



Enabling Blended Learning with IXL

Nightingale Primary School, London, England



“With IXL, the ‘Goldilocks’ factor is built in: it’s not too hard, and not too easy. And students get immediate feedback. That’s crucial for helping students be self-regulated learners.”

Omar Jennings, Headteacher

“Their confidence is so much greater and retention is better because they are exposed to so much more. They can talk procedurally about what is happening. As a teacher, I could not create enough work of this quality to get these results for my students.”

Adrian Koza, Year 5 Teacher

Nightingale Primary School serves year 1 – 6 students in a highly diverse neighborhood in Southeast London, with many immigrant families from Eastern European and African countries. When the COVID-19 pandemic began, Headteacher Omar Jennings and staff transitioned their 238 students to a blended learning model—and they haven’t looked back. IXL provides targeted practice and differentiated instruction for blended learning. End-of-year assessments show that the approach is paying off with strong growth for all students—especially those who started out behind.

The Challenge: Addressing Learning Loss with Blended Learning

Nightingale prides itself on high academic standards. The school consistently ranks in the UK’s top 10% for maths, thanks in part to their participation in the [Maths Hub](#) program, coordinated by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM). IXL met their need for high-quality instructional materials to support academic excellence.

When COVID-19 forced sudden lockdowns for schools across the globe in March of 2020, teachers were motivated to preserve student progress. Headteacher Omar Jennings explains, “One of the things we had to look at this year was learning loss—how do you mitigate or recover learning after a disruption like this?”

While teachers started using IXL Maths and IXL English in 2018, it was primarily used for occasional homework. They began using the program in earnest in March of 2020. In September of 2020, they invested in laptops for all students in years 2–6. A blended learning model allowed them to transition more easily between remote and in-person learning over the next school year.



Students have now returned to the classroom full-time, but Nightingale is committed to retaining its blended learning model. Their approach balances teacher-delivered direct instruction and coaching with technology-enabled purposeful practice. IXL is the primary tool they use for daily guided and independent practice.

Creating Independent Learners Through Deliberate Practice

With their blended learning approach, Nightingale teachers may spend 10-15 minutes introducing a concept before allowing students to practice the skill independently on IXL. Omar says, “We realized that we needed to incorporate more deliberate practice time for students. IXL is a phenomenal tool because of the way it scales up. There is both procedural variation and conceptual variation. Students are getting exactly what they need during that deliberate practice time.”

In year 5, students may spend 20-30 minutes on IXL during the school day. They can get additional practice on IXL at home or during a before-school program. Adrian Koza, the year 5 teacher, says, “I really like the self-pacing aspect of IXL. Each student is getting the right level of challenge to progress. They aren’t just jumping through to get finished with a set number of problems, and they can take as much time as they need to master a skill.”

With IXL, students are able to work independently and take ownership of their learning. The program provides immediate feedback and correction, so students know right away if they answer a question correctly and can see where they went wrong if they make a mistake. Omar says, “The feedback loop in an IXL session makes learning significantly more efficient in comparison to a paper worksheet. Giving students feedback in real-time has been proven in studies to be an effective approach, but it isn’t always easy for teachers to do.”

IXL also makes it easier for teachers to differentiate instruction. Teachers can immediately see how students are doing and where they need extra support. Students can work independently in IXL on questions that match their level of mastery. Omar says, “In guided practice, differentiation is always the most difficult element. You may have 20% of the class ready to move on, so you are either holding them back or trying to create work for them. With IXL, they can keep going.” Other students may need additional practice time to master grade-level skills, or they may need to go back and review skills from previous years.

“It’s very evident that we are closing the gaps for our reluctant learners. Students stay very engaged with IXL; they want to go above and beyond. It all goes back to engagement.”

Omar Jennings, Headteacher



The IXL Effect: Closing the Gaps and Keeping Learners Engaged

Students at Nightingale Primary are accelerating learning with IXL. The impact has been especially pronounced for students who were previously behind. Adrian says, “In any classroom, you have your top achievers, your middle achievers and your struggling learners. All of my students are making progress, and I see the gap between these groups closing now.”

Between September 2020 and July 2021, students answered more than one million questions and demonstrated mastery in 21,144 skills. Nightingale students consistently exceeded the recommended 30 questions per week benchmark, and the results were apparent in their IXL Effect report. Those gains translated to the real world, too. A practice proficiency test (2019 SAT Mock Test) in July 2021 showed that more than 90% of year 6 students made age-expected progress for the school year.

Omar attributes much of the success with IXL to the way it engages students, especially reluctant learners. Some students have completed thousands of problems independently, mastering skills for year 7, Algebra I and higher. Adrian says, “I had one student who was very disengaged in maths. With IXL, she now has the drive to want to be independent and improve her scores by herself.”

Students have been able to translate their learning on IXL to other contexts—including the end-of-year assessment. Omar says, “Students were able to apply their problem-solving skills to this new situation. Deliberate practice removes a lot of the fear and anxiety.” Thanks to IXL, students are leaving Nightingale Primary with the skills and the confidence they need to tackle year 7 and beyond.

A Model for Success at Nightingale Primary

Here’s how teacher Adrian Koza is using IXL with his year 5 students:

- Students complete the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic at the beginning of the year to provide baseline data.
- IXL is integrated into every lesson. After Adrian introduces a concept through direct instruction, students work independently on IXL for targeted practice. They can spend as much or as little time as they need to master the skill.
- Students spend about 20 minutes each day in class working on IXL. Students who have extra time after achieving mastery on the target skill can work on skills recommended by the IXL Real-Time Diagnostic or work ahead on higher-level skills. Students can continue to work in IXL at home or during a before-school program.
- The level of mastery expected for each student can be adjusted for individual needs. While most students aim for a SmartScore (IXL’s proprietary scoring system that measures how well a student understands a skill) of 100, students who are struggling may only be expected to get a SmartScore of 90.
- Adrian uses Live Classroom to monitor what students are working on and determine which students need additional coaching and support.
- IXL Analytics allows him to track progress for individual students and for the class as a whole to make better instructional decisions.