

# The Great School Framework

## Communicating with parents and carers through the pandemic

### Case study – Kingswood Nursery School

[www.kingswood.herts.sch.uk](http://www.kingswood.herts.sch.uk)

School's Out – but for how long nobody knows. Finding ways to communicate with parents and carers during the coronavirus pandemic has been more essential than it's ever been before. The staff at Kingswood nursery school are usually able to have daily face to face conversations to talk about the children's learning and well-being. Without this it's been essential to find ways to help parents/carers feel confident to support their child's learning at home.

### The introduction of Tapestry

Kingswood is a maintained nursery school in Watford, for children aged 2-5 years of age, with 130 children on roll. We introduced 'Tapestry', an online learning journal, in September 2018, for a trial period of one year.

The main reason for this was to support and inform parents about their child's learning, to have clear documentation about how each child was progressing through the Early Years curriculum, and to ensure that the children continued to make valuable progress through regular 'target' setting.

By July 2019 we were convinced that this electronic way of recording was the way forward. Staff were no longer spending their valuable PPA time 'printing, cutting and sticking', which was the case with the former paper journals, and the parents were more actively involved with their child's learning. We had always invited parents to borrow the paper journals to take home, to view them in one of our open sessions, but very few did.

Previously, reports were completed 4 times a year but always addressed what the children **had already done**, and then 3 targets were set at the end to be worked on at home and school.

We decided to abandon report writing and focus on setting regular short-term targets that could be worked on at home and at a school, monitored and supported through recording and communication on Tapestry. It was agreed the 'targets' would be those most relevant to the child's immediate needs and would be backed up with observations and photos from school and from home. Parents who weren't engaging received a paper copy of the target, a home learning bag to address the target and/or a phone-call. Gradually more and more parents came on board and thus became even more effective partners and educators in their child's learning.

All was going well .....and then the coronavirus pandemic struck.

### Tapestry has helped phenomenally

Having 'Tapestry' already in place has been a phenomenal way to keep in touch with parents. We have been open for the children of critical workers since the lockdown was announced, with a skeleton number on staff on site. The remainder of staff have been working from home, setting the children in their key group regular fun challenges based upon what they know about the children in their group.



The staff have, at times, become quite competitive: 'If the maximum number of red objects found by Green Group was 40, I am sure that our group can beat this!' The parents have really enjoyed this, and some have even involved grandparents, who are also sending in their photos of the numbers of objects found.

Because the parents can add photos and videos of their children taking part in suggested activities, ultimately geared towards supporting children's 'targets', staff are able to quickly add further suggestions to improve and modify their learning. For example, when a video of a child who appeared to need help using scissors was posted in Tapestry, staff were able to follow this up by suggesting that the correct scissor grip was demonstrated and providing ideas such as cutting cooked spaghetti to help build the child's fine scissor skills.



### Maintaining relationships through shared activities

The staff can send videos of themselves talking to the children which really helps maintain a personal relationship. They can send links to websites, You Tube clips, and resources on our website.

Good morning, everyone! Guess what? It is Friday and I am missing going on our yoga journey together! Kick off your shoes and socks and get your bodies at the ready. If you have internet access go to 'YouTube' and follow a yoga story with 'Cosmic Kids'. Don't forget to send me back your videos!  
*Parents, please remember to supervise your child with adverts and pop-ups whilst online.*



Following on from our data analysis in March 2020, it was evident that Maths was an area for development, so the staff have been sending plenty of maths activities to address this.

Lois I have a special maths challenge for you!

Can you find 3 spoons? 🍴 🍴 🍴

Can you find 3 socks? 🧦 🧦 🧦

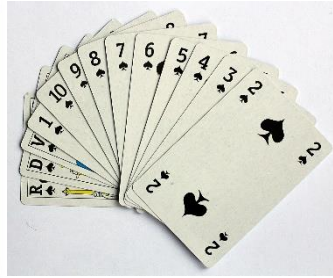
Can you find 3 teddy bears? 🧸 🧸 🧸

Can you find 3 shoes? 👟 👟 👟

Can you find 3 balls? ⚽ ⚽ ⚽

Once you have found them all, can you sort them in to their groups of 3.

Good Luck Lois!



Number recognition – Playing snap. A classic card game for your child to try. I hope you enjoy playing this!

*Tip for parents: don't use the whole pack at first. By restricting the number of cards it will be much easier for your child.*

This week I am going to be setting you some maths challenges. You might want to do them several times this week to deepen the learning.

Here is the first: Positional language. Take turns to hide a teddy or favourite toy. Give clues for others to find your toy. Use positional language such as 'behind', 'near', 'above', 'underneath' until Ted is found.

Let me know how you get on!



The staff have been able to send updates regarding the seeds that were planted at school.

'Baby-sitting your seeds'.

I hope you are pleased with how well they are growing!  
Can you plant some seeds at home and send me pictures?



We received lots of responses from parents.



'We did plant some seeds at home and here is a photo of how well they are doing.'



One of many photos received following a 'floating and sinking challenge'.



Photo received regarding a Pre-School child continuing 'Busy Fingers' at home.

Sarah, our wonderful singing and guitar playing member of the team, sings up to 10 minutes of songs to the children a couple of times a week online. This is so popular that some families have shown Sarah on their big TV screens and say it is like her being in their front room. We then get videos back of the children singing along.

Sarah sending them an individual 'Happy Birthday' song on their birthday has been magical! The children have been quite overwhelmed!



### **Continuing the learning journey**

The setting of short term 'targets' for the children is having a much more immediate greater impact on their learning, compared to termly reports and consultations spread across the year.

In terms of the support for families due to the coronavirus pandemic, it is evident from the information being shared by parents back to us through Tapestry that the Kingswood children are still on a learning journey, albeit from the comfort of their homes and gardens.

### **Parents have felt less isolated**

Many of our parents have commented that it has made them feel far less isolated and it has helped the staff feel in touch with the children in their key groups.

Now that we have the parents hooked, we intend that this strengthened partnership in learning will continue and develop. Parents are the child's 'first and most enduring educators'. 'Over 70% of children's lives are spent not in a setting, but with their family and the wider community. Therefore, home and community must be recognised as significant learning environments in the lives of children'. (The Early Years Foundation Stage – 'Parents as Partners' 2007)

The coronavirus pandemic will have an impact on the lives of this group of children and families for a long time to come, but we hope that we have supported their learning and well-being during this difficult time.

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