation of schools took part in the pilot, including five Government schools, one Catholic school, and one independent school.

Student Surveys

Pivot administered two different surveys pre- and post- program to gather student feedback.

Student Survey on Teaching

Pivot's Student Survey on Teaching collected insights on students' perceptions of their teacher's practice across three-factor model, or 'domains', (classroom environment, instruction and relationships) with a single survey item pertaining to student voice (see Appendix X). The survey's 25 items are all empirically connected to research that matches teaching practices to student achievement gains, and the items are organised within the three-factor model that is conceptually supported by the research on quality teaching practice areas. This includes teacher clarity (Titsworth et al., 2015), collaborative learning (Tennenbaum et al., 2020), effective feedback (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Wisniewski et al., 2020), clear goal-setting (Gollwitzer & Sheeran, 2006; Marzano et al., 2003), strong classroom management (Marzano & Marzano., 2003), and challenging students to think critically and deeply about content (Klauer & Phye, 2008; Marzano, 2000), amongst others.

The core survey was complemented by **five additional questions** focused on online safety education. Student responses to this survey are anonymous. The survey included the following newly developed questions designed to gather feedback on the impact of the Cyber Safety Project's program:

- This teacher has taught me how to create a long, strong, and secure password. (Level 3-4, Lesson 4; Level 5-6 Lesson 1)
- This teacher has shown me ways to protect personal information online. (Level 3-4. Lessons 1 & 3; Level 5-6, Lessons 2 & 3)
- This teacher has shown me how to be kind and respectful when I talk and share with others online. (Level 3-4, Lesson 5; Level 5-6, Lessons 6 & 7)
- This teacher helps me understand why it's not always safe online.
- I feel comfortable talking to my teacher if I'm having a cyber safety problem.

Likert scales for young people are more appropriate when questions are concrete. Mellor and Moore (2014) examined the validity of the use of Likert scales in children aged six to 13 years with a sample of 111 Anglo-Australian children from the state of Victoria. They compared results from a variety of scale types and question types, finding that younger children's responses to survey items were most capable of answering questions about concrete or physical tasks.

For older primary school-aged students, such as those participating in this pilot, Pivot adopted a six-point Likert scale on the agree/disagree continuum for its Student Survey on Teaching. Part of the rationale for this is to force choice for participants such that satisficing responses that would hinder data integrity can be minimised, while also allowing for greater granularity of responses (e.g. three levels of agreement / disagreement, with two scales that allow respondents to anchor close to a midpoint score). This adjustment remains in alignment with research suggesting that for older children, five-to-seven-point scales provide solid validity and reliability while also providing us with the opportunity to examine whether results also provide more fine-grained information to distinguish between students' perceptions of their teachers.

Student Wellbeing for Learning Survey

Pivot's Wellbeing for Learning Survey gathered student self-reported wellbeing metrics through a 15-item survey. The survey questions (see Appendix A) are aligned with three broad evidence-based wellbeing domains, including resilience, safety and belonging. Resilience, which relates to mindsets for wellbeing and learning, involves being able to adapt to adversity. Belonging, which addresses relationships at school, refers to feeling accepted and valued by peers and the wider school community. Safety, which relates to the school environment, involves feeling and being physically and emotionally safe at school and online. This framework is broadly consistent with the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework (2025) to recognise the connections between student safety, wellbeing and learning outcomes.

The survey uses a unipolar 5-point frequency scale ranging from "Never" to "Almost Always" for all 15 survey items. Students completed a baseline survey and one series of weekly questionnaires (or 'check-ins') where students answer each question a second time, with additional questions relating to general wellbeing, and range of protective behaviours including sleep, schoolwork, friendships, family relationships, health and hobbies. Students can access age-appropriate scenarios to support comprehension of each question. Student responses are not anonymous, and students can reach out for help from a staff member or from an external wellbeing service. Further information regarding the development and statistical testing of the Pivot Wellbeing for Learning survey is available here.

As part of the 15-item survey, one item ('I feel safe from online bullying') directly asked students to provide a rating on their perceptions of safety online.

Cyber Safety Project Knowledge Checkpoints

To assess knowledge acquisition and behavioural change, students completed a series of digital quizzes. A pre-knowledge test was conducted prior to the lessons, followed by checkpoint quizzes for each lesson set (four quizzes for Responsibility-focused lessons and four for Integrity-focused lessons). Each knowledge question was multiple-choice format and quizzes were designed to test competency or attitudes aligned to the graded program. A full set of the quiz questions are available in Appendix D.

Pilot Findings

At the conclusion of the surveys and interviews, Pivot's statistician-lead team conducted a range of typical analysis (e.g., correlation, bi-variate analyses) and analysed the qualitative data from the interviews.

Three key findings emerged from our pilot project.

Finding #1: Online Safety Knowledge and Skills: The Link Between Student Knowledge and Teacher Capability

Teachers were provided with a robust program with strong learning design principles through the Cyber Safety Project Educator Hub. In this study, we found that teacher capability was supported and as a result, student responses showed positive changes across a number of key areas in online safety. The strongest gains across the 8-week program was in teaching students how to create secure passwords (+30.6%). This suggests the program excelled in delivering specific, actionable knowledge for young people in relation to password safety. Students saw smaller improvements in degree of comfort discussing online safety issues with teachers (+0.5%) and understanding the risks of being online (+5.0%), which were more likely to be impacted by the established student-teacher relationship. This may highlight areas for further focus in supporting disclosure, perhaps through more relational and scenario-based approaches. The consistent improvements, from small to significant across all measures, demonstrate the program's value in enhancing online safety knowledge and skills.

Summary of All Student Responses across Online Safety Additional Questions

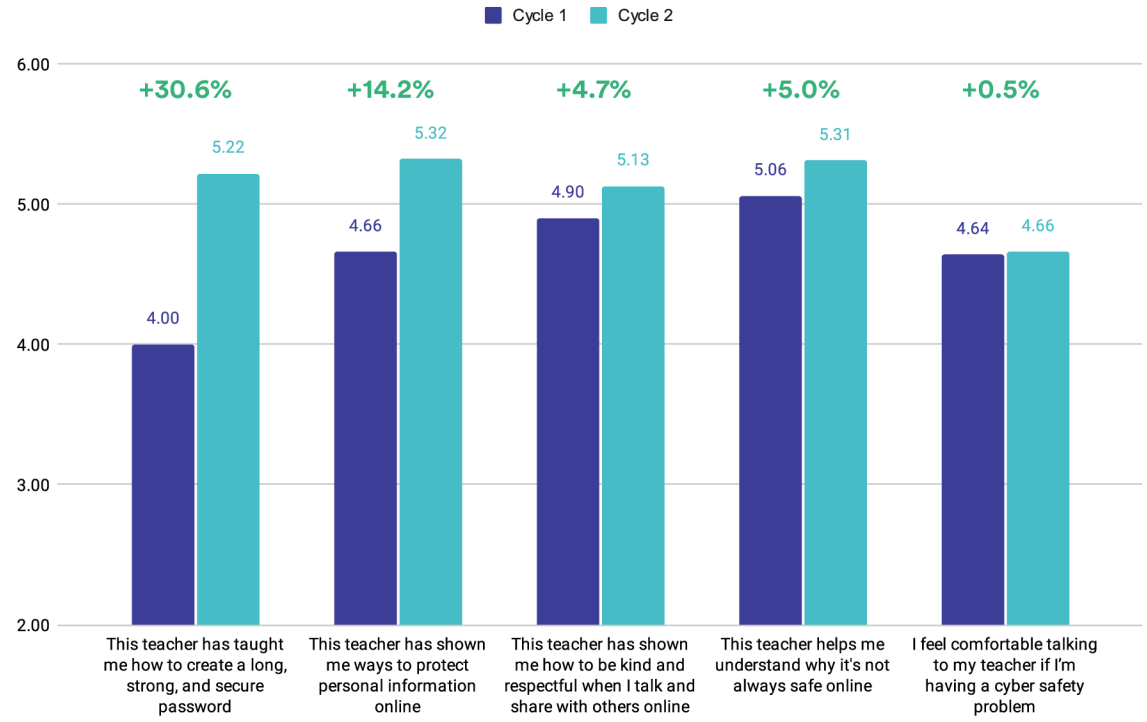

Figure 1: Student Survey on Teaching: Additional Cyber Safety Questions Average Scores | All Participating Students | Cycle 1 compared to Cycle 2

- From Cycle 1 to Cycle 2, the data reveals a slight improvement in students' comfort discussing online safety issues with their teachers, with scores increasing from 4.64 to 4.66 (+0.5%). While students are moderately comfortable, more targeted efforts may be needed to build greater trust and openness. Further teacher-level insights were made available to each classroom teacher as part of their participation in the Pivot Student Survey on Teaching.

- Students' perceptions of being taught kindness and respect online improved from 4.90 to 5.13 (+4.7%), demonstrating moderate progress in fostering respectful online interactions. This suggests the program had a positive but incremental impact on social online safety skills.

- A notable increase was observed in students' understanding of how to protect personal information, with scores rising from 4.66 to 5.32 (+14.2%). This highlights the program's success in equipping students with practical knowledge to safeguard their digital identity.

- The most significant improvement was in teaching students how to create secure passwords, with scores jumping from 4.00 to 5.22 (+30.6%). This indicates the program's strong effectiveness in delivering practical, actionable online safety skills.

- Finally, students' understanding of online safety risks saw a moderate increase from 5.06 to 5.31 (+5.0%). While this reflects a growing awareness of online risks, there is scope to further deepen students' understanding of these complex issues.

All Student Responses across Online Safety Additional Questions: Years 3 and 4

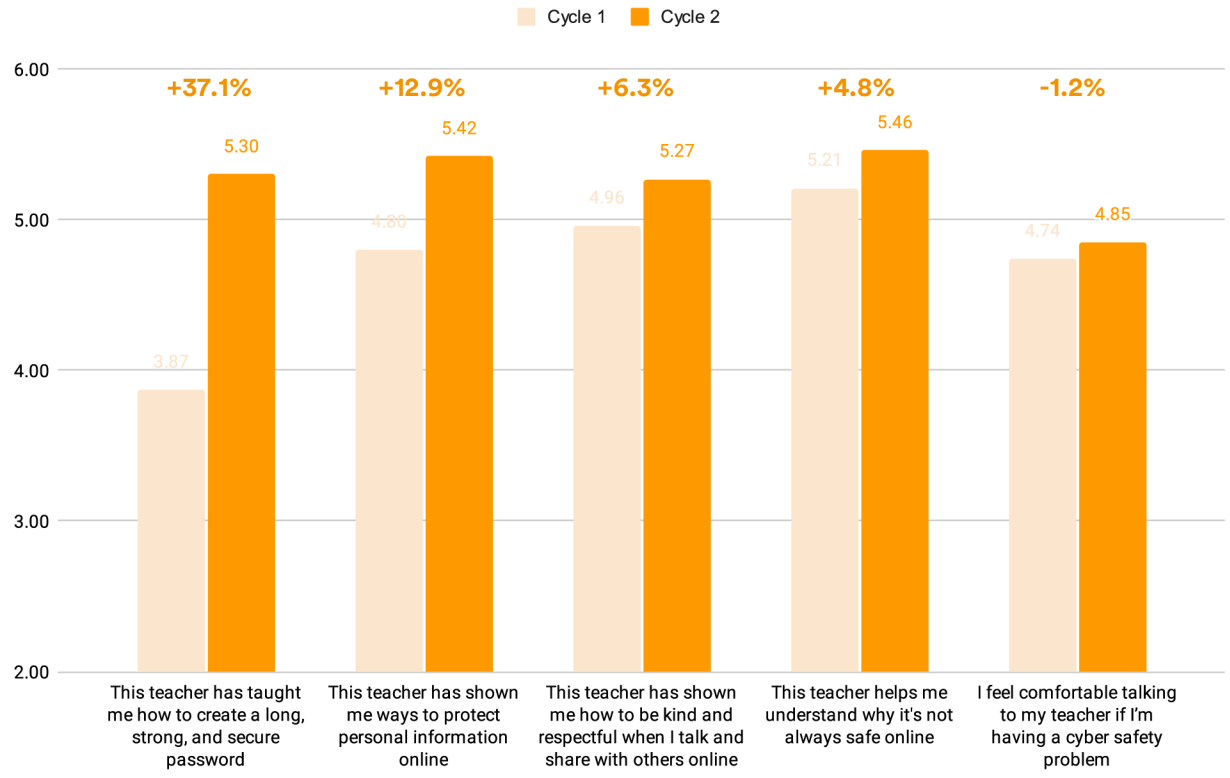

Figure 2: Student Survey on Teaching: Additional Cyber Safety Questions Average Scores | Years 3 and 4 Students Only | Cycle 1 compared to Cycle 2

All Student Responses across Online Safety Additional Questions: Years 5 and 6

Figure 3: Student Survey on Teaching: Additional Cyber Safety Questions Average Scores | Years 5 and 6 Students Only | Cycle 1 compared to Cycle 2

In Year 3-4, the strongest improvement was seen in learning how to create a secure password, which increased by 37.1%, while their understanding of how to protect personal information also improved significantly by 12.9%. Similarly, being taught kindness and respect online rose by 6.3%, and their comfort in discussing online safety problems with teachers increased by 2.3%.

In contrast, Year 5-6 students demonstrated the highest increase of knowledge and skills in creating a secure password (+24.3%) and protecting personal information (+15.4%), though their comfort in discussing online safety issues declined slightly (-1.2%). Interestingly, Year 5-6 scores began lower across most metrics in Cycle 1 but showed greater proportional improvements compared to Year 3-4.

All Student Responses across Online Safety Additional Questions: Responses by Gender

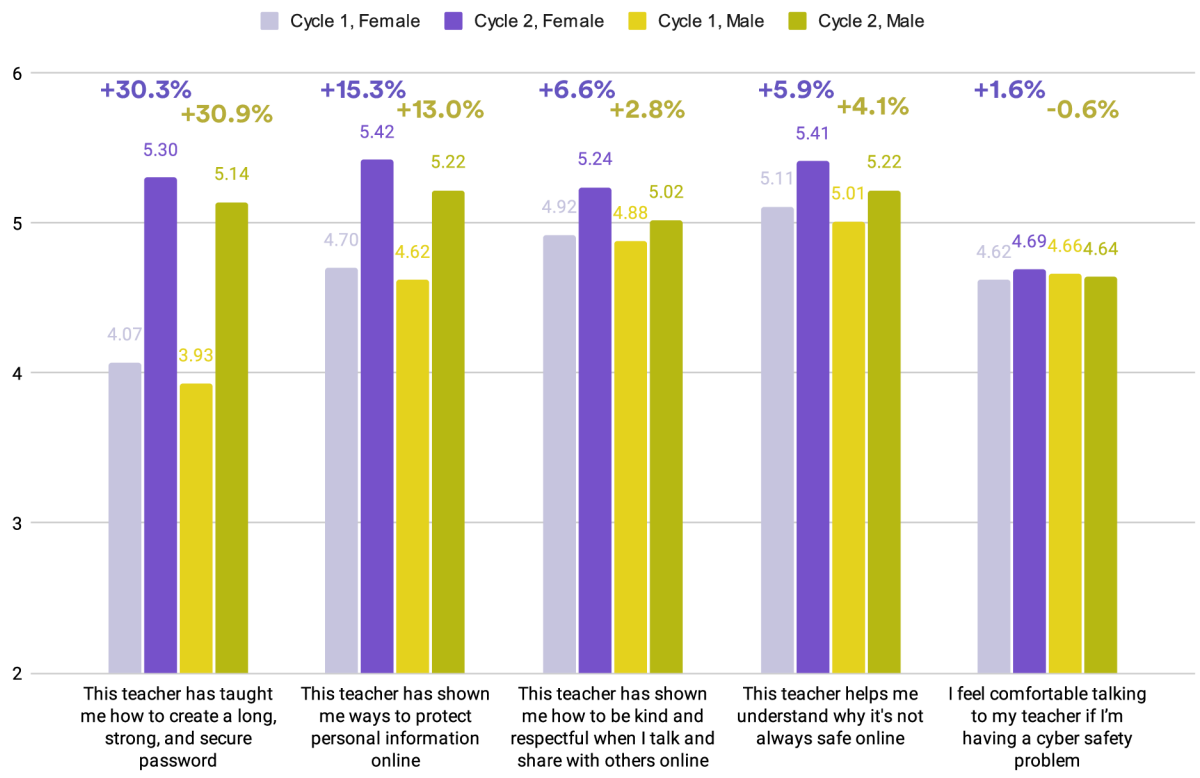

Figure 4: Student Survey on Teaching: Additional Cyber Safety Questions Average Scores | Responses by Gender | Cycle 1 compared to Cycle 2

Female students showed improvement across all metrics, with the largest gains in being taught how to create a secure password (+30.3%) and protecting personal information online (+15.3%). Males also showed strong gains in creating secure passwords (+30.9%) and protecting personal information (+13%), though their initial scores were slightly lower than females. However, male students exhibited a slight decrease in comfort discussing online safety issues with teachers (-0.6%), in contrast to a small increase for females (+1.6%).

Selected Wellbeing Survey Items with Connection to Online Safety

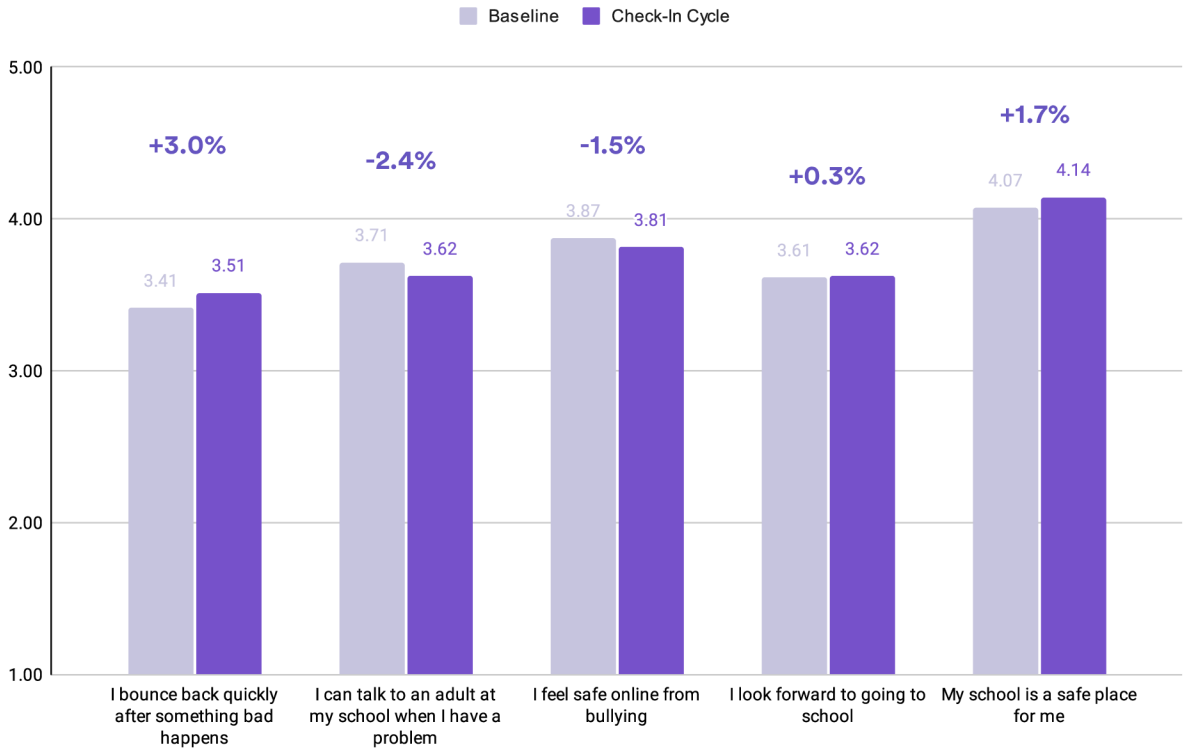

Figure 5: Wellbeing for Learning Survey: Question Average Scores for Specific Connected Questions to the Pilot Project | All Participant Responses | Baseline Cycle compared with Check-In Cycle

A range of wellbeing survey items were identified as potentially providing additional data points for assessing the impact of the online safety education program. These questions were drawn from a range of domains (see Appendix X):

- I bounce back quickly after something bad happens (Resilience)
- I can talk to an adult at my school when I have a problem (Belonging)
- I feel safe online from bullying (Safety)
- I look forward to going to school (Belonging)
- My school is a safe place for me (Safety)

While there is evidence of positive impacts on resilience and perceptions of school safety, the decreases in relational factors (e.g., talking to an adult) and safety from bullying highlight areas of concern. The mixed results suggest that while the program may strengthen individual coping skills and general school and online safety perceptions, its effect on fostering trust-based relationships and combating bullying requires further refinement or a collaborative approach with schools to set in place opportunities and clarity on avenues for help-seeking. Ultimately, these results indicate the need for a balanced focus on building both individual skills in help-seeking, and supportive school environments where students feel confident to disclose online safety issues. Observable improvements in student self-reported wellbeing may not shift quickly, thus a longer-term view or program evaluation is recommended to fully understand the impact of the program on student wellbeing.

Finding #2: The Role of The Teacher-Student Relationship in Supporting Online Safety

The learning and relational connection between a teacher and student cannot be underestimated. Results from our pilot suggest that a teacher's current and contemporary knowledge of online safety has as much impact as their connection with the student, where teacher care and connectedness, knowledge of relevant topics, along with their use of technology, were the most common predictors of more impactful online safety teaching. Students quickly assess a teacher's credibility and knowledge of the topic, which supports better teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.

There are several important implications here. The first is that educating teachers about cybersafety topics is vital to their efforts to successfully deliver cybersafety training to their students. Students will note their credibility and knowledge of the topics, and this will likely lead to better quality teaching and learning outcomes in this area. Second, teachers' skills in using ICT in the classroom appears to impact or reflect positively upon online safety training, so ensuring that such programs (and other professional learning opportunities) prioritise developing teachers' ICT skills will likely support higher quality outcomes for online safety education. Third, students' engagement in online safety learning is potentially mediated by their sense of the care and connection they feel with their teacher. Schools should therefore prioritise relationships as the key tool for effective instruction, including online safety instruction, and program content should include (where possible) advice and strategies for teachers to leverage rapport and relationships.

This pilot also led us to identify a number (n=10) of 'Top Teachers' who saw the most significant growth in student perception pre- and post-intervention. As part of our review, we looked into the other aspects and areas of teaching practice in which our 'Top Teachers' received strong student perception ratings on the Pivot Student Survey on Teaching (see below).

Question	Domain	Average Score
I know how I am supposed to behave in class	Classroom Environment	5.45
This teacher respects me for who I am	Relationships	5.36
This teacher believes I can succeed in school	Relationships	5.29
This teacher knows a lot about the topics in this class	Instruction	5.26
This teacher supports me if I am confused	Relationships	5.18
This teacher cares about my wellbeing	Relationships	5.17

Figure 6: Student Survey on Teaching | Highest Average Questions Overall, by Domain | Top Ten Teachers.

We were also interested to understand in which other areas these 'Top Teachers' saw an improvement. We identified the ten questions from the survey data that were not directly related to cyber safety but showed the most significant improvement in student ratings over the survey cycles, from pre- to post-intervention.

Question	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Growth
This teacher's use of technology helps me learn	4.64	4.93	+0.29
This teacher encourages me to think instead of just telling me the answers	5.11	5.26	+0.16
This teacher believes I can succeed in school	5.20	5.34	+0.14
This teacher makes connections to what we have already learned	4.84	4.98	+0.14
This teacher connects their teaching to my life	4.37	4.51	+0.14
This teacher knows a lot about the topics in this class	5.13	5.26	+0.13
This teacher gives clear instructions	5.04	5.16	+0.12
This teacher helps me to set goals for my learning	4.74	4.83	+0.10
This teacher makes changes in response to my feedback	4.65	4.74	+0.09
This teacher makes learning interesting	4.67	4.75	+0.08

Figure 7: Student Survey on Teaching | Highest Growth Questions for the Top Ten Teachers | Cycle 1 to Cycle 2.

It was evident that effective technology integration may have supported the 'Top Teachers" impact in this pilot. Encouraging critical thinking, observed in the strongest increase (+0.29) in "this teacher encourages me to think instead of just telling me the answers" (+0.15 increase), highlights that teachers who emphasise student-led problem-solving may see better outcomes with online safety interventions. Contextual learning also remains important, as evidenced by the results in "making connections to what we have already learned" (+0.14 increase) and "connects their teaching to my life" (+0.14 increase) both suggest these teachers excel at making learning relevant to their students.

Our data suggests that teachers who excel in online safety education are also perceived by their students as:

- Building strong teacher-student relationships
- Creating safe and respectful classroom environments
- Maintaining clear behavioural expectations
- Demonstrating subject matter expertise

Excellence in online safety education doesn't exist in isolation but is part of a broader pattern of effective teaching practices, especially in areas related to student relationships and classroom environment.

Finding #3: The Importance of a Robust, Valid and Reliable Online Safety Program

With our current understanding of the importance of student learning and cognitive development, schools should seek to embed valid, reliable, and robust programs to support effective learning in online safety. A program grounded in these qualities ensures that the content delivered is consistently accurate, comprehensive, and applicable across diverse learning environments. Validity ensures that the program effectively measures and addresses the critical components of online safety, while reliability means it is likely that these measurements produce consistent results over time and across different contexts.

From an educational standpoint, a robust program aligns with constructivist theories, emphasising that learning is most effective when built on reliable frameworks that support meaningful engagement with the content. By establishing clear, evidence-based correlations between key aspects of online safety instruction, programs foster deeper understanding and skill development, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience and equipping students with the necessary tools to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

The five aspects of cyber safety that were assessed pre- and post- program were significantly positively related and predicted each other. Each of the five items used to examine teachers' development of online safety were either moderately or strongly related to each other (based on bivariate correlation analysis). This suggested that these aspects of online safety instruction are valid and work towards a larger overall principle of quality online safety education. This was further supported by confirmatory factor analysis. Pivot was therefore able to find that the Cyber Safety Project's design and structure (including the five additional question aspects) were robust, valid and reliable measurements of online safety knowledge. Key results are shown in the table below.

	I feel comfortable talking to my teacher if I'm having a cyber safety problem	This teacher has shown me how to be kind and respectful when I talk and share with others online	This teacher has shown me ways to protect personal information online	This teacher has taught me how to create a long, strong and secure password	**This teacher helps me understand why it's not always safe online**
I feel comfortable talking to my teacher if I'm having a cyber safety problem	-				
This teacher has shown me how to be kind and respectful when I talk and share with others online	.47**	-			
This teacher has shown me ways to protect personal information online	.38*	.73**	-		
This teacher has taught me how to create a long, strong and secure password	.33*	.53**	.63**	-	
This teacher helps me to understand why it's not always safe online	.46**	.74**	.83**	.50**	-

Figure 8: Correlation Table for Online Safety Questions

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Students' online safety knowledge was assessed before and after completing units of learning through a multiple-choice quiz. To measure behavioural change, a self-assessment of skill application was also conducted following the units of learning.

Results showed an increase of online safety knowledge across all year levels. In particular, Level 3 & 4 students significantly increased their understanding of safe email practices and the number of Level 5 & 6 students who were able to define strategies for identifying mis- or disinformation more than doubled. When strengthening password security following responsibility lessons, 59.78% of students reported taking action to increase their security. Following lessons on the value of integrity, 93.82% of students reported that they had applied their new skills. A sample of results are shown in the table below.

Question	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Growth
Level 3 & 4 – Value: Responsibility			
Which information below is most safe to share online?	87.9%	92.4%	4.5%
Playing an online game with one friend who you know is called playing in a _ _ _ space.	32.6%	46.9%	14.3%
Since completing the lesson about passwords, have you updated at least one of your passwords to be longer and stronger?	N/A	70.55%	
Level 3 & 4 – Value: Integrity			
Which is these is a red flag that someone is a tricky person online?	72.9%	82.1%	9.5%
Which email is safe to open?	65.4%	84.2%	18.8%
After completing the Cyber Safety Project lessons about integrity, I am now more careful about who I play with online.	N/A	94.63%	
Level 5 & 6 – Value: Responsibility			
When spotting fake news, we can use the acronym T.R.U.E. to help us. What does T.R.U.E. stand for?	20.5%	48.3%	27.8%
Since completing the lesson about passwords, have you updated at least one of your passwords to be longer and stronger?	N/A	49.01%	
Level 5 & 6 – Value: Integrity			
Spreading rumours about someone else online is known as…	33.3%	62.2%	28.9%
After completing the Cyber Safety Project lessons about Integrity, I have been more considerate of others and respectful when I talk and share online.	N/A	93.4%	

Figure 10: Cyber Safety Knowledge Check | Pre and Post Quiz Results | % Growth

Recommendations

Our recommendations fall broadly into two spheres: for system leaders and policy-makers, and for stakeholders in school settings. School settings encompass a broad range of stakeholders, from students and their families, to educators and school leaders.

For School Settings

Recommendation One: Embed hands-on practice for online safety skills and continue to reinforce more abstract concepts

Knowledge acquisition was greatest where the content was 'concrete', such as teachers equipping students with strategies to protect personal information (+14.2%) and teaching students how to create a long, strong and secure password (+30.6%). We propose that more 'soft' or abstract skills, such as recognising cyber risks, likely require longer-term and regular exposure and reinforcement in line with students' development. We heard that providing time for staff to explore, discuss, and unpack program insights is essential, so that educators and program leaders can translate data insights to actionable outcomes.

When interviewing school and online safety program leads after the program concluded, the participating schools observed that students had shown increased engagement and excitement during cyber safety lessons, demonstrated an eagerness to participate and apply what they learned, such as creating secure passwords and adjusting their profile settings to be more secure. There was a noticeable shift in students' understanding of what information is safe versus unsafe to be shared online, and students were recorded actively reporting issues such as password sharing and online safety incidents. Additionally, the project fostered strong discussions across different year levels and reduced online incidents reported during the term, indicating a positive impact on student behaviour and awareness.

When it comes to less 'concrete' concepts involving nuanced skill acquisition, such as the ability to critically reflect on the impacts of one's behaviour and digital reputation (Integrity), effective online safety education relies on contextualised conversations and ongoing opportunities to develop interpersonal skills. School leaders highlighted that access to a robust digital literacy framework with sequenced learning materials, providing multiple exposures to key concepts, empowered teachers to progressively build students' skills and knowledge over time.

Recommendation Two: Monitoring student wellbeing provides a baseline for understanding where students are 'at', that can support their online safety

Our pilot schools noted the potential impact of tracking student wellbeing, in particular resilience, through more regular check-ins or surveys. By monitoring students' emotional resilience and safety perceptions in both digital and physical contexts, timely interventions can be put in place (including identifying individual at-risk students).

The Pivot wellbeing surveys revealed several insights for school-led teams participating in the pilot, prompting discussions on how to improve resilience and developing strategies for disclosing online safety challenges or transgressions. By capturing regular and relevant insights, teacher care and connectedness (at the individual, class and cohort level) can be enhanced with a deeper understanding of student wellbeing. In light of the data that suggests students' engagement in online safety learning is potentially mediated by their sense of the care and connection they feel with their teacher, monitoring student wellbeing should be a priority for schools engaging in online safety programs.

Recommendation Three: Help seeking is a vital (but difficult) element of online safety training that is enabled when students trust and respect their teachers and should be continually reinforced

Research shows child self-disclosure improves with empathetic, responsive learning environments. Our pilot suggests that students' overall impressions of teaching quality predict their comfort in raising problems related to online safety with their teacher. However, students reported some reluctance to seek help from adults at school, even when they viewed teachers as encouraging and supportive. In some school settings, consistent or slightly decreasing results across specific items concerned with help seeking behaviours and relational trust were observed in the Pivot surveys. Wellbeing data insights served as a valuable tool for reflection, guiding targeted interventions, such as where the reteaching of online safety concepts might be necessary, and schools internally conducting collegial discussions to enhance student learning and wellbeing.

When introducing programs such as the Cyber Safety Project, schools should consider how they are supporting the development of active listening skills for educators. Schools can also measure students' perceptions of their teachers' effectiveness in relationship-building through Pivot's Student Survey on Teaching. When stronger student-teacher relationships are supported, students may seek help more readily within their school environment.

Recommendation Four: Seek out high quality online safety education programs

Not all online safety education is equal. We must maintain the highest expectations of our online safety education providers to deliver an evidence-based, well-constructed, proactive, sequenced curriculum that offers multiple exposures to key security, safety and wellbeing concepts. Ideally, pre and post measures are taken, and refinements are made consistently over time as the online safety landscape changes. Research backed, valid and reliable approaches, like that demonstrated by CSP, should be of paramount importance to decision-makers when allocating investment resources.

The five key aspects of cyber safety assessed before and after the program were closely related and predictive of each other, indicating their validity. This strong correlation suggests that these elements work together to support a comprehensive approach to quality online safety instruction. Confirmatory factor analysis further validated the robustness and reliability of the Cyber Safety Project's design and structure, confirming its effectiveness in measuring and enhancing online safety knowledge.

Recommendation Five: Provide guidance for schools in tailoring online safety programs to unique school contexts

There is a significant opportunity to support schools in embedding online safety into their improvement plans, emphasising its role in fostering student growth and providing critical evidence for program development. The wellbeing teams view the Cyber Safety Project (CSP) as more valuable than other initiatives, with strong interest in integrating these projects into regular weekly plans to ensure consistent instruction and data insight utilisation.

To maximise impact, schools should be guided in analysing their specific data to identify unique challenges and strengths in online safety practices. Utilising timely feedback cycles, such as Pivot surveys on teaching or student self-reported wellbeing, enhance a school's understanding of student progress or challenge to inform tiered interventions. Incorporating additional data sources, such as records of online safety incidents, can enhance the contextual understanding. Tailoring interventions based on these insights will ensure that online safety programs effectively address identified gaps, utilise existing expertise within schools, and provide targeted, meaningful support to each school community.

Recommendation Six: Build teacher capacity and confidence and invest in system-wide professional learning

We challenge system leaders and policy makers to provide targeted professional development and embed accessible, practical resources to empower teachers in delivering effective online safety education that meets them 'where they are'. Regular, evidence-based training programs should focus on building teachers' understanding of digital risks and equipping them with intervention strategies, while keeping them informed about emerging trends. Crucially, online safety must become a permanent 'agenda item' for system leaders guiding professional learning, alongside developing responsive, dynamic toolkits available to all educators from Foundation to school completion.

long-term partnerships between school systems, such as dioceses, and expert education providers, like the Cyber Safety Project, are highly effective in increasing teacher confidence and capacity. These collaborations ensure that professional learning opportunities are consistent, targeted, and grounded in best-practice online safety education. By engaging educators with a shared metalanguage and structured, nuanced programs, such partnerships foster a deeper understanding of key concepts and intervention strategies. Over time, this consistency enhances teacher efficacy, enabling them to confidently integrate online safety education into their teaching practice and address emerging digital challenges with greater expertise.

About Pivot

We are a female-founded company based in Melbourne with a decade of experience providing practical and evidence-based support to schools and educators across Australia and New Zealand. Our tools and resources support growth in teaching practice – primarily by harnessing the power of students' voices and encouraging deep teacher self-reflection, engagement and collaborative practices for improved pedagogy and wellbeing. Our work is supported by international research and data gathered from over six million survey responses since our inception, and we captured a quarter of a million students' voices through survey responses in 2023 alone.

Our flagship Student Survey on Teaching provides teachers and schools with reliable, timely, detailed and personalised feedback to guide responsive teaching. Pivot's reports are clear, incisive and easy to digest, with our studies finding that three out of four teachers make a change to their practice after they view their Pivot insight reports – guided by our recommended evidence-based resources that support them to take action the very next day. Our research-based insights support continuous improvement in classrooms across the country.

With over a decade of impact, Pivot has partnered with major educational organisations and agencies, including:

- Northern Territory Department of Education
- Catholic Education Diocese of Parramatta
- Catholic Education Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle
- Catholic Education Diocese of Townsville
- Tasmanian Department of Education
- New South Wales Department of Education
- Victorian Department of Education and Training
- Sydney Catholic Diocese
- Edmund Rice Education Australia
- Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga
- Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong
- Queensland Catholic Education Commission
- Teach for Australia
- Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers
- Australian Secondary Principals Association
- Australian Primary Principals Association

Pivot is driven by our vision: to drive a positive impact in the education sector through the creation of the best possible learning environments for all students.

About Cyber Safety Project

Cyber Safety Project (CSP) is a trusted provider of online safety and digital wellbeing education, delivering programs that empower students, educators, and families to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly. Created by experienced school leaders who are experts in educational technology and student engagement strategies, CSP offers practical solutions designed to address the challenges of an increasingly digital world.

Students from Foundation to Year 12 engage in a structured, sequenced program that evolves with them, ensuring progressive knowledge and skill development. Underpinned by a digital citizenship framework, the program emphasises the values of responsibility, integrity, resilience, and empathy. Each year, students encounter new, developmentally appropriate content that builds on prior learning, equipping them with advanced skills to manage online challenges. The CSP Student Digital Habits Survey provides data to tailor learning outcomes for each school community, ensuring relevance and impact.

CSP reaches over 100,000 students, 5,000 educators, and 10,000 parents annually through in-person and live-streamed sessions. Our innovative model includes an online educator hub, offering 112 on-demand videos and lesson guides for ongoing support and seamless integration of year round learning. . Beyond the classroom, CSP supports families with extended resources, including the Digi-Know podcasts for parents and kids, offering strategies to manage online and cyber safety at home and reinforce digital wellbeing principles.

With a proven track record, CSP has partnered with prominent educational bodies and organisations, including:

- Catholic Network Australia and state-based dioceses
- NSW Department of Education - Cybermarvel Program
- Catholic Education WA Dioceses - Cyber Challenge Program
- Victorian Department of Education - Respectful Relationships
- Office of eSafety Commissioner (Trusted eSafety Provider Program)

Cyber Safety Project is committed to equipping every student, educator, and parent with the tools to thrive in a digital age, creating a culture of safety, responsibility, and wellbeing for all.

Appendices

Appendix A: Participation Protocols and Data Privacy

Purpose and Scope of the Research

All participating schools were briefed on goals of the pilot project, ensuring that alignment was achieved with each school's educational priorities and would contribute meaningfully to online safety knowledge or practice in their context.

Data Protection

- Consent: Schools were provided with detailed information about the pilot project, including its purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, to ensure voluntary participation.
- Confidentiality and Privacy: Procedures to protect the identity and data of participants must be in place, including secure data storage and anonymisation of data in reports. Pivot's Privacy Policy is available here and the Cyber Safety Project's Privacy Policy is available here.

Project Team

Key personnel involved in developing and delivering the pilot project included:

Pivot

- Cleo Westhorpe, Co-Founder and Head of Education
- Caitlin Macleod, Co-Founder
- Jen Foster, Senior Account Manager
- Adrianne Bremner, Account Manager

Cyber Safety Project

- Trent Ray, Co-Founder and Managing Director
- Andrew Bennetto, CEO
- Amanda Greig, Customer Relationship Manager
- Jaclyn Tasker, Curriculum and Engagement Lead

Appendix B: Pivot Student Survey on Teaching Questions

Classroom Environment

- This teacher's use of technology helps me learn.
- This teacher gives me choices about the work I do.
- This teacher helps me focus on learning.
- I know how I am supposed to behave in this class.
- This teacher explains things in a way I can understand.
- This teacher gives clear instructions.
- In this class, I often work with other students.
- This teacher makes learning in this class interesting.

Instruction

- This teacher makes connections to what we have already learned.
- This teacher knows a lot about the topics in this class.
- This teacher asks questions that make me think deeply.
- This teacher helps me to set goals for my learning.
- This teacher gives me time to think when I need it.
- I know how well I am doing in this class.
- This teacher encourages me to think instead of just telling me the answers.
- This teacher makes changes in response to my feedback.
- This teacher's feedback helps me improve.

Relationships

- This teacher respects me for who I am.
- This teacher connects their teaching to my life.
- This teacher believes I can succeed in school
- I feel comfortable asking this teacher for help.
- This teacher cares about my wellbeing.
- This teacher helps me if I am upset.
- This teacher asks me to share my ideas about what we are learning.
- This teacher supports me if I am confused.

Student Voice

- This teacher makes changes in response to my feedback.

Appendix C: Pivot Wellbeing for Learning Survey Questions

Resilience

- I feel like I belong at my school
- I look forward to going to school
- Students at my school care about me
- I have friends at school I trust
- I can talk to an adult at my school when I have a problem

Safety

- I ask for help when I need it
- I believe things will work out for the best
- I keep trying even when my schoolwork is difficult
- I believe I can learn things that are difficult
- I bounce back after something bad happens to me

Belonging

- My school is a safe place for me
- People at my school respect my personal boundaries
- I feel safe from bullying at my school
- I can be myself at school
- I feel safe online from bullying

Appendix D: Cyber Safety Project Knowledge Checkpoints

Quiz responses were available as multi-choice.

Year 3 and 4: Responsibility

1. “Which information below is most safe to share online?”
2. "Playing an online game with one friend who you know offline is called playing in a ___ space.”
3. "If your name was Taylor Swift and you were born in 1989, which of the following usernames would be safest to use online?”
4. "Which of these is a password acronym (pacronym)?”
5. "Since completing the lesson about passwords, have you updated at least one of your passwords to be longer and stronger?”

Year 3 and 4: Integrity

1. “Which of these posts is respectful to share online?”
2. “Which of these is a red flag that someone is a tricky person online?”
3. “Which email is safe to open?”
4. "How can you tell if something is true online?”
5. “After completing the Cyber Safety Project lessons about Integrity, I am now more careful about who I play with online.”

Year 5 and 6: Responsibility

1. “Which of these is a passphrase acronym?”
2. “A group chat would be considered a...”
3. “Which of these DOES NOT fit the safety message?”
4. “When spotting fake news, we can use the acronym T.R.U.E. to help us. What does T.R.U.E. stand for?”
5. "Since completing the lesson about passwords, have you updated at least one of your passwords to be longer and stronger?”

Year 5 and 6: Integrity

1. “Which of the following would be the safest 'profile picture' to use on a social media or gaming account?”
2. “Thinking about how we can make others feel, which of these online comments could be perceived as hurtful?”
3. “Your brother is obsessed with getting more followers and is accepting everyone and anyone to follow him. You are in one of his photos. In this scenario, what is the safest action to take?”
4. “Spreading rumours about someone else online is known as...”
5. “After completing the Cyber Safety Lessons about Integrity, I have been more considerate of others and respectful when I talk and share online.”

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