Great maths results you can count on!

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School name:	Speenhamland Primary School	School type:	Community Primary (4-11 years)
Region:	Berkshire	Ofsted rating:	Requires improvement (May 2015)
Area type:	Town	Pupil premium %	26.1%
Number of pupils:	270	EAL %	15.2%

Why Abacus?

Speenhamland is a slightly larger than average primary school in Newbury. The school had focused on literacy the year before which had become strongly embedded in the school. Building on this success they were looking at maths following a recent Ofsted report and consultations with the local authority. **Karen Osmond, Maths Coordinator,** explains how they introduced Abacus to improve attainment and embed maths throughout the school.

Key points to take away

- Abacus **support teachers to address key issues** in maths by implemeting best-practice.
- The Abacus service **helps teachers to quickly identify and close any gaps** in children's learning.
- Abacus provides consistency throughout the school and **helps develop conceptual understanding and procedural fluency**.
- **Visual and interactive teaching** supports children in seeing what they are being taught.

Background

Improving attainment and progress in maths was a big focus area for our school, and was a key part of our School Improvement Plan. Our Ofsted reports and consultations with the local authority identified maths as a key issue we needed to address. We had worked very hard in previous years to focus on literacy and wanted to do the same with maths and to embed it in the children's learning.

We are part of a small network of local schools and we often share best practice together. One school had already implemented Abacus so we went along to see how they were using it. Although we needed to take action quickly, we wanted to make sure that the programme we chose was right for the school, the teachers and most importantly the children. The partner school was already having success with Abacus, and were seeing significant progress, so it made sense to take that learning and do the same.

Getting teachers, children and parents on-board

Our staff came together and discussed how we were going to roll out the Abacus programme. Everyone agreed that we would teach from the planning so we had consistency and good coverage. They liked the fact that Abacus offers lots of consolidation in the children's learning. It identifies children's prior knowledge as well as any gaps which they can build on. This consistency of teaching across the school enables any gaps to be quickly identified and closed.

We invited parents to school to show them the new curriculum, what Abacus looked like and how we used it. This way they could fully embrace the technology and understand what their children were doing in school and how we wanted them to use it in their own time.

We introduced Abacus in October 2014 and started to make changes to our teaching immediately. We have morning challenges for the children when they arrive at school and lots of these used to be literacy based. However, we have now introduced more maths challenges so the children can build on what they are learning in their lessons.

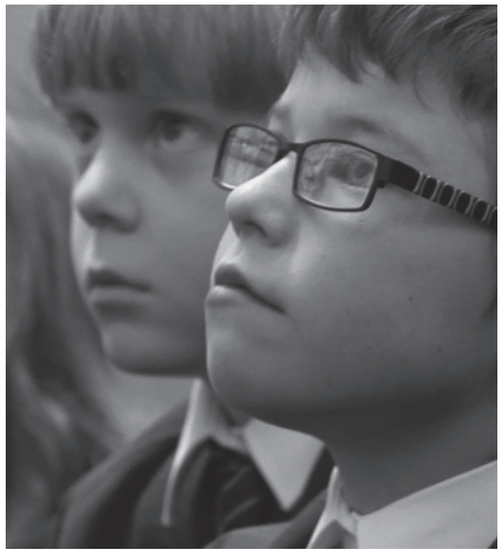
> "What is taught in one year is built on in the next and the progress is there and clearly visible."

Progress through practical and engaging lessons

The children really love using Abacus. The visual aspects of the programme join up all the elements of doing, seeing and hearing; before Abacus the children were doing but without the seeing. I was observing a class where the children had not reached the stage the teacher had intended by the end of the lesson. However, the next day she had cups of little sweets so the children had a practical example they could easily relate to by using an approach which resonated with them. All the children like to see something animated because suddenly they are able to see what is being taught and are more open to understanding the why behind it.

Since implementing Abacus, we have also introduced problem solving lessons so we are working through reasoning to develop the mastery and really embed their knowledge; this is a major objective for us. Problem solving is what we need for achieving mastery so children can grasp the fluency of the subject. We wait a couple of weeks after we have taught a subject and then start the problem solving tasks with the children. This gives us a much better insight into how embedded their learning is. It keeps everything fresh and the children are actually putting their maths into practice. There are lots of problem solving questions in the SATs and the children have the knowledge of how to approach these questions and explain their thinking.

> "The children love the activities, they are like a breath of fresh air."



Feedback from the children

The children love the Abacus activities, they are like a breath of fresh air. All the children like the animated learning, because as it's visual they can see what is being taught which completely engages them. Lessons are fun for the children and we have seen a complete shift in their attitude towards maths. We even have children asking "I know there's no homework this week but can you put something else on my system for me?"

The impact of consistency across for children and teachers

All the teachers are happy to now have the one resource for maths which has given us consistency across the school so there are no gaps in the teaching. What is taught via the Abacus programme in one year is built on in the next and the progress is clearly visible. Abacus has also given us time to do some assessment around what the children need because we are not having to worry about planning which used to be very time consuming. We know what we want to cover in the class and simply search for the right planning guides which can be tweaked if necessary. As teachers, we have found it motivating that the children are really enjoying maths now.

The outcome – the right formula for great results

We have been delighted with the progress the children have made since we introduced Abacus. Overall expectations are much higher under the new curriculum and we have been able to easily identify any gaps in the children's mental maths skills and address them with the bank of Abacus resources available to us. The children have developed a love of maths because lessons are interactive, engaging and overall good fun. Their knowledge is so much deeper than before because we are tracking their learning and also assessing their understanding both during and after we teach something new. This helps us assess if the children have retained what they have been taught weeks later and keeps the children fresh and engaged.

In our most recent inspection, Ofsted cited: "Mathematics teaching is improving. You have made a number of changes to the way it is taught, including introducing a new mathematics scheme to help teachers to know what to teach and when. This is helping to improve consistency across the school."

Find out more

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