Kidproof has been working with year 3 and 4 students at Roberts McCubbin PS in the area of cybersafety and digital citizenship.

We demonstrated the difference between the internet and the world wide web. Visually representing the WWW gives students the opportunity to understand that when something goes into cyberspace it can be there forever, and can be nearly impossible to take off. Kids express a variety of games and apps that they use online, with Instagram and Minecraft being the two most popular. Many schools have their own game or app that may be popular for them, however the rules and how we should use them are universal.

It is important that both parents and kids understand the difference between who is a face to face friend, and who is an online friend. It is easy for the line to be blurred. Face to face friends are those friends that we have actually met face to face in a social situation. Face to face friends can also be online friends. Online friends are those friends that we make from, you guessed it—online. We have never met these friends face to face, we only know what they tell us about themselves or the photos they choose to share with us. Kids tend to think Skype is a safe option as you can “see” the person. I would never completely trust someone I hadn’t met face to face, ever. Skype is a tool that can be used to trick us into thinking we know who we are talking to.

It is important that children have safe email addresses. Too many youth have email addresses that give far too much personal information away about themselves. The safest email address gives nothing away about the child. It is gender and age neutral and says nothing about interests, passions or hobbies.

Strategies were discussed in regards to cyberbullying. There are strategies a child can use for themselves to prevent and be proactive about bullying (I.C.E) and strategies for helping a friend (A.C.T). Of course, the most important strategy is to let someone know from the very first incident, and to keep conversations open with trusted adults. Parents can start conversations around safety using current media stories and asking children what they might do in that situation. “What if” scenario’s help kids work through possibilities and outcomes.

The workshop finished with a series of 8 different Cybersafety scenarios. Students were required to share with their peers the danger that each scenario presented (and often there was more than one), why was it dangerous and how could they safely respond if they found themselves in that situation.

Kids are amazing with technology, and they often know more about it than their parents. However, keeping kids safe online is a parenting issue, and not a technology issue. Open up conversations around good digital citizenship, and keep them ongoing. Safe kids have safe families.