

Mathematics Mastery

Primary Maths Curriculum Change Readiness Guide

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Key takeways (TL;DR)

- **Foundational knowledge is vital:** Especially in maths, where content may be streamlined to focus on core skills. Schools should audit how they teach and assess these fundamentals, using resources like the EEF's evidence-based toolkits.

- **Assessments will remain stable:** SATs, the Phonics Screening Check, and the Multiplication Tables Check (MTC) are here to stay, though refinements (e.g., broader MTC reporting, low-stakes checks) may be introduced.

- **Maths curriculum likely changes:**
  - Emphasis on number facts, mental strategies, and spatial reasoning in early years and KS1.
  - Some topics (e.g., fractions, decimals) may shift between year groups for better progression.
  - Topics not seen as essential (e.g., Roman numerals, km/mile conversions) may be removed.
  - A "phonics for maths" approach could standardise foundational number skills teaching.

- **Challenge for all:** Less content means time to 'go slower' with more room to deepen understanding. Programmes like Mathematics Mastery offer structured ways to enrich learning for pupils with a range of prior attainment, including resources to challenge high attainers.

- **Staff development focus:** Prioritise training in early maths, number facts, and mental strategies across KS1 and KS2 to align with likely curriculum changes.

- **Technology's role:** With AI and digital tools becoming more integrated, schools should
- assess how tech is used to support learning, especially where curriculum links exist
- (e.g., computing and maths).

In summary

Transparency and staff collaboration are key. Use this time to reflect, plan, and align your curriculum with expected changes. Providers like Ark Curriculum Plus and NCETM Maths Hubs offer tailored support. See this change as a chance to enhance your offer even further and not just adjust the old.



Getting ready for curriculum change

The prospect of curriculum change can be both exciting and challenging. There is uncertainty about what may change, and this can make it hard to plan for the future. We have drawn on our subject expertise, network of AC+ schools, and analysis of the Interim Curriculum and Assessment Review Report (the Review) to support you in preparing for this change.

Included in this guide is a general summary of what to expect from the Review and some suggestions for how to prepare (Section 1). In the second half of the guide we have provided some subject specific predictions, for example the topics we think may be changed, moved or removed and what this means for schools.

Whenever you see , there will be a useful reflection prompt that we think will help your school to get prepared. We hope these will help you feel reassured in this time of change.



Section 1: Broad changes

Evolution not revolution

The Review has been clear that minimising the impact on workload will be an important consideration for any changes. This is one of the biggest concerns we hear from schools. As the phrase above suggests, don't expect a 'big bang', like 2014.

It is likely that there will be a rolling programme of recommendations, giving schools time to explore and introduce them one by one.

The Review describes system gains since the previous curriculum review, which indicates that recommendations will build on what has proven to work (supporting strategies that have a strong evidence base), rather than lots of untried ideas.



Consulting the EEF and its various toolkits summarising research best practice would be sensible if you are considering a school improvement activity and are worried it may be impacted by the review recommendations.

A knowledge-rich curriculum that supports foundational knowledge and mastery

There are seven mentions of the importance of 'foundational knowledge' in the Review and that the primary phase is 'crucial' in ensuring that pupils have core skills that enable them to access more complex ideas. Mastery is explicitly mentioned as 'vital for raising standards and enabling future expertise'.

- In subjects such as maths, curriculum content is likely to be significantly reduced to enable a focus on foundational skills.



Reflect on your school's curriculum offer. How do you support the teaching of foundational skills? Are these 'non-negotiable? Do teachers know what these skills are? Use our subject specific guides with a list of likely topics that will be moved or changed and which topics are 'foundational'.



Consider investing in a mastery curriculum programme. Ark Curriculum Plus offers support for delivering mastery across a range of subjects at primary and secondary level.

Formal assessments are an important part of Key Stage 1 and 2

We do not expect a radical change to the current assessment system at primary. SATs, the phonics screening check (PSC) and the multiplication tables check (MTC) are here to stay. However, there may be some changes:

- Writing assessment at KS2 and the Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar test are mentioned in the Report. We know that these assessments have issues and suggest some possible alternatives (see our literacy guide).
- Reporting the MTC to include all pupils. Currently pupils can be discounted if they are working significantly below the expected standard and these are not included in the reported average score.
- There could be a MTC 'recheck' in Y5 like in phonics.
- There could be additional 'low stakes gateway checks' in maths to assess foundational knowledge, for example number facts in KS1.



It is worth paying close attention to 'core skills' in each subject and consider how these are tracked and assessed. Conduct an audit of your phonics, times tables and early maths provision.

Technology

Quoting the CAR Interim Report: "*...attention is needed to address opportunities and challenges created by our fast-changing world [including] artificial intelligence (AI).*"

This suggests technology might play a more pivotal role across the whole curriculum. It is therefore important to be aware of cross-curricular links between mathematics and other subjects, for example in computing. The current computing curriculum expects students to be taught to understand what algorithms are and design, write and debug programs that accomplish specific goals.



Audit the current use of technology in teaching maths and highlight where students are performing written algorithms that may also be performed by a computer using tools such as AI.

Section 2: Maths-specific changes

What things are likely to be kept in the primary maths curriculum? Will there be anything new? What topics will have greater focus?

It is likely that some content in the primary maths curriculum will be moved to a different phase or removed altogether. This will make room to teach some topics in more depth. The NCETM Ready to Progress Criteria lists the topics that are considered 'foundational' and could be a template for a content restructure.

What else will change?

Documents such as Ofsted's *Coordinating Mathematical Success* report and the EEF *Improving Mathematics in KS2 and KS3* provide good suggestions that are likely to influence the Review as well as the recently published Maths Horizons Report. Based on this we have summarised what we think will be included in the final Review report.

Our best guesses are that:

- Number facts in KS1 and early years will be given greater focus, alongside associated additive strategies and skills such as counting on and backwards to 100 and subitising groups.
- There will be a stronger link made between spatial reasoning and number facts to support early number sense, with an emphasis on some core visual representations.
- Some topics will be moved from KS1 to KS2, such as fractions, and some strands, such as geometry, may be integrated more fully across the year, rather than sitting as a discrete topic at the end of each year.
- Topics re-taught from first principles in KS3 may be moved to KS3, for example, angle theorems, negative numbers, algebra, multiplying fractions, scale factors, volume, definitions of circle parts, calculating mean averages etc.
- Some topics may be removed altogether, e.g. km/miles conversion, Roman numerals, maybe even 12 times table (this is a relic of our imperial measurement system but is not core knowledge now).
- Some topics may be moved, for examples fractions from KS1 to lower KS2 (Year 3); short multiplication and division to Year 5, after children know their times tables; decimals into Year 5; moving decimals into the place value rather than fractions strand for greater coherence and curriculum focus.

- Think about your current offer in these year groups. Can all pupils rapidly recall number facts to 20 by the end of Year 1? Do they still finger count? Can pupils apply mental strategies to simple calculations, like near doubles (6+7) etc.
- Some schools may need to reflect on the support they provide to pupils who are working well below age-related expectations to ensure they can be successful in the MTC.
- If you are making use of the NCETM Mastering Number at KS1 programme through the Maths Hubs, reflect on how well you implement this and with what fidelity. Consider how familiar all your teachers are with the approaches and whether there is consistency in the quality of delivery.

Phonics for maths

Some elements of phonics practice could be applied to maths in Year 1 to support the teaching of number facts. Like in phonics, schools may be expected to track pupil attainment in foundational maths skills (like number facts) more closely. How this is done exactly is subject to debate. There is the prospect of a statutory assessment of number facts at the end of KS1. An assessment like the phonics screening check would ensure schools focus hard on provision in this area but could be tricky to implement, and so may be an optional recommendation rather than statutory.

Many schools are participating in programmes such as the NCETM Mastering Number at KS1. This is similar to phonics and is designed to be implemented with fidelity to support all pupils to master early number concepts. It is reasonable to expect this programme to expand. Mathematics Mastery Primary Maths Meetings are already structured with content that boosts number facts teaching and will ensure this aspect of your school's maths offer is robust.

Whilst it is not certain exactly what 'phonics for maths' will look like, you could ask in your setting:

- How rigorous are our expectations about pupils knowing core facts (like number bonds)? How do we know that pupils are secure?
- What happens when pupils struggle to retain number facts? Is there a strategy to identify and support them to keep up (like in phonics)?
- Reflect on what high quality practice looks like and how you will provide more opportunities for students to develop their procedural fluency. What will this look like in your classrooms and what outcomes are you expecting from pupil practice?

Challenge for all pupils

With a reduction in content, it becomes even more vital to consider how you challenge and deepen the understanding of your highest prior-attaining pupils as well. Providing opportunities to develop further depth and avoiding acceleration through the content will require careful planning.



When auditing your curriculum look for clear opportunities to develop and enrich pupil understanding of all aspects of the curriculum. Mathematics Mastery provides a 'develop learning' phase in every lesson, but also look for opportunities through organisations such as the UKMT to stretch high attainers within the curriculum.

Making sure your staff have the right skills

Based on our analysis of what we think will change, here are the top focus areas to consider for staff training and development.

1. Early maths, including spatial reasoning in EYFS
2. KS1 number facts
3. Implementing teaching strategies to develop times tables knowledge
4. Mental strategies across KS1 and KS2

These areas are supported extensively in Mathematics Mastery Primary, which includes videos, curriculum mapping and comprehensive resources for teachers, along with a programme of in-person and online professional development.

And finally

Schools are used to dealing with change so you will know how important it is to be transparent, and to communicate your thinking and planning in relation to the Review. Discuss the changes with staff and give them opportunities to make suggestions and predictions. Share this document with them and get them to 'RAG-rate' where they think the school is at and what, as a team, you will need to do to prepare. Make shrewd resourcing decisions and don't be afraid to look to providers like Ark Curriculum Plus and your local NCETM Maths Hub for assistance.

If you have audited your curriculum offer using the suggestions above and need some help, get in touch with our team. We are close to decision-makers and are tailoring our programmes and support accordingly so that our schools will be ahead of changes. Above all, embrace this moment as an opportunity.

The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

Good luck!

Get in touch with our team to explore how we can help:

Book a call

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