

CYBERSMARTIES

FIRST FULLY MONITORED SOCIAL NETWORK FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Project URL: <http://cybersmarties.com/>

Project Twitter: [@CyberSmarties](https://twitter.com/CyberSmarties)

- Digital Engagement
- Education
- Safety & Security
- Social Software

Children today have unprecedented access to information and technology. While digital advancements can connect them to knowledge, teachers and friends, sites like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram and Twitter can also expose them to cruelty and abuse online. A 2014 McAfee study showed that 87% of US teens and pre-teens have witnessed cyber bullying.

Diarmuid Hudner, founder of Irish startup CyberSmarties, believes that we need to teach younger children how to use social media before they are old enough to register for sites like Facebook. He likens this to training wheels on a bike, or getting a driving licence. "You have to be educated how to use [social media] in the same way you have a practical test for driving," he explains.

CyberSmarties is believed to be Ireland's first-ever social network for children. Children sign up before being verified by a network of teachers, who then monitor chats between different children. No pictures are allowed, to prevent body shaming, and the site uses an algorithm that catches negative words and slang, like 'fat', 'hate' or 'h8'.

If a child's message contains negative words, he or she is prevented from sending it until the language is changed. As this is tedious, children learn to modify their behaviour. "The average is three days for kids to stop sending messages with negative words," says Hudner. And while some words do fall through the net, children are encouraged to report this to a teacher.

Hudner is marketing the network to schools, so that children can learn to communicate with their peers and make new friends under the supervision of their teachers. 40 schools have signed up so far, and the fully monitored package costs just €30 per pupil per year. Find out more at <https://cybersmarties.com>

Image courtesy of henry...

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