St Columba's School (VIC)

A team approach leads to great outcomes for all

**Domain focus:
1, 5 & 6**

A community approach

The little school with a big heart' is the motto of St Columba's School and represents a unique culture of care, empathy and respect for diversity.
As a Catholic school, we are called to act with compassion and empathy, to respect and care for our world and for the most vulnerable and to promote inclusion and provide community.

'The little school with a big heart'

Firmly believing in keeping all our students safe, eSmart provided the guidelines, framework, curriculum and support for our school to continue the learning and teaching of cyber safety and being safe to our community.
Over many years St. Columba's included cyber safety throughout our curriculum but we found we wanted an approach that would benefit the whole school community as well as others in the local area. We wanted an approach that was team based and collaborative.

Recognising a need

A few years ago, we recognized the importance of making cyber safety a priority in our school not just for our students but for our staff and parents. We registered to become an eSmart school and the journey was solely taken on by the IT leader. As a school, we were able to implement policies, learning experiences, expert advice and incursions but we became stagnant and our usual team approach across all areas of our school was not meeting expectations in implementing the eSmart framework.

A team responsibility

After much support from the eSmart team at Alannah & Madeline Foundation, and establishing our own eSmart team with staff from all levels, we were able to gain traction across the school on understanding the importance of educating our community about online safety.

The eSmart team meet regularly for a 15-minute stand up meeting. During the journey, we used the System Tool to share thoughts, concerns and ideas. We had a focus on National eSmart week through remote learning and the whole school and parent community were involved in either online activities or webinars. This was a very successful week, and it is just one of the many areas of eSmart we focus on at St. Columba's.
The school's eSmart team used the scope and sequence to highlight the areas of need within the curriculum. We held information session with students, staff and parents at the beginning of the year.
Our parent evening focused on parents understanding some apps and the 'traps' children can fall into. They were shown how to manage settings and some great parental advice. The evening was also about sharing some of the darker sides to the internet and social media but how to manage this rather than taking these away.

"establishing an eSmart team with staff from all levels"

A safer curriculum

St Columba's prides itself on knowing every child and to honour this we provide our students with the knowledge and understanding of what it means to stay safe online. We work in leveled teams across the school and each level has a representative on our eSmart team. This allows for a collaborative and collective approach to the eSmart curriculum and framework.

Our outcomes for eSmart were not only to promote safe internet use across all year levels but to make it more visible across the whole school community. This also meant that we would be focusing on integrating our eSmart curriculum throughout our Units of Inquiry and other learning areas.

> "a collaborative and collective approach"

Community partnership

The most challenging area was engaging other community groups. One of our teachers was on the committee of the local cricket club which enabled us to connect with them. She spent some time discussing the Alannah & Madeline Foundation and what we were doing to become an eSmart school.

By sharing some ideas about policies with them, they were very keen to stay connected and then involve the junior players in our journey.

Moving forward, this would include having our teacher present to the cricket community about acceptable use and positive behaviours for social media, ways for the children and adults to stay safe and how to go about reporting unacceptable online behaviour.

Our advice

The best advice we can give any school embarking on the eSmart journey is to have regular contact with your dedicated eSmart Advisor, and invest in creating a team early in the journey. Although the benefits of becoming eSmart are rewarding for your school community, you cannot do this on your own. Create a team and take your time.

I would highly recommend using the 15-minute stand up meeting structure as this allowed quick discussions and actions without it feeling like an extra thing for teachers/staff to do.

> "invest in creating a team early in the journey"

You want everyone to value and support the core value of eSmart and you need to communicate regularly with your community.

Without the support of a team, we would not have been able to gain our eSmart status.

School profile

St. Columba's Primary School is a Catholic primary school, located in Elwood, an inner suburb of Melbourne, Victoria.
The school has an enrolment of 163 students.
They have been a registered eSmart School since 2019.