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Exploring with healthy choices

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Longford Intermediate School pupils are leading active, healthier lives as they explore new countries.

Pupils in six classes at the school are some of the 20,000 New Zealanders taking part in the Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure, where points are earned by exercising, eating healthily and sleeping well.

Teacher Charlotte Forbes said she and her class enjoyed the programme, which started on November 1.

“They’ve loved it, they’ve absolutely loved it.

“I’ve enjoyed watching the kids make those changes knowing it’s so positive. And because it’s only small changes I think it will stay.”

“Instead of getting in the car, a lot of them are cycling or walking.

“It’s reinforced our message of how important it is to have that healthy balance in life and how important it is to exercise for not only your physical body but for your mind as well.”

Pupils had the freedom to choose how they obtained their points, she said.

“It was about them making the changes for their life so I felt it was important that they had the control of doing that.

“For some of them just going for a walk and getting 5000 steps in a day was more than what they were doing before.

“They’ve all been able to achieve something then that’s personal to them.

“I’ve actually had parents say thank you for having these conversations with their kids because they’ve wanted them to be more active and they’ve wanted them to make changes to their diets.”

Pupils’ online avatars travelled to new countries as they accumulated points, which had

inspired some to want to travel, Ms Forbes said.

“It’s showing them that the world isn’t actually as big as they think and that they can get there themselves.

“We’ve had so many whole-class conversations about each of the countries we’ve gone to.”

Pupils had also learned things

about New Zealand, which was one of the destination countries.

The programme had also brought her pupils closer together, Ms Forbes said.

“They can put their Playstation down, go for a walk with their mates to catch up instead of sitting on their phone texting them.

“When the challenge first started there were two boys who enjoy running, so I said why don’t you go running together one night? And they did.

“They’ve built a nice friendship on that.

“I think it’s a fantastic challenge and I will definitely be doing it with my class next year, 110%.”

Programme founder Kim Harvey visited the school on Friday to see how the pupils had found the challenge.

Her goal was to educate people at a young age on how to live healthy lives, she said.

“If you can get children embedding these foundational ideas and habits, they’re much more likely to carry them through to adulthood.”

While the programme was targeted towards children, it had a much wider impact, Ms Harvey said.

“Your children are the biggest influence on what you do.”

“They’re the ones who are going to create a revolution in our communities, because they’re going to take it home and their parents are going to listen to them more than they listen to me.”



Seeing the world ... Young and Healthy Virtual Adventure founder Kim Harvey (on left of second row) visits Longford Intermediate School pupils taking part in the programme.

PHOTO: MICHAEL CURREEN