Post-Primary Safer Internet Day Presentation: News, Media and the Problem of False Information Script

Slide 1:
Notes for speaker – brief introduction and welcome.
Explain how long the talk will take and the types of things you will be doing over that time. For example:
"Today we are joining millions of people around the world in celebrating Safer Internet Day, a day for promoting a safer and better internet for all users, especially young people. During this assembly we are going to talk about being online and using the internet. We will look at the positives and possible negatives of the internet as well as some general advice on how to manage your online wellbeing."

Slide 2:
Today's talk has been developed by Webwise the **Irish Internet Safety Awareness Centre** that promotes safer use of the internet by young people
Some of the work Webwise are involved in:
1. Responsible for the promotion and coordination of Safer Internet day in Ireland
2. Develop education resources and programmes for schools to address a range of online safety initiatives
3. Webwise are supported by a Youth Advisory panel made up of second-level students from across Ireland
4. Provide free training programmes to second-level students to support schools engaging in Safer Internet Day
5. Provide information, advice, and tools to parents to support their engagement in their children's online live
6. Students can find more information on the dedicated youth hub: http://webwise.ie/youth

Slide 3:
Notes: Safer Internet Day (SID) is an EU wide initiative to promote a safer internet for all users, especially young people. Safer Internet Day in Ireland is promoted and coordinated by Webwise, the Irish Internet Safety Education Awareness Programme. The Theme for Safer Internet Day is "Together for a Better Internet".

The aim of the day is a call on all stakeholders - industry, government and the public to join together to make the internet a safer and better place for all, and especially for children and young people.

Safer Internet Day is a day to promote safe and responsible use of the internet, a day for us to consider all the different ways we use the internet and how we can make the internet a safer and better place for all, and especially for children and young people.

Slide 4:
Notes: Safer Internet Day provides an opportunity for students to take the lead in raising awareness of internet safety concerns and issues of young people to the school community including teachers, students and parents/guardians. It provides an opportunity to address the issue of cyberbullying and internet safety by leading awareness-raising campaigns in their clubs, schools, and communities.

There are lots of ideas for SID activities on the Safer Internet Day page:
www.webwise.ie/saferinternetday
Register your school's Safer Internet Day events on the Webwise event's map and see how other schools are celebrating Safer Internet Day here: www.webwise.ie/saferinternetday

Slide 5:
Notes: From accessing information for homework and study, to connecting with friends, or staying up-to-date on any number of topics, content is sourced online on a daily basis. With so much content available to us, it is important to be able to judge how accurate and reliable our information is. This means asking questions about where our information comes from, who produced it and why, evaluating the impact it may have, and determining to what extent it can be trusted.

False information can spread rapidly on social media, online platforms or in messaging apps, often taking advantage of times of uncertainty. An obvious example of this is the increase in the volume of false or misinformation encountered by most people during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Slide 6:
Notes: When introducing the topic; students may be more familiar with the term 'fake news'. If possible, it is advised to avoid the term 'fake news', or at least limit its use as the term 'fake news' is closely associated with politics, and this association can unhelpfully narrow the focus of the issue.

The term 'false information' is preferable as it can refer to a diverse range of disinformation covering topics such as health, environmental and economics across all platforms and genres, while 'fake news' is more narrowly understood as political news stories.

Slide 7:
Notes: With so much information at our fingertips it can be easy to come across something online that isn't quite as accurate or reliable as it should be.
This kind of information is often called Fake News but a better description might be false information because it affects more than news stories.

Let's watch this explainer video on what is false information to learn more. Click the link to play video: https://vimeo.com/383270456

Running time is 4:22.

Slide 8:
Notes: False information: Information, stories or hoaxes created to deliberately misinform or deceive readers, viewers or listeners. The story itself might be fabricated, with no verifiable facts, sources or quotes or some elements or facts might be accurate but presented in a false or misleading way. Explain to students the term 'fake news' is now closely associated with politics, and this association can unhelpfully narrow the focus of the issue. The term 'false information' is preferable as it can refer to a diverse range of disinformation covering topics such as health, environmental and economics across all platforms and genres, while 'fake news' is more narrowly understood as political news stories.

Reinforce to students that false information can originate from many sources, but can also come to us in many different ways, including from sources we trust: many people have seen false information shared online by friends and family, and sometimes legitimate news sources fail to double-check facts or make honest mistakes.

Slide 9:
Notes: There are a number of things to watch out for when evaluating content online.
1. Check the source
Check the source of the story, do you recognise the website? Is it a credible or reliable source? If you are unfamiliar with the site, look in the about section or find out more information about the author, date, time, URL.

2. Look beyond the headline
Check the entire article. To grab attention, false information often uses sensationalist or shocking clickbait headlines – sometimes all caps and using exclamation points. False information can also contain incorrect dates or altered timelines. It is also a good idea to check when the article was published, is it current or an old news story? It's also a good idea to see if the information is attributed to an author, or if quotes are attributed to real people or unnamed sources.

3. Check other sources
Probably the most reliable way to 'fact-check' information is to cross-reference it with other sources. Ask yourself whether other reputable news/media outlets are reporting on the story. Check whether there are any sources in the story. If so, check that they are reliable or if they even exist! Try to find the earliest and most local source for the story.

4. Is it fact or opinion?
The language used in the piece might help you identify whether something is written as fact (something that is proven to be true) or opinion (someone's personal belief). For example factual statements might include words such as "The annual report confirms… Scientists have recently discovered… According to the results of the tests… The investigation demonstrated…" Whereas opinion pieces might use statements such as "He claimed that… It is the officer's view that… Many scientists suspect that… I believe…" or could pose questions such as "Could this really be possible …?". Remember, you are entitled to your own opinion but not your own facts.

5. Check your biases

Are your own views or beliefs affecting your judgement of a news feature or report? We are even more likely to accept or ignore things depending on whether or not they support what we already believe.

6. Is it a joke?

Satirical sites like Waterford Whispers are popular online and sometimes it is not always clear whether a story is just a joke or parody… Check the website, is it known for satire or creating funny stories or is the social media account marked as a 'parody' account?

7. Check a fact-checking site

Sites like Snopes: www.snopes.com; PolitiFact: politifact.com; Fact Check: factcheck.org can be a great shortcut to find out if a story has already been debunked – or if a too-good-to-be true story really was true after all.

For pictures, you can do a reverse search for images at TinEye (www.tineye.com) or Google Reverse Image Search (www.images.google.com). This will tell you where else the picture has appeared, and also show you similar pictures (which is a good way to find out if it has been photoshopped). Then before you believe it or share it: Check your own instincts – does it seem likely to be true, is it accurate and helpful, is it fair to share?

Slide 10:
Notes: Play the two deepfake videos of Tom Cruise for students and ask them can they guess which video features the real Tom Cruise?
Videos available here:
- https://www.tiktok.com/@deeptomcruise/video/6933305746130046214?lang=en&is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1
- https://www.tiktok.com/@deeptomcruise/video/6932166297996233989?lang=en&is_copy_url=1&is_from_webapp=v1

The answer is neither of them are. They are both deepfake videos of Tom Cruise.

Ask students if they have ever heard of the term deepfakes before or if they have seen any similar doctored videos?

Ask students if they or someone they know have ever fallen for or shared a false or inaccurate image or video of some kind? Ask students what does it matter if we can't tell real or reliable from false or misleading information online? Remind them that viral images or videos that are misleading or not real are just as harmful as articles containing false information – think about when a natural disaster or terrorist attack happens, social media is flooded with footage apparently showing the scene on the ground. Or the influence of these images on how people think or what they believe. An image says a thousand words so it is important that students can identify images or videos which are false.

We are now going to look at images, deepfakes and visual deception online and consider the potential consequences if an image or video is doctored so well that it can be hard to tell if it is authentic.

Slide 11:
Notes: Explain to students what deepfakes are.
Deepfakes are fake videos created using digital software, machine learning and face swapping. Deepfakes are computer-created artificial videos in which images are combined to create new footage that depicts events, statements or action that never actually happened.

Emphasise to students that the results can be quite convincing. Deep fakes differ from other forms of false information by being very difficult to identify as false.

Slide 12:
Notes: How does it work?
The basic concept behind the technology is facial recognition, users of Snapchat will be familiar with the face swap or filters functions which apply transformations or augment your facial features. Deep Fakes are similar but much more realistic.

Fake videos can be created using a machine learning technique called a "generative adversarial network" or GAN. For example a GAN can look at thousands of photos of Beyonce and produce a new image that approximates those photos without being an exact copy of any one of the photos. GAN can be used to generate new audio from existing audio, or new text from existing text – it is a multiuse technology. The technology used to create deepfakes is programmed to map faces according to "landmark" points. These are features like the corners of your eyes and mouth, your nostrils, and the contour of your jawline.

Slide 13:
Notes: Next, ask students to consider the potential consequences if an image or video is doctored or altered so well that it can be hard to tell if it is authentic.

While the technology used to create deep fakes is relatively new technology, it is advancing quickly and it is becoming more and more difficult to check if a video is real or not. Developments in these kinds of technologies have obvious social, moral and political implications. There are already issues around news sources and credibility of stories online, deep fakes have the potential to exacerbate the problem of false information online or disrupt and undermine the credibility of and trust in news, and information in general.

The real potential danger of false information and deepfake technology is creating mistrust or apathy in people about what we see or hear online. If everything could be fake does that mean that nothing is real anymore? For as long as we have had photographs and video and audio footage they have helped learn about our past, and shaped how we see and know things. Some people already question the facts around events that unquestionably happened, like the Holocaust, the moon landing and 9/11, despite video proof. If deepfakes make people believe they can't trust video, the problems of false information and conspiracy theories could get worse.

Slide 14:
Notes: How to spot deepfakes?
Like all types of information we encounter online the most important thing we can do when deciding if videos or images online are authentic and real is to be critical.

We need to use critical thinking and ask ourselves key questions such as:
— Who and why is someone sharing this video?
— Who or what is the original source?
— Is the person in the video saying something you'd never expect them to say?
— Does the video advance someone else's agenda? Who benefits from this video?

Slide 15:
Notes: The internet has enabled a whole new way to publish, share and consume information and news with very little regulation or editorial standards.
Many people now get news from social media sites and networks and often it can be difficult to tell whether stories are credible or not. Information overload and a general lack of understanding about how the internet works by people has also contributed to an increase in fake news or hoax stories. Social media sites can play a big part in increasing the reach of these types of stories.

The economics of social media favour gossip, novelty, speed and "shareability"' Simeon Yates

Slide 16:
Notes: The False Information Business Model
The internet and social media have made it very easy for anyone to publish content on a website, blog or social media profile and potentially reach large audiences. With so many people now getting news from social media sites, many content creators/publishers have used this to their advantage.
False information can be a profitable business, generating large sums of advertising revenue for publishers who create and publish stories that go viral. The more clicks a story gets, the more money online publishers make through advertising revenue and **for many publishers social media is an ideal platform to share content and drive web traffic.**

False Information, Social Media, and the Filter Bubble
Journalist Hugh Linehan noted; "Media is no longer passively consumed – it's created, shared, liked, commented on, attacked and defended in all sorts of different ways by hundreds of millions of people. And the algorithms used by the most powerful tech companies – Google and Facebook in particular – are brilliantly designed to personalise and tailor these services to each user's profile."

When we go online or login to a social network we are generally presented with news, articles and content based on our own searches online. This type of content tends to reflect our own likes, views and beliefs and therefore isolating us from differing views and opinions. This is often referred to as a filter bubble.

Slide 17:
Notes: Click to watch this video: How filter bubbles isolate you, available at
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pT-k1kDIRnw

Explain to students that when we go online or login to a social network we are generally presented with news, articles and content based on our own searches online. This is because platforms such as Google and Facebook use algorithms to personalise and tailor

their services to each user, meaning different users will see different content. This type of content tends to reflect our own likes, views and beliefs and therefore isolating us from differing views and opinions. This is often referred to as a filter bubble.

"Filter bubble" refers to a phenomenon that occurs with many of the websites that we use: platforms such as Google and Facebook use algorithms(mathematical equations) based on our search history and personal information to personalise and tailor their services to us. This means that different users using the exact same search or scrolling through a news feed on social media can see different content. This type of content tends to reflect our own likes, views and beliefs and therefore isolating us from differing views and opinions.

Slide 18:
Notes: Let's consider what are the benefits and drawbacks to getting information online through a filter bubble?
Sample answers include:
Benefits:
— Search engines can give us more relevant results that we want faster.
— Websites, apps, search engines show us content we've already shown an interest in.
— Websites that we commonly go to are easier to find, as they appear higher up in search lists.
— Location tracking helps us search our area for relevant shops/ restaurants etc.
— We can save our login details on our devices so we don't have to keep retyping them.
Drawbacks:
— If search results are skewed and we are unaware of it, this affects our ability to access, evaluate, and use information. We need to know if search results are biased in order to be critical in our selection of information.
— Make you less open-minded and able to see things from someone else's point of view.

Explain to students that sometimes the filters we use to manage the vast amount of information available online has become like a bubble around us where we mainly just get opinions we already agree with and we have to learn how to burst that bubble.

Slide 19:
Notes: How might you break out of your filter bubble?
Explain to students that sometimes the filters we use to manage the vast amount of information available online has become like a bubble around us where we mainly just get opinions we already agree with and we have to learn how to burst that bubble.

Ask students to consider what search engine, apps, social media platforms, etc they use to find out information about the world, your interests and your homework/research – these are sources you trust and use on a daily basis. Students are to list their trusted sources they use on a daily basis inside their filter bubble.

Next, ask students if they wanted to break out of your filter bubble, how might you do it? What people and organisations might you follow? What new perspectives might you seek

out? How could you find them?
Suggestions include:

> — Try doing a search with a search engine that you don't usually use e.g., DuckDuckGo, sweetsearch,
> — Turn off targeted ads,
> — Regularly delete your browser history,
> — Follow trusted news sources, journalists, experts
> — Swap one of your trusted sources for one you rarely use, maybe even just for a short period of time.

Finally, remind students that the most important thing you can do is make sure that you're not only getting news that confirms what you already believe. At the same time it's important not to "overcorrect" and seek out sources that have a totally opposite bias from yours, which will almost certainly make you angry and reinforce your current opinions. Instead, find sources from a moderately different point of view.

Slide 20:
Notes: Webwise love seeing all your photos from your online safety campaigns and Safer Internet Day activities. Send in your photos, videos and posters to Webwise and you could be in with a chance of winning some great prizes. Just email: **internetsafety@pdst.ie**

Share your SID activities
We love seeing all your photos from your online safety campaigns and Safer Internet Day activities. Connect with us on:
- Twitter @Webwise_Ireland
- Facebook: facebook.com/webwise_Ireland
- Instagram: webwiseireland
- Share ideas tips/plans using #SaferInternetDay
- Share your internet safety messages on webwise.ie/saferinternetday

Slide 21:
Notes: Join the conversation on online safety!
We love seeing your online safety campaigns and Safer Internet Day activities. Connect with us on:
- Twitter @Webwise_Ireland
- Facebook: facebook.com/webwise_Ireland
- Instagram: webwiseireland
- Share ideas tips/plans using #SaferInternetDay
- Share your internet safety messages on webwise.ie/saferinternetday

Slide 22:

Notes: Webwise would encourage you to download copies of the ***Parents' Guide to a Better Internet*** booklets and or Parent's checklists to distribute to pupils to take home to their parents. The booklet can be ordered for free at webwise.ie/parents