

Support great teaching by saving time and stress



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. Following a recent Ofsted report, and consultations with the local authority, maths was identified as a key area for improvement. The school had focused on literacy the previous year and wanted to build on that success. **Karen Osmond, Maths Coordinator**, explains how Abacus has had an impact on maths teaching in her school.

Key points to take away

- Flexible planning resources **save time and stress** so focus is centered around teaching.
- Whole school approach **supports consistent teaching to improve attainment** and build on success.
- Interactive resources **help to motivate and engage children as well as teachers**.
- Abacus **allows teachers to focus on closing learning gaps** and identifying future teaching and learning needs.

Background

In the past we have used various bits of other maths schemes at Speenhamland and we felt that gaps were emerging because there wasn't consistency in the teaching. Maths was an area of focus and improvement for us and something we needed to address quickly. We wanted to ensure that when children were moving from one year to the next they had the scaffolding to move their maths along too.

In October 2014 we introduced Abacus after I went out to two local primary schools who already used it. I was able to see first-hand how it worked, how the school was using it and the impact it was having. The schools we networked with shared their learnings with myself and the Head Teacher and after that we felt relief that we had found Abacus and we knew it worked.

How Abacus was implemented at Speenhamland Primary

We made the decision to implement Abacus as our sole maths programme and teach it from the planning across the board. All the staff came together and we discussed how it would be implemented; we all agreed that one common resource would give us cohesion in our teaching and ensure coverage. Because everything is available in one place for teachers and children, there is consistency throughout.

When we launched Abacus we were clear that for the more experienced staff the planning was a support tool to enhance their teaching. Abacus provides flexibility for teachers to switch things around slightly or alter some of the activities to suit their class requirements.

All teachers are finding the daily and weekly plans really useful. Our more experienced teachers were finding new ideas, and I remember one teacher commenting "Oh, I hadn't thought about that." Abacus is a great tool for teachers wanting to search for additional resources or teaching material during lessons even if they're not part of the planning for that class.

“I planned five weeks of maths in about two hours.”

(Year 5 and 6 teacher)

What is the feedback from the teachers?

All staff at our school collectively made the decision to go with Abacus so they have all reacted very positively. It has everything we need as well as new approaches to teaching. We even had a teacher who commented "I haven't thought about teaching that way." It helps identify gaps and also gauge the children's prior knowledge so it's easy to see which areas we need to concentrate our efforts.

I have found that Abacus really keeps children focused and engaged. A good example is when I was teaching fractions to Year 5, the Abacus programme looks at how pizzas can be divided and the visual aspect of the programme really made a difference. It sounds simple but the children could relate to the example and even broaching the subject of mixed or improper fractions was not daunting for them. This kind of contextual learning really resonates with the children. In fact, we made pizzas in class and used the example as a practical activity; the kids loved this and they just went off and started problem solving. They also really like the visuals on the interactive whiteboard too. After Easter one of the Year 6 teachers then came in to teach Year 5 and said "I can't believe how good their mental maths skills are."

“I can use the time saved in the classroom to make a real impact on the children's learning.”



Saving time and stress so teachers can teach

Abacus has really given us time to conduct meaningful assessment and has allowed us to focus our energy on identifying future teaching and learning needs. We have also been amazed at how much time we are saving on planning; I came into school over the Easter holidays and printed out the necessary resources which meant I planned five weeks of maths lessons in about two hours.

Our whole approach has changed. Before, if I knew I had to teach division then I would look at the resources I had or identify additional material I would need to find. Now I plan what I want to teach and I don't have to worry because I know the resources are there. I can use the time saved in the classroom to make a real impact on the children's learning.



The outcome – excellent teaching fosters successful pupils

We had an external company come in to carry out a maths audit and they told us that there is consistent teaching and that gaps are being identified and closed. With the whole school using Abacus we are finding that what we are teaching in Year 1 is being built on in Year 2 and so on. We are now embedding the learning throughout the school with complete consistency. The teachers are also finding that time saved in planning has helped in improving attainment throughout the school.

Find out more

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