We never thought this would happen, within five days we went from full operations to reduction in service provision for key workers children. Ponteland Primary School is situated in the heart of the attractive village of Ponteland not far from Newcastle-upon-Tyne. The school serves a diverse community, attracting pupils from the local area and villages. The school is a non-selective community primary school providing education, emotional wellbeing and an environment where children thrive.

A key focus is the provision of inclusive support to children from Year 1 - Year 6 who are not making age-related progress and struggling with curricular maths. The range of needs for these children vary from severely struggling, to children with mild-learning difficulties and some with co-occurring SEN conditions. The school’s caring ethos extends to ensuring that we maximise each child’s potential.

At school our children within the maths intervention groups, looked forward every few days to work with both the tactile and online activities on Dynamo Maths. However, the government announcement of school closure meant that this was not possible and we needed to plan on how best to continue supporting our children.

The lockdown announcement meant that we had to change swiftly to enable parents to support children remotely. Luckily, we were able to continue using Dynamo Maths, which is a specialist Maths Intervention and catch-up program with a hybrid of pedagogies; lesson plans and ICT activities; digital activities that are personalised to target areas where children need support.

Our initial fear was that parents may need IT support, but only a few calls came in to request forgotten passwords. A few requested some guidance on how to assist their children with certain tasks but on the whole the transition was simple. Because the children were so familiar with using the programme in school, they were able to be quite independent in many instances doing this at home.

Further, the use of the same resource in school for the key worker children during lockdown provided a bridge of familiarity and the new norm of school work. They were able to use Dynamo throughout their time at school which meant that they kept practising and improving their skills too.

As we journey back to the opening of the schools, I think the future is bright and we will be looking at using the new approach that strengthens the partnership approach between the school, children and parents. The ability to use these types of learning programmes in school and at home is a great way to bridge the gap between home and school and help parents understand the role they can play if their child is struggling at school and be more involved in their learning.

We were indeed very fortunate to have had a specialist resource for children who were not making age-related progress. It was very beneficial to offer them this resource to use at home over this time.

Case Study: Journey to Blended Learning

Shelley Farnham, SEN Support Assistant, Ponteland Primary School