









Mind the Gaps

SuccessMaker

School name:	 The Libra School	School type:	 Independent special school (5-18 years)
Region:	 South West	Ofsted rating:	 Outstanding (January 2016)
Area type:	 Rural	Pupil premium %:	 60%
Number of pupils:	 24	EAL %:	 0%

Why SuccessMaker? Teachers at The Libra School are aware of the significant gaps in their pupils' learning. They were drawn to SuccessMaker because they knew it would give a clear and objective analysis of those gaps and that this would lead to focused, directed skills practice and assessment.

Key points to take away

- Specific gaps in pupils' reading and maths were identified, leading to focused and individualised skills practice
- Positive reaction from pupils who experienced enjoyment and success
- Data analysis showed individual, group and class progress which was used to inform teaching and planning
- Used to accelerate pupil progress.

Background

The Libra School is an independent school for pupils with social, emotional, behavioural, and learning needs. The school serves pupils from 5 to 18 years and has a very high percentage of pupils receiving pupil premium. The school has two overarching aims: to help their pupils gain emotional stability whilst making accelerated academic progress.

Who, what and when?

Deputy headteacher Kirsty Crosby and the school's class teachers have identified that about 50% of their pupils would benefit from using SuccessMaker. "If I've got pupils that have been on different intervention programmes for a while and are making good progress, then those are the ones that I think are ready to accelerate academically. So I put them on SuccessMaker. We use it for acceleration rather than intervention."

The pupils have specific time slots and specific teachers to work with them. "They use laptops or desktops and it tends to happen outside of the classroom during their

allocated one-to-one time," says Kirsty. Throughout the school, the pupils have between two and four sessions per week. This is worked out by balancing pupil concentration levels with specific learning gaps and existing timetables. All pupils use both the reading and maths programmes.

“ The students have significant gaps in their learning because they've often missed a lot of schooling. SuccessMaker helps us to recognise progress, but more importantly, to identify the gaps. ”



Individual vs age-related expectations

Notwithstanding the challenges presented in meeting age-related expectations with The Libra School's wide range of special educational needs, deputy headteacher Kirsty Crosby and The Libra School staff are intent on making sure each pupil reaches their full potential. "We're keen to monitor and measure progress and we've found SuccessMaker to be a useful tool in our armoury. First off, we use the Initial Placement tool, which assesses the children to find the right starting point for them on SuccessMaker. We then let the programme generate an instant and individual [learning] programme which our pupils can start using straight away."

Data provided by SuccessMaker allowed the school to track pupil progression both individually and as a group. The reports show how in a ten week period, Libra school pupils in Year 2 used the maths programme for 6 hours on average and went on to make an average gain of just over 2 months, with one child making four and a half months progress during that time. There were individual successes in reading too, which included a boy from Key Stage 1 and one from Key Stage 2, both making three and a half months progress in ten hours of use.

Kirsty continued: "The students at Libra School have significant gaps in their learning because they've often missed a lot of schooling. SuccessMaker helps us to recognise progress, but more importantly, to identify the gaps. We can then plan our teaching accordingly." The Libra School have identified which pupils, in any given cohort, are struggling to master specific concepts with SuccessMaker's Mastery Report. They can see at a glance which children in Year 4, for example, have not mastered the skill of adding three digit numbers presented horizontally up to ten, or cannot identify the functions of parts of speech, specifically nouns and pronouns.

Deemed a "Success" – from those that matter!

"For the pupils, there is no fear of failure with this product," says Kirsty. She explains that for many of her pupils, the act of physically picking up a pen can be an area of "significant conflict; some are not able to write, some just don't like doing it and many feel insecure about putting that pen to paper. Equally, reading out loud to a member of staff or another pupil can cause embarrassment and awkwardness. Whereas when they're reading or writing on the computer, the fear of failure goes and the embarrassment of making a mistake just disappears. The only audience that the pupils have is the computer and they know it isn't going to judge them. It just supports them by giving them different practice and reinforcement opportunities or moving them on accordingly to the next bit."

“ For the pupils, there is no fear of failure with this product. ”

The tailored and targeted approach of SuccessMaker was also acknowledged by Ofsted during a recent visit to the school, where they recognised that the work provided for pupils at The Libra School "was highly individualised." The staff must take the credit for that, but are happy to apportion some of this success to SuccessMaker!



Outcome

For the pupils and wider staff at The Libra School, using and working with SuccessMaker has led to four noticeable outcomes:

- Increased confidence and enthusiasm for learning
- Individualised and personalised targeted teaching definitely has a renewed prominence and energy about it
- Finding the gaps in pupils' learning has become much simpler
- The route to bridging those gaps is clearer and more straightforward.

When asked to sum up her thoughts about SuccessMaker, Kirsty concludes: "It's useful, it makes life easier and I definitely want to keep it running."

Find out more

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