Rural school's use of edtech spearheads its innovative digital strategy and keeps standards in maths high

Mathletics transitions from a platform used for small group interventions to a resource which permeates the whole school curriculum.

About the school

Penpol Primary School based in the historical town of Hayle in South West Cornwall is a larger than average primary school with 397 pupils, rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

Despite the challenges it faces in its isolated rural location on the western peninsula of Cornwall, Penpol Primary School is proud to lead the way for other schools in the area with its digital strategy. Its ambitious cycle of research, evaluation, planning and development drives its practice forward, allowing the school to offer a truly 21st century learning experience. Penpol prides itself on its cross-curricular approach, ensuring that technology is embedded into all aspects of teaching and learning to improve outcomes.

What were the challenges?

Jacob Woolcock, Head of Computing and Digital Learning at Penpol, was keen to drive the school's digital strategy and integrate technology into more aspects of classroom practice, including in maths to keep standards high.

"One of the main challenges we faced regarding maths learning in school was engaging pupils who lacked enthusiasm and didn't want to participate in lessons as well as those who felt anxious about making a mistake.

"We needed a resource that efficiently identified topic weaknesses in individual pupils and also groups, allowing teachers to target these areas and provide one-to-one support if necessary to prevent any child falling behind the rest of the class.

"It's a key element of our school improvement plan to integrate technology into classroom learning. Our remote location on the western peninsula of Cornwall reduces our pupils' opportunities to visit big companies, businesses and colleges and experience different industries and cutting-edge technologies.

"It's crucial that our pupils have the opportunity to use high-end technology and develop transferable digital skills in order to succeed in this technological age."

How is Mathletics meeting these challenges?

> “Initially we trialled Mathletics to engage reluctant maths learners, offering it as a lunchtime club to enhance pupils’ computing and maths skills. It was so popular that we decided to use it for homework, revision and classwork too! Mathletics transitioned from a platform used for small group interventions to a resource which permeates the whole school curriculum.”

“Mathletics is a great tool for supporting pupils’ learning and ongoing improvement. Its instant reporting facility allows us to quickly and easily identify any pupils struggling with a topic. We can then assign a TA who provides one-to-one support outside normal maths lessons – this keeps pupils up-to-date with the maths curriculum teaching. As many of our TAs are non-maths specialists, they use Mathletics during these support sessions because they are secure in the knowledge that Mathletics provides ready-made content that is targeted and adapted to suit the child’s ability.”

What are the overall results?

“The biggest improvement is our pupils’ attitude to maths; they’re enthusiastic about the resource and often choose to use Mathletics during free time in computing lessons. The platform removes anxiety surrounding mistakes, showing the children that errors are a key part of learning.

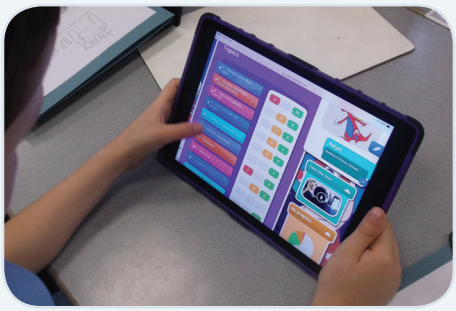
“Pupils aren’t discouraged by red crosses for wrong answers in their books. On the contrary, children using Mathletics are encouraged to retry a question immediately and learn from their mistakes.

“The Mathletics participation report enables us to reward engaged pupils who opt to revisit challenging subjects. Teachers can easily see which children are redoing questions to improve their scores as well as those who are rushing through tasks without correcting their answers!

“This increased confidence and refinement of skills is reflected in our results: in 2018 79.2% of pupils were working to the government’s current floor standards - the minimum expectations for pupils’ attainment and progress in mathematics - compared to 76% nationally.

“Crucially, Mathletics helps equip our pupils with lifelong digital skills. Our team is implementing a step change in technology usage– I’ve just been appointed an Apple Distinguished Educator and we are focusing on programming skills.

“We’ve started using iPads in the classroom and the Mathletics app has been a great starting point for this; teachers feel confident using Mathletics on iPads as they know that the children will have fun and consolidate their maths skills.”



Would you recommend Mathletics?

“Absolutely! It’s fun, engaging and a hands-on digital resource that reinforces lesson content, cements knowledge and efficiently allows teachers to evaluate and readily determine pupil progress. It’s a huge win for any school!”

“Mathletics is one of our ‘must-renew’ applications every year!”