



# Creativity and Communication

Focus on **Learning platforms**

Primary/whole school

## Top tips from Parsons Down Junior School

- Relate all activity to learning outcomes
- Provide children with creative opportunities
- Recognise the motivational factor of being able to talk to a wider audience
- Use the platform to celebrate pupils' achievements
- Encourage pupils to share their work with families and friends

Parsons Down Junior School (PDJ) caters for over 300 pupils between the ages of seven and eleven. The school has been working closely with their Local Authority advisor to focus on using their learning platform in a way that emphasises the benefits of collaborating and communicating through an online learning community.

As Sue Stewart, ICT Co-ordinator and Yr 4 teacher at PDJ explains, one of the most important aspects of learning platform implementation is ensuring that it relates to genuine learning outcomes. "Adding real value with a learning platform requires thought and understanding of how it will enhance learning. ICT should never be used simply for its own sake and, as teachers, we need to bear in mind that careful planning is vital for creating activities that really benefit pupils."

But that does not mean that there is anything dull or unrewarding about the ways that the platform can be used, as PDJ has demonstrated with their imagination and creativity. When a group of Yr 6 pupils went on a residential trip to Wales this year they decided to use the platform to upload daily stories about their trip, complete with photos of their activities and information about what they had experienced. Sue continues, "A few pupils hadn't been able to go on the trip, so to make sure they didn't feel excluded from the fun we decided that they would also upload news about their day. We included a discussion forum and it was soon being used in ways that we hadn't expected. It wasn't long before parents got involved and were using the forum to stay in touch with their children and get first hand updates on how they were."

"The positive comments we received showed just how much potential there was for this kind of communication. It reassured the parents, gave them more involvement in the trip and worked really well at including the pupils who were not able to attend. Effectively the platform became an interface with vast potential and this is something that we will aim to develop in future years."



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*Sue Stewart, ICT Co-ordinator  
and Yr 4 teacher at PDJ*

The enthusiasm of the pupils for this approach to work is one of the key advantages of using a learning platform, as Sue explains, “The biggest single benefit of using a learning platform is its motivational factor. The children love ICT and are often streets ahead of their teachers in terms of ability. Providing them with outlets to demonstrate and use these skills in a learning environment can deliver impressive results.”

The after-school Web Busters Club has been another area where pupils have been given the chance to apply their ICT knowledge outside the traditional classroom but with a real focus on engaging learning. “We try to focus on topical themes or current events at school and the Web Busters Club belongs to the pupils. The material they create is very much their own work. It is very individual and this freedom inspires their creativity and they gain real pleasure in seeing their work published for others to share.”

Creating this ability to share work and publish material on the platform for others to see is one of the major roles that the learning platform has played at PDJ. Sue continues, “We have really created a true shared learning environment where pupils can add their own thoughts and opinions while developing their communication and literacy skills. The learning platform is providing the opportunity to work with partners and other schools without physically having to leave the school site, making it a much more practical part of everyday school life.” Pupils are encouraged to actively involve their parents and all work is displayed on the platform for parents to view from home. Sue summarises, “We see this as really celebrating the children’s work. They are proud to see the material they create published online – particularly when it goes beyond our school and is shared on the Local Authority site. They understand that they are reaching a wider audience and this helps with raising the standards of how they present their work as well.”



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