CASE STUDY: Purple Mash at St John's

Introduction and Context

This case study explores the development of the digital learning platform - Purple Mash - at St John's from March 2020 and its impact on teaching and learning since fully re-opening in March 21.

Before the pandemic, St John's had been utilising Purple Mash as a resource to deliver some key elements of the computing curriculum and as our chosen SOW. Staff had received minimal training from Purple Mash specialists (two twilight sessions over 3 years). Some additional support was given by the computing lead and network manager for maximising the SOW. Feedback from staff on the resource had been very positive.

What challenges did we face?

The short notice of schools closing in March 2020, left no time to demonstrate to the St John's community how pivotal Purple Mash would be in the remote plan.

Although staff had a good knowledge of Purple Mash as a tool for teaching computing, they weren't prepared to use it to facilitate daily teaching and learning. Delving into the resource to utilise it for the breadth of curriculum subjects, training, combined with tailoring and differentiating the resources, did put the whole staff body under increased pressure. Initially, this did increase the workload for all staff considerably.

In some Year groups, computers and school ipads had not been utilised enough – only during the computing hour. This meant that staff's knowledge of resources such as educational apps was not extensive and opportunities for cross-curricular links/using transferrable skills were not maximised.

The first 8 weeks of implementing our remote plan, led to high volumes of parental phone calls to the school for support with technology and home learning. This was incredibly time consuming for the school's leadership team and class teachers. There were clear parental frustrations when navigating the interface of Purple Mash.

The resources for EYFS and sequenced mathematics lessons were limited.

What helped us succeed?

The staff's ability to master new resources through Purple Mash's training online training platform and share best practice. When the school's remote education guidance was reviewed in September 2020, St John's felt they were in a strong position because home learning leaders were able to confidently refine our offer with insight for subsequent lockdowns, maximising our use of Purple Mash as the main platform to set daily learning.

The children engage well with Purple Mash. Because they were familiar with using it to support their learning before Coronavirus, it gave St John's a springboard to work with.

Clear guidance for parents and staff on the expectations for a remote school day. This was established quickly and created consistency across the school.

Staff worked tirelessly to ensure communication with parents weekly/daily/fortnightly was prioritised to offer the necessary support. Over the phone coaching to help parents navigate the Purple Mash interface, offer advice and listen to parents when facing challenges kept learning moving.

Daily monitoring of work and communication from the pupils by the SLT as well as class teachers to continually drive forward the home learning and improve consistency throughout both full lockdowns.

The ever-evolving and improved resources offered by Purple Mash. Purple Mash listened to the feedback from teachers globally. Attending the teacher panel meant that St John's were always up to date with changes and developments of the resources.

The 2email application on Purple Mash for pupil- teacher contact proved to be an effective way for staff to engage with pupils daily, send work and offer positive praise. You could also target different groups of children this way.

The feedback on learning that staff could give via voice recorded or typed messages attached to each piece of work, proved to motivate the pupils extremely well and support parents.

The quiz app - an excellent way to check subject knowledge and understanding of concepts as frequently as teachers needed.

Using the class blogs and offering flexible daily timetabling allowed parents to fit home learning around their own work commitments. Parents were clear on activities that would need parental support and those that the children were meant to complete independently.

Since the full return to school, how has this impacted St John's curriculum?

Digital literacy has improved across the entire school because of Purple Mash. In computing, staff have a better knowledge of the progressions of skills and what knowledge (especially language) the children need to be able to develop skills. This has mainly been evident in the increased use of technology across both key stages. Within the classroom, regular cross-curricular links involving digital learning have become the norm pupils are offered frequent opportunities to choose apps on Purple Mash to present scientific results, writing and Art. More frequent use of using transferrable skills across the curriculum. Feedback is also continuing to be offered through Purple Mash where appropriate.

The profile of digital literacy has been raised considerably with computing lessons taking high priority across both key stages. Evidence of this has come from conferencing with staff and pupils, accompanied by work scrutiny on Purple Mash.

Homework continues to be set via Purple Mash, with teachers utilising the 2quiz app for spelling assessments, revision and creative opportunities. Engagement of this is high

Every teacher now has an assigned IPAD for teaching and learning which they are able to use interactively, collect evidence of assessment. (There is also a bank of 30 for the pupils to use)

Utilising Apps daily such as Bug Club and Serial Mash to continue to raise the profile of reading across the school and maintain high outcomes.

General use of apps such as Digi Maps and Padlet are confidently being used by staff and best practice shared to support those less confident.

KS2 children are mostly responsible online and understand the language needed to send emails and messages appropriately to their peers and teachers through the success of the 2email app on Purple Mash. Pupils continue to use 2email as a means of communication with the teachers/subject leaders. This has strengthened pupil voice.

High engagement of pupils through successful online projects. Evidence: Year 5 have been involved in an exciting project with the National Oceanography Centre and were able to participate in some excellent scientific research. Through the Portsmouth Music Hub, children have been able to participate in music performances and would like to continue virtual concerts throughout the year. This will continue next academic year – an alternative way to engage professional visitors.

Next Steps:

- A road map of must can statements designed by St John's to share with families to support digital literacy at home. (This is currently being designed.)
- More frequent monitoring of computing lessons and scrutiny of skills and knowledge taught
- Monitoring of curriculum maps to address opportunities to teach and use transferrable skills.