

Intervention in the Mastery Context

The Mastery Journey

When the school decided to adopt a mastery approach to teaching mathematics it left us with a number of pressing questions.

For example:

- What does a mastery approach look like?
- How could I implement it in my classroom?
- How can I keep a class with a diverse range of attainment together and teach them as a class?

My TA and I were lucky enough to get places on the Every Child Counts **Intervention in the Mastery Context (IMC)** programme being run through the NW3 Maths Hub. Unlike some training this wasn't based around an actual intervention programme but examines the bigger issues around supporting struggling learners in a mastery system. We were hoping to improve the outcomes for our learners who need a keep-up intervention and also improve our own skills in being able to support those learners who have difficulties, particularly in a mastery context.

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At the outset my TA and I knew every child had big gaps, we just didn't know where they were. We spent time prior to this course discussing what they didn't know, and how to fill that gap in, rather than working with what they did know, and building on these foundations. However, this 3-day course gave my TA and I a chance to learn how to diagnose the mathematical gaps that exist within our class.

After the first session we took away with us a solid understanding of diagnostic assessments and how to use this to discover what our children **'knew'** as opposed to what they didn't know.



This information allowed us to lay the foundations for secure learning with our children and to help them build on their existing learning as well as connecting current learning with prior learning.

As well as training us in diagnostic assessment the programme also gave us ways to help carefully plan a succession of small steps which build on existing knowledge. Because the purpose of each of these small steps were very clear to us, we were able to spot, very quickly, which children began to struggle and exactly where they encountered difficulties.

These children were our target for keep-up intervention. We used the variation theory, which we'd also learned about, to plan activities which stripped back the concepts and very quickly we built up new learning where all children were still with us.

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Impact on practice

Planning in small steps has allowed us to achieve further, faster and to keep the children with us. We now have a range of games and activities to support struggling learners. Our questioning has been refined. We now aim to extend discourse, to encourage children to talk much more: to themselves, their partners, their tables, other tables, in front of the class, and to share and develop their thoughts.

We now intervene **daily** during assembly time or during handwriting time first thing in the morning. We need to find a time to keep up prior to the next session.

The children are now more confident in maths, and we're more confident at delivering the maths our children need.



Some of the **key inputs** from the programme include:

- Developing fluency
- Thinking mathematically
- Extend discourse in maths
- Deeper questioning
- Seating - fluid - cooperative groups, some grouped by ability in particular sessions.
- Variation of problem and methods.

In conclusion, essentially, both my TA and I are more equipped to support struggling learners through a range of assessment, questioning, carefully planned steps and activities. We are currently testing this week - however, there have been marked improvements in closing the gap for our Year 5 children - I know the children well enough to say that the impact of this course has been huge for our children in such a short space of time.

School context:

- Situated in the top 10% of most deprived areas in the UK.
- One form entry primary school with over 250 children on roll (including 2 year old provision).
- High percentage of Pupil Premium children.

Class context:

- 30 children in total (12 boys, 18 girls)
- some severe behavioural concerns with some children in the cohort
- 2 EAL children - 1 who has been in the country for almost 1 year
- 1 traveller child
- speech and language difficulties - expressing, vocalising, vocabulary, immature
- range of ability within the class
- 2 children working at greater depth in maths, applying their knowledge across a range of subject areas - science, topic.



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