

Teaching for mastery – helping all children succeed in maths

Hear from four school leaders about how their role in implementing teaching for mastery is enabling more pupils than ever to succeed at – and enjoy – maths.

Since 2014, 301 schools from across Shropshire, Telford, Herefordshire and Wolverhampton have been working with SHaW Maths Hub, as part of the national Maths Hubs Programme, to develop and refine teaching for mastery. Pedagogical strategies of the approach include breaking learning down into small, connected steps; carefully selecting representations that best expose the structure of the maths being taught; developing pupils' fluency in number facts through explicit teaching; and ensuring that all children learn maths through thinking mathematically and reasoning. The approach is rooted in the [NCETM's 5 Big Ideas of Teaching for Mastery](#).

The positive impact of teaching for mastery, implemented with fidelity, is evident across a diverse range of schools in the region – from large trusts with multi-form entry schools to small schools with mixed-age classes. Some schools have been refining the approach for years, while others are just beginning their journey. In every case, the involvement and commitment of school and trust leaders have been instrumental to the program's success.

Walford Primary School (Herefordshire)

At Walford Primary, the implementation of Teaching for Mastery began in 2016 under the leadership of Headteacher Louise George. Louise has a deep commitment to developing her staff and her implementation approach reflects the recommended 'behaviours' in the EEF Guide to Implementation (2024), especially around empowering others to enable change. After Emma, the school's maths subject leader, returned from a Work Group with SHaW Maths Hub, Louise recognized Emma's passion for Teaching for Mastery and empowered her to lead its implementation across the school.

The transformation at Walford Primary has been profound. Teachers are now confident in teaching the whole class together where all children are active learners. They ensure that lessons start from a point at which all children can access the learning, and they use small steps to help them reason and make connections. She recalls the move away from differentiation and ability grouping: "I remember staff getting quite emotional about the fact that children were saying, 'I can now do that work', rather than being told, 'This task is for you.'" Louise reflects that the previous approach was "putting a ceiling on children's potential". She says that now, not only have KS2 data improved, but "every child is well-equipped for their transition to secondary school."

Elston Hall Trust (Wolverhampton)

Samantha Wycherley, School Improvement Lead at Elston Hall Trust in Wolverhampton, has also had a pivotal role in implementing teaching for mastery across her trust. Although Sam had not previously engaged with Maths Hub work, she chose to attend sessions alongside her teachers to better understand the approach. She then ensured that learning was cascaded across the trust's schools. The implementation strategies recommended by SHaW Maths Hub were aligned with the EEF Implementation Guidance, uniting teachers' knowledge, understanding, and skills.



By fostering collaboration through shared planning sessions, peer observations, and reflections on teaching practices, Sam enabled her teachers to adopt a consistent approach. The results have been highly positive. Sam notes that all pupils, regardless of prior attainment or SEND status, are now participating actively in lessons. Previously less confident children are now thriving in maths, thanks to improved access and opportunities to build on prior knowledge. For example, a lesson might begin with a simple fact like $3 + 4 = 7$, and pupils are encouraged to connect this knowledge to more complex concepts like adding fractions.

Oracy techniques, including modelling precise mathematical vocabulary and providing time for peer discussions, have helped all pupils, including those with high needs, engage meaningfully in lessons. Sam highlights a particular example of a boy who, after struggling to engage in lessons, is now actively participating in discussions and hands-on learning. Although his work looks different, he is able to articulate exactly what he is learning, demonstrating a clear understanding of the content.

Sam is delighted with the impact of teaching for mastery and says that “all pupils – high prior-attaining, EAL, SEND – can participate actively in lessons. Children who were less confident are loving maths because they can access lessons.” A lesson might start with a known fact such as $3 + 4 = 7$, and children are encouraged to connect this to adding fractions; if they know 3 *ones* plus 4 *ones* is 7 *ones*, it's a small step to finding the sum of 3 *tenths* and 4 *tenths*.

William Reynolds Primary School (Telford)

At William Reynolds Primary, headteacher Jasmin Taylor is seeing the powerful impact of teaching for mastery.

Since taking up her first headship in January 2024, shortly after the school began working with SHaW Maths Hub, Jasmin has prioritised embedding the approach across the school. Drawing on her experience as a trained Mastery Specialist, she is now focused on empowering others to lead and sustain this work.

An open lesson approach, focused on oracy, stem sentences, and deliberate practice, has helped staff deepen their understanding of Teaching for Mastery. The school's maths lead is applying the approach in her Year 1 classroom, supporting Reception colleagues with Mastering Number, and helping develop pedagogy across the school.

“Pupils are now more active in lessons,” Jasmin explains. “They’re making connections, noticing patterns, and confidently explaining their thinking. Teachers feel more confident too, particularly when using our textbook-based scheme of work.”

A recent review highlighted the strength and consistency of the school's approach, including:

- Consistent use of stem sentences and mathematical language;
- High-quality CPD for teachers and TAs;
- Strong subject leadership;
- Clear teaching, effective feedback, and revisiting of key content;
- Well-targeted interventions for pupils needing additional support.

The Meadows Primary School (Oswestry)

The Meadows Primary School began developing a teaching for mastery approach in 2017, with Karen Morris as headteacher. Karen also carefully considered how to implement the approach across the school and has ensured that her maths lead has been able to provide ongoing support to other teachers to refine and develop their pedagogy. She describes the impact of the approach on her children, particularly her more vulnerable learners:

‘As we have implemented teaching for mastery over the past eight years, I’ve noticed a sustained change in how pupils approach maths. In the past, many pupils felt that maths was something they could not succeed at, but as teachers have become more skilled in using a teaching for mastery approach, this has changed. Reasoning is not just something that only a few pupils get to ‘do’ at the end of a lesson but is fundamental to the way that maths is taught and learnt. With teachers crafting effective lessons, children are making connections to prior learning and forming generalisations that they can take forwards. Their improved fluency through using Mastering Number is also supporting them to reason. For example, if you know that $7 \times 8 = 56$, it's a smaller step to understanding why $\frac{7}{56} = \frac{1}{8}$

I would thoroughly recommend that all schools get involved in the work of the Maths Hub!’

At SHaW Maths Hub, we are committed to helping all schools, whatever their context, to develop a teaching for mastery approach, so that all children are set up for long-term success. We'd love to work with you if you haven't already engaged with teaching for mastery!

If you would like to get involved in the work of SHaW Maths Hub, please visit our website at [SHaW Maths Hub](https://www.shawmathshub.co.uk) or contact operations@shawmathshub.co.uk