

[Home](#) / [News & Features](#)

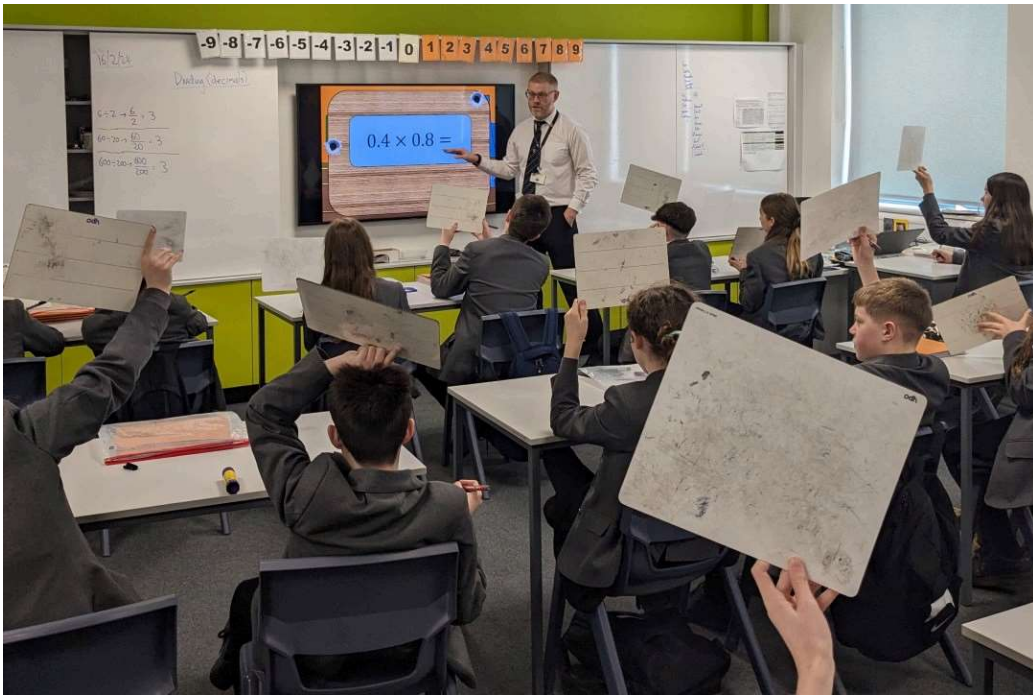
/ Bridging the gap: ensuring that all students can succeed in KS3 maths

Article

Bridging the gap: ensuring that all students can succeed in KS3 maths

How one North East secondary school is 'Securing Foundations at Year 7', with a new Maths Hubs project aimed at supporting all students to thrive in the maths classroom

18/03/2025



Transition to Year 7: a testing time

Each year, of the approximately 625,000 Year 6 pupils in England, nearly 30% do not meet the expected standard for maths in KS2 SATs. These pupils may be working on mathematical content ranging from Year 1 to Year 6, with a wide variation in learning needs. So, what happens to the lowest prior attainers, often from disproportionately disadvantaged backgrounds, when they meet KS3 maths content?

This is an enduring challenge for secondary maths departments who, despite expertise in teaching secondary mathematics, may have less experience in addressing gaps that may have their roots in Key Stage 1 and 2 maths content.

A new Maths Hubs project, Securing Foundations at Year 7 is carefully designed to tackle this challenge. Aimed at teachers of KS3 maths, it provides professional development and resources to equip participants with subject knowledge and pedagogy so they can identify and address students' gaps in understanding KS1 and KS2 maths content.

Securing Foundations in the classroom

Ponteland High School, a secondary and sixth-form school near Newcastle, has been working within the Sustaining phase of the Teaching for Mastery Programme with Great North Maths Hub for several years. The school is fortunate to have Secondary Mastery

Specialist Anna Bunce on staff; an experienced teacher, Assistant Maths Hub Lead and Regional Community Lead for the new *Securing Foundations at Year 7* project.

'I first discovered Maths Hubs' professional development in 2014, when I was head of maths in a middle school,' Anna recalls. 'Teaching for mastery completely changed my perspective on maths so, after engaging as a participant on the programme for a couple of years, I decided to train as a Mastery Specialist myself. I'm well aware of the foundational gaps that can prevent students from accessing the curriculum, and my role at Ponteland High School is to support those low prior attainers, so when *Securing Foundations at Year 7* was launched I was keen to get involved.'

A dual approach: professional development and classroom materials

Anna is enthusiastic about the systematic structure of *Securing Foundations at Year 7*. 'It's still challenging maths,' she explains, 'but delivered at a slower pace. It consolidates and builds the learning carefully, in different contexts, so the students can appreciate the ways they are using and applying their knowledge. The materials have encouraged me to develop the learning and to make links to more complex areas of maths in the Year 7 curriculum.'

However, she cautions against teachers using the project materials without attending online central and regional workshops. Central workshops delivered by NCETM specialists help teachers understand the rationale behind the materials, which is vital for successful implementation. Regional workshops, led by Regional Community Leads like Anna, provide practical guidance on adapting *Securing Foundations* to different school contexts, allowing participants to exchange successful strategies and deepen their pedagogical understanding.

'Although the classroom materials are brilliant, they can be challenging to use if you're a secondary teacher not used to looking at maths from a primary perspective, so attending the regional workshops and getting that professional development to really understand Key Stage 1 and 2 pedagogy is key to its success.'

Making maths click for students

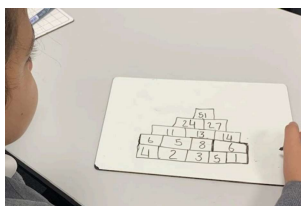
The impact on the students themselves has been profound. Tom, a Year 7 student, describes how maths has changed for him:

‘In primary school, I hated maths. I sat beside people who got all the answers right and I was miles behind them. It made me feel rubbish,’ he admits. ‘But now, it’s my favourite subject. Miss’s way of teaching makes it stick in my head. Even when a question is really tricky, now I think ‘I can probably do this!’

Tom’s classmate, Róisín agrees. ‘At primary school, I used to get really frustrated because I didn’t understand the questions. Here, Miss uses pictures and things like counters and algebra tiles to explain things better. The slides are really good because they have more pictures than words, and that makes it easier for me to understand.’

Securing Foundations at Year 7 is designed around the underpinning principles of teaching for mastery, with the fundamental belief that all students can learn and enjoy maths. It aims to ensure that students don’t carry the weight of past struggles into their future learning, while also building their self-belief and confidence in maths.

‘This programme gives students the confidence to say, ‘I can do maths.’ That’s huge. And for teachers, it’s a chance to make a real difference to these students’ lives,’ Anna explains. ‘It’s about building a staircase for students to climb—step by step, skill by skill.’



Jeremiah Suffolk, Raising Achievement Leader, highlights how *Securing Foundations* has supported the school to deliver on its philosophy to provide an education for every child, and to ensure no one is left behind.

‘Our goal is to ensure every student has access to a high-quality curriculum. But for some, maths is incredibly challenging. *Securing Foundations* provides a focused approach, and the strategies

equip students with efficient ways to solve problems, freeing up their thinking for more complex tasks.'

He's particularly excited about the professional development opportunities:

'Secondary teachers often don't get exposed to early maths concepts. This programme bridges that gap.'

For headteacher Stefan McElwee, the benefits of the programme are clear:

'Research shows clearly that teachers develop effectively when provided with the time and space to talk about pedagogy and curriculum development, and Anna's engagement with Great North Maths Hub as a Mastery Specialist has developed our maths department.'

Colleagues have shared with me that they feel they have received strong CPD through *Securing Foundations at Year 7*, enabling them to better understand KS2 foundations and how they can be developed in KS3. Our philosophy for intervention is centred around supporting students to make progress, so that they can continue their learning alongside their year group peers, and Anna's teaching of our Year 7 students enables this to happen'.

Support your students to thrive in maths

Join the hundreds of schools already engaged with the Securing Foundations at Year 7 project

[Discover](#)

Is there anything wrong with this page?

Is this page useful? [Yes](#) [No](#)

Was this written in plain English? [Yes](#) [No](#)

Subscribe to our newsletter

- Primary & Early Years Round-up
- Secondary Round-up
- National Newsletter

Subscribe

The NCETM is led and delivered by Etio (formerly Tribal Education Services), with MEI as a key partner. Learn more about Etio Global and what they do via the link to their website in 'About the NCETM'.

ABOUT US

[About the NCETM](#)

[Meet the team](#)

[Work with us](#)

[Partners](#)

[FAQs](#)

ABOUT THIS WEBSITE

[Legal & Privacy](#)

[Press](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Accessibility](#)

[Manage cookies](#)

STAY CONNECTED

[Contact us](#)

FOLLOW US

× [X \(Twitter\)](#)

[Facebook](#)

[LinkedIn](#)

[Instagram](#)

 YouTube

2025 © Etio