

Success Story No.1 – Using Facebook with Early Years families at Oakthorpe Primary School

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I had the pleasure of speaking with Leanne Martin from Oakthorpe Primary School and she shared the school's success using technology to engage parents and carers of Early Years children.

What is your school context?

We are a 3 form entry primary school, I am the Head of Early Years and a Reception teacher.

What has been the biggest challenge?

Technology – getting into the routine of online teaching and supporting parents that felt overwhelmed, particularly in the first week. We have paired back what we are providing for learning activities, and I will overview the whole team's work to monitor this.

Can you share your success engaging with parents?

We set up a private Facebook group for parents, with added security, and the vast majority of parents are using it.

We upload practical Literacy, Phonics and Maths activities each morning. Our activities follow a weekly focus such as "Dinosaurs" to engage the children and it mirrors how learning would have happened in school. The activities don't require a printer, as many families don't have one, and they also use household objects, so families are able to easily access the activities.

Teachers have been posting teaching videos which we've heard that both students and parents have enjoyed. TAs have been reading stories and we post those too.

Each week alongside the daily tasks we also provide parents with an activities list, with different ideas listed under the 7 areas of learning for parents to pick and choose from.

We let parents know on the Friday what next week's topic is so they can research ahead if they want to.

We can give feedback on the things that are posted by families. Parents and carers can choose whether this is private or shared to the group. Some parents and carers are looking but not posting, which is fine. Its lovely having this interacton with the children.

On our school website, we have also made resources available to parents who don't have Facebook access. It has a weekly plan of activities that mirror the ones on the Facebook group. We also upload worksheets and tasks. Parents have the option of collecting this work as a printed pack from the school. This aids families without printer or internet access.

Literacy has seemed the hardest for families, we have made it clear that it doesn't matter where the children started, that everyone is at different stages. We have provided additional support for phonics.

What has engagement been like?

Very good as the vast majority of the parents use Facebook anyway. It's really secure so we all have confidence in both us posting for families and them posting back to us. Parents enjoy the flexibility of choosing which activities they complete and which work they want to show us. During phone calls to parents they have said how much they like the tasks being set and how much fun they have been having completing them.

What are you thinking about next?

We are now planning with a stronger focus on the individual needs of children as well thinking about transitioning the children into returning to school if and when they do reopen.

Any final thoughts?

I will be happy to see children back!