

Sunmarke School, Dubai

Reducing teacher workload while improving student grades

Fortes Education has been an established education provider for over two decades with Regent International, the Jumeirah International Nurseries and Sunmarke Schools supporting students in Dubai. With an overall capacity of 3,000 nursery to year 13 students and located at Jumeirah Village Triangle, Sunmarke follows the National Curriculum of England, and also offers the International Baccalaureate® (IB). Respected as premium international educational institutes, the schools are rated amongst the leading schools and preschools in the UAE.

Background

Back in 2018, Benjamin Atkins, deputy headteacher at Sunmarke School set an objective of finding a way to reduce teacher workload. They started using GCSEPod an engaging online resource that provides students with short (typically three to five minute) video pods that demonstrate numerous learning concepts across more than 20 GCSE and IGCSE subjects from every exam board. Its bank of 50,000 dynamic questions provide accurate reporting and monitoring to ensure in-depth subject knowledge.



**SUNMARKE
SCHOOL**
Where Amazing Happens

The resource is ideal for independent learning in the class, homework and revision. More importantly the homework 'marking' is carried out automatically by the resource, removing significant teacher workload.

Benjamin Atkins explains, "originally we looked at GCSEPod as a tool to reduce marking for students' home learning. We launched the resource across Years 9 to 11, and students instantly took to the platform and started streaming the video 'pods' from GCSEPod for each of their subjects.

"We could see and track the amount of hours each student had spent online and the work they had been putting in outside of lessons. However, as Year 11 got closer to their GCSEs, students' streaming usage started to rapidly increase."

The school soon realised that GCSEPod was not only reducing teacher work load but was becoming a sought-after independent learning tool by all the students.

Autonomous Learning

In addition to enhancing student motivation to learn, countless research highlights the benefits of schools offering a level of

independent learning. It not only increases their motivation to learn but also results in higher levels of student awareness of their own progress and achievement.

Using GCSEPod

Taking chemistry as an example, GCSEPod offers the ideal way to explain complex concepts such as molar. Once the students have watched the videos it's so much easier for them to grasp the concept rather than sitting listening to a teacher or reading from a book.

In physics it could be the concept of forces that a student is wanting to understand. Students may have had a lesson on this in class and use GCSEPod to consolidate their learning as homework, or they may watch the relevant GCSEPods before a lesson so they can come to class with a level of understanding and in turn, engage more comfortably with the classroom activities.

Whether it is the revision of a particular learning concept as homework or full revision before exams, GCSEPod is ideal. The teachers can easily create revision playlists, on calculus for example, providing the students with invaluable, rich independent learning content.



“Our teacher-workload reduction idea has worked, it has also become one of the best revision aids available to our students. Due to its success, by the end of the first year of having GCSEPod, both teachers and students were asking if it was available for Key Stages 3 and 5. It therefore came as no surprise when we received our GCSE results in the summer.”

Benjamin Atkins, Deputy Headteacher, Sunmarke School

As Favour Adewumi, a Year 12 student at Sunmarke 6th form explains, “GCSEPod helped me so much during my GCSE, it helped me understand the lesson after my classes in school. It was an easy form of revision because I could listen to it everywhere; in the car ride on the way to school or after school, during revision, in your room. GCSEPod helped me achieve my goal and I am forever grateful.”

Extending the school day

Benjamin Atkins explains that many students spend time travelling to and from school each day. He has found that the students have been so engaged in using GCSEPod that they are watching the pods on the bus on the way to and from school, extending their learning time. He said, “we would see them stepping off the school bus in the morning having spent their twenty-minute travel time re-capping previous lessons such as science or geography. At lunch time and after-school, students would be plugged into their devices taking revision notes.”

Peter Sklavounos, a Year 12 student at Sunmarke School agrees with Mr Atkins,

“GCSEPod is a great platform that offers students an enhanced learning experience and provides them with long-term memory capabilities through individual audio-visual pods.”

“Personally, I found that the save-for-later option helped out the most as it allowed me to access the videos while travelling.”

Results

As Benjamin Atkins concludes, “our teacher-workload reduction idea has worked, it has also become one of the best revision aids available to our students.

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“As the year ended, we were delighted to hear that the amount of revision our students at Sunmarke had done, had actually meant we had won the regional trophy for the POD Games. With the highest streaming rate internationally [based on our size].

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The biggest impact GCSEPod had on our school was the impact on progress in science. Over 80 per cent of Year 11 students either met or exceeded their CAT4 ‘If Challenged’ target. Similar results could be seen across the humanities and mathematics as well, giving us an amazing set of GCSE results across the board.”

The success of GCSEPod is probably best summarised by Esraa Kamel a Year 12 student at Sunmarke when she said, “GCSEPod is very informative and explains the hardest topics in the simplest ways and in a short amount of time. I definitely recommend GCSEPod as it helped me assimilate incomprehensible concepts.”

