

**Peebles High School**  
Scottish Borders,  
Jan Sheridan,  
Head of Mathematics  
January 2018



## Success@Arithmetic – A Secondary Perspective

Our Head Teacher asked us for our vision of school life in 2020 and to indulge in some blue-sky thinking. I had my answer ready - I wanted an intervention programme in our cluster to enable the students from our primary feeder schools to arrive ready for the secondary curriculum. All secondary schools have them, mathematics students with gaps in their learning.

There are many reasons why the gaps exist: immaturity, moving schools, ill health or perhaps they were just not ready for a new concept when it was introduced. It really didn't matter. What did matter was if they left high school with the gaps still in place - then we had failed them.

*'What did matter was if they left high school with the gaps still in place - then we had failed them.'*

The previous year I had taken a class of fairly innumerate second year students, one of our lowest sets, off curriculum two periods a week to work on basic numeracy skills. The change in behaviour, motivation levels, and skills set by the end of the year was startling. The intervention worked well, however, I had carried it out on an ad hoc basis and a more structured approach was needed before asking primary schools or secondary colleagues to become involved.



The Head Teacher asked me to look into intervention programs and in my search I found the ECC **Success@Arithmetic** programme from **Edge Hill University**. Its philosophy meshed with the experience I had with students the previous year especially the use of manipulatives and emphasis on vocabulary. We contacted schools where it was already up and running and got very favourable reports on the programme.

I went to a meeting of the Tweedale Learning Cluster to address the cluster's Head Teachers and regional representatives to explain the need for this programme and how I envisaged the set up. I wanted a member of teaching staff and 2 additional support (ANA) staff members at each school trained, along with 2 Learning Support staff, 2 ANAs and 2 mathematics teachers from the secondary school. This would mean that every school in the cluster would be running the intervention programme.



Our **Every Child Counts Trainer** for the **Success@Arithmetic** programme, was very inspiring and we enjoyed the training. I set up a GLOW group for the trained staff to keep in touch and we met up about 3 months later to discuss where we were in the programme with our students, how many students were taking part, what problems we had encountered, how we had dealt with it, to share our practice, concerns, successes and occasional failures too. We have continued to meet up about once a term and this year have had other colleagues in the region come to see **Success@Arithmetic** in practice in our schools, with a view to introducing **Success@Arithmetic** to their clusters.

In secondary we are using the techniques and skills drawn from **Success@Arithmetic** in whole class situations, staff are delighted that they have "something in their toolbox" to help equip them to teach basic numeracy concepts. In primaries the intervention programme is running in small groups usually of two students.

The understanding and skills gained by students from **Success@Arithmetic** cannot be shown by figure alone, generally all staff involved have reported gains in confidence, motivation and skills and can perhaps be best summed up by one particular student, who when asked about his experience at the end of the programme said "I feel like I've been let out of prison..."

*'The understanding and skills gained by students from Success@Arithmetic cannot be shown by figures alone...'*