

Learning by numbers

Two practitioners talk about how they use maths software to accelerate learning

Raising self confidence – Corinne Owen

We use Dynamo Maths in our school, which caters for pupils aged three to 19. All of them have autism spectrum disorder or severe learning difficulties and we wanted to improve standards in their number work. When we researched how our students learn, we found they do better when they use ICT, so we looked for a suitable maths program.

Dynamo Maths is aimed at learners with dyscalculia and although it is mapped to the curriculum outcomes of years 1 and 2, the way it presents information suits our students perfectly, even those aged 19 who are still struggling with numbers. We start our students on it when they have achieved P Scale 4 in maths, although the program is actually aimed at P6 to L2a.

We love the support materials that come with the program. It is very easy to assess children's progress using the reporting facility and the printable worksheets make one-to-one work and consolidation easy. Learning is personalised by selecting only the modules you want each student to access, and there is a facility to print certificates to celebrate their achievements.

The outcomes are excellent. Since we bought Dynamo last September, the 66 students who are using it are making progress. Some of them are racing

through it! It targets specific areas of learning and provides teachers with a structured plan of materials and activities.

The best thing is that it gains the child's interest in a way no other resource does in school – they are learning about numbers and counting, and doing functional maths such as money and time, which will help them when they leave school.

Because it's interesting and fun, one of the spin-offs is that it also improves language – there are often lively discussions about what children see on the screen.

“It makes my brain work harder”

‘I like it better than doing maths in workbooks because it makes my brain work harder,’ says one student. Another has challenging behaviour and low self-esteem. He especially likes the yellow bubble popping up and telling him ‘Well done’ so he knows exactly what he achieved, or ‘Good try’ if he didn't quite get it correct and then the software shows him how to get it right. While he can't accept praise from a person, he will accept praise from a computer, so this has massively boosted his confidence.

For a lot of our students, I think its success is down to the way the maths is presented. They think they're playing games and don't realise they are learning. In fact, it is so much fun that some children log in from home and so we are able to engage parents in working with their children, which is real progress – our students are not easy to teach and having parents wanting to help is brilliant.

Ease of use is another advantage. The students all have their own user name and password. We've also trained all our staff to use it and have created a crib sheet for TAs – they don't help with the maths, they are simply there in case students can't read a word or are not sure what to do next.

I wish I'd found it earlier – we use it every day and it makes such a difference.



Corinne Owen is head of education at Foxwood School in Hythe

The Dynamo Maths Online School Base System has over 230 online modules. The licence for three students and one teacher is £103 + VAT. Each additional student is £6.49 + VAT. www.dynamomaths.co.uk

They learn about functional maths like money



It is easy to assess children using the reporting facility

