



CASE STUDY

Comet Bay College

This is the story of one school's journey to create a comprehensive cybersafety ecosystem as a Linewize Partner School.



"In our Comet Bay learning community we have 4,500 kids from K-12, and in this community, parent concern over misuse of electronic devices and social media is quite high. So we wanted to try to float an education perspective, a parent safety perspective around kids and social media.

At our ICT Conference two years ago, we attended a Linewize presentation. It clicked."

*Phil Casas, Associate Principal
Comet Bay College*



Executive summary

Comet Bay College is a senior school located in Secret Harbour, Western Australia. A leader in information technology education, the College is home to an acclaimed STEM program, and utilises a comprehensive learning management system for students, teachers and parents. A compulsory BYOD policy was launched in 2016. Any tablet or laptop is presently allowable as a BYOD device, and the College aims to include personal smartphones as learning devices in the near future.

In recent years, educators and parents alike noticed a disturbing uptick in issues around social media and gaming, with sexting a particular problem facing girls and compulsive gaming affecting boys. Increasingly parents were demanding that the school provide a solution.

School leaders have adopted Linewize to address these needs - to keep students safe at school, at home, and on-the-go, on any device they use.



"My first teaching role in IT was on a Commodore 64 with a data cassette. I didn't have to protect the kids too much from that. And I wasn't too worried about addiction because they had to spend so long blowing on the tape and banging it to get it working that they had all the physical exercise they needed. Whereas now - it's on their phone, it's on the doorstep."

*Phil Casas, Associate Principal
Comet Bay College*

The problem and its context

The School

Comet Bay College is a state secondary school located in Secret Harbour, 60 km south of Perth, Western Australia, with a current enrolment of 1,800. (The broader Comet Bay learning community, which includes feeder primary schools, has an enrolment of 4,500.)

Among the specialist initiatives at CBC are a Gifted and Talented Program and an Australian Football Program, recently hailed as the "Benchmark" of specialist undertakings in WA by the WA Football Commission. A leader in IT education, CBC's innovative STEM programs, in which students learn to design and build drones, robots and flight simulators, has attracted national media attention.



The Challenge

In 2016, CBC launched a compulsory BYOD policy for Year 7s, with subsequent year-groups coming online each year. Somewhat unusually, students are permitted to use any tablet or laptop.

"It can be an iPad, it can be an Air, it can be a Surface Pro, it can be a \$40 Android tablet ..."

BYOD devices are used to access Office 365 as a part of an Education Department licensing package, which is compatible with Apple, Android or Microsoft operating systems. Each student receives up to ten licenses free.

Throughout the College, an Education Department learning management system (or LMS) called Connect is the interface used by teachers, students and parents to access class resources, assessments, messaging and attendance records. Use of the system is mandated for every member of staff.

But the school's entree into digital learning has come at a cost, with mounting incidents of cyberbullying, sexting and compulsive gaming. Most of these problems were arising at home or on weekends, off the school network. But they were becoming an issue for the College too, owing to the ready availability of technology.

*There was an incident at the College, earlier this year, where several students had worked out a way to hack the reward system and award themselves reward points. They then exchanged these reward points for EB Games-type game vouchers and credits. When caught and asked why, the boys responded that they'd spent so much time on Fortnite, and kept having to pay to upgrade, so they **had** to find ways to get game credits.*



"We cater for a wide range of academic, vocational and sporting pursuits. We pride ourselves on recognising the considerable range of interests and aptitudes that our students demonstrate. Our priority is to equip each student with a balanced set of skills, to meet tomorrow's challenges."

*Jamie Hayres, Principal
Comet Bay College*

The Linewize Journey

The issues for parents and teachers alike were becoming alarming. Parents began presenting administrators with screenshots as evidence of children being bullied on social media at weekends on their “learning” devices. And sexting and harassment was creating problems at school as well. “If I could bump off Mark Zuckerberg, I could save myself probably 60% of my workload,” Associate Principal Phil Casas confided. “It’s not just Facebook but also Snapchat and all kind of group chats with bits and pieces that disappear so they can’t be traced.”

School leaders were introduced to Linewize’s cloud-based Mobile Zone solution at a parent information night devoted to cyber safety for students. “We wanted to try to float an education perspective, a parent safety perspective around kids and social media,” Casas recalled. The presentation by Linewize School Relationship Manager Jess Hill and cyber expert Pete Brown outlined a holistic solution with an emphasis on digital wellbeing, online safety education and collaboration across the school community.



“It clicked,” Casas said.

A decision was taken to underwrite 200 Linewize Family Packs - each containing Mobile Zone licenses for up to 3 children and 6 devices - as a first step toward a mandatory policy of requiring Linewize protection on all student devices that are brought to school. It’s an especially critical safeguard with regard to smartphones, which are slated to join tablets and laptops as acceptable BYOD devices in the near future future.

“In the next year or so, we’re going to be able to have kids bring their mobile phone as their device. And that’s where it’s going to be crucial that we then say, okay, we’ll allow you your phone in class, but you must have this software on it. That is where we’re heading.”

“But it’s got to be a transition,” Casas explained. “It requires a lot of thinking and planning around giving parents the tools to take control - it’s training parents to accept have some parenting responsibility. And that can be a big ask in today’s day and age.”

“Linewize gives them the tools to be parents - and the realisation that, wait on, we can do this. And it doesn’t just have to be around the device. It can be around other behaviours in the house as well.”

Access to a dedicated cyber education specialist is an integral part of the Linewize online safety ecosystem. Linewize cyber expert Pete Brown of online safety education consultancy Cyber Safety Teacher presented at CBC’s parent education night. But he was also engaged privately by a number of families in the college community to help mums and dads navigate their digital parenting journey.

Outcomes

"It's simple and easy to use, the kids get used to it, and it's peace of mind for parents. Sure, the kids will rail against it initially but when they're seeing other kids get caught up in this ruckus and they're not - then they have a bit of relief about it. 'If I didn't have this stuff on my phone I might have been dragged into that too.'"

CBC parents have reported uniformly positive feedback to date. "So it is really, really useful," affirms Casas.

He looks forward to engaging with the newest cohort - parents of incoming Year 7s - and explaining the benefits of Mobile Zone:

"Your biggest fear is about your kids' safety when they're coming to the big, scary high school. Here's one of the things you can do to protect them."

Future prospects

Casas has been working alongside Linewize School Relationship Manager Jess Hill to develop two webinars for College parents to continue to cyber safety conversation: one to focus on compulsive gaming and the other on sexting.

"These are the biggest things that crop up," says Casas. "Teenage boys, very convincing boys, are able to have girls send bits and pieces of photographs around, and then all of a sudden they're on the internet. That's my number-one concern. And number two is parents concerned that their child is addicted to Fortnite."

Casas believes parents are hungry for a solution to issues like these - and looks forward to spreading the word about Linewize throughout the College community, with the help of cyber expert Pete Brown and Linewize's dedicated School Relationship Team. As the BYOD program progresses year by year, "it's just a matter of getting the information in front of parents," he says.

And when school policy changes to permit personal mobiles as BYOD devices, the need will take on added urgency.

"That's where it's going to be crucial that we then say, okay, we'll allow you your phone in class, but you must have this software on it. That is where we're heading."

About Linewize

Linewize is committed to making student Internet management easy, and keeping students safe online on any device, anywhere, any time.

Learn more

Email sales@linewize.io
Visit us at linewize.io