

Case Study: Mathseeds captivates children at Spixworth Infant School and helps them to visualise mathematical concepts



About the school

Spixworth Infant School in Norwich is a small school with 127 pupils taught in four mixed age classes. Two classes cater for Reception and Year 1 pupils and two further classes cater for Year 1 and Year 2 children.

The school was graded as 'Good' by Ofsted in 2014, when inspectors commented that children 'are made to think by their teachers' and 'disabled children and those with special educational needs benefit from extra help'. They also noted that, despite entering the school with widely differing levels of skills, in three of the previous five years pupils had left the school with exceptionally high combined levels in reading, writing and mathematics.

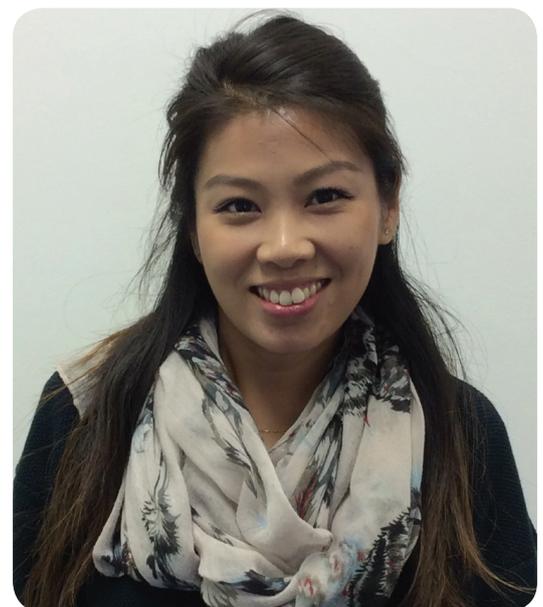
Suzanne To has a mixed class of Year 1 and Year 2 pupils and has recently taken over as subject specialist for mathematics. She has been keen to extend the range of resources available to children at school and at home so that pupils can practise the skills they need to reach higher levels.



The challenges faced

"We were looking to raise the profile of mathematics in the school so we decided to find an online resource suitable for our age range of four to seven," said Suzanne. "We wanted the children to explore maths in a fun way in different environments and we also wanted to encourage and support parents to get actively involved with how their children are learning maths at school."

Parents are divided on the issue of homework. Some parents are very keen while others feel that the current education system puts so much pressure on children they don't want them to do homework as well. Some parents are not confident in their own maths skills and worry they will show children methods that are no longer in use, so they are more likely to help their children with reading and spelling at home than maths.



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support@3plearning.co.uk

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The solution

The school knew about 3P Learning's suite of award-winning digital learning resources for schools, but wondered if the maths resources would be suitable for their younger age group. Fortunately, 3P Learning now offers Mathseeds, a companion maths program to the popular literacy resource, Reading Eggs, both of which are targeted to early learners.

Mathseeds is an online program designed to teach core mathematics and problem-solving skills to children aged three to six via fun maths games and activities. They also have apps for iPad, iPhone and Android devices that focus on single skills.

The school began using Mathseeds at the beginning of last year, meaning have now used it for four terms. They wanted to get parents on side so they sent home letters, details of the logins and set Mathseeds homework once a fortnight. Children liked getting certificates as a reward for their efforts.

However, Suzanne found that some children were not using the program. This could have been because they had no access to technology, because they had a negative view of maths or because parents were not encouraging them to do homework.

So this year the school has adopted different approaches. Suzanne has set up a Mathseeds lunchtime club and selected children from years one and two who come and use Mathseeds on iPads. "At the moment we are letting them choose what area they want to explore," she said. "Some spent the first few sessions playing games. Others opted for activities relating to different areas of maths. My class has spent this half term focusing on calculations, but some of the children opted for shape activities, moving away from number."

The benefits

The school is pleased with the results so far and has found that the very visual nature of Mathseeds has appealed to the children.

For example, number lines help children with 'counting on' because they can see what happens when they add 10 to a number or 100. It helps them to visualise concepts.

Suzanne is using it to boost the skills and confidence of children who are working below expected levels. It is a useful way to bridge the gap between concrete and abstract mathematics.

"Number formation was picked up as a particular problem for the younger children and I was able to tell staff that the Mathseeds app has a function to help children form numbers correctly. Now some of the children are using iPads first thing in the morning to practise," she said.

The children are captivated by the technology. They pay more attention to animations than to a spoken explanation and find it motivating.

Suzanne feels that this is a resource that will grow with the school as there are still different aspects she could explore. "I am sure we could use it even more effectively but it is important to get the balance right between using a digital resource and other teaching methods. I would recommend Mathseeds to other schools," said Suzanne. "I would miss it if I didn't have access to it."

About 3P Learning

3P Learning is a leading provider of digital maths and literacy resources, which are used by 5 million students in 20,000 schools around the world.

Mathletics is a digital maths resource used by more than 5,000 UK schools. It is proven to significantly increase levels of student engagement, confidence and motivation and to improve attainment and progress in maths from KS1 to KS4.

SpelloDrome helps children to develop their spelling, writing and communication skills. It offers curriculum aligned, customisable word lists and worksheets focusing on spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Reading Eggs helps children learn how to read and develop a love of reading. With an extensive range of phonics and comprehension lessons and eBooks, Reading Eggs provides everything needed to nurture high literacy standards.

Mathseeds is a digital maths resource, created specifically for the needs of early maths learners from Reception to Year 2. It contains hundreds of highly interactive, sequential activities for children to complete at their own pace. Mathseeds challenges pupils to build their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

For further information on 3P Learning please visit 3plearning.com

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