

A little struggle can be productive, but too much can be a barrier to progress. Here's how we, through maths mastery, support struggling learners and help them reach their full potential.

So what can you do to support them? Here are six ways that mastery teaching strategies can help struggling learners.

### **Use whole-class teaching**

Whole-class teaching is a cornerstone of maths mastery. Its aim is to teach all learners together, making sure everyone masters the learning and moves along at the same pace.

You might be wondering if whole-class teaching can really help struggling learners to master maths.

Research confirms that struggling learners actually achieve more in mixed-ability classes. Seeing how other learners solve problems and interacting with their peers has huge benefits.

But the evidence goes even further than that. When children are taught in mixed-ability groups the tail of underachievement is reduced and the range of ability within the class decreases. When you teach everyone together, you make it easier for your struggling learners to move along at the same pace as their peers.

### **Encourage a growth mindset**

Having a growth mindset means you believe hard work and practice leads to improvement. Carol Dweck's research shows learners with a growth mindset achieve more in school and later on in life.

A growth mindset is essential for helping struggling learners succeed in a mastery classroom — how can everyone achieve the same learning if you don't believe that it's possible?

We encourage a growth mindset in our classrooms by:

Seeing mistakes as an opportunity to learn

Praising effort rather than getting an answer right

Emphasising progress rather than speed

Using the word 'yet' — you haven't mastered this yet, this answer isn't right yet

Use journaling to reduce anxiety

Maths anxiety can cause learners to struggle, and struggling in maths can cause more anxiety.

Maths journals encourage learners to communicate their knowledge about mathematics, but learners can also use journals to write down their feelings about their maths lessons. Journaling tasks can help learners reflect on their worries, reduce maths anxiety and even boost their performance on tests. Our children at St Michael's have opportunities to journal at the end of every maths unit.

### **Encourage collaboration and peer tutoring**

Children learn from and challenge each other when they work together. Collaboration is most effective in smaller groups, and in our lessons, our groupings are flexible based on the needs of the children.

Peer tutoring has a positive impact on learning and can help struggling learners to consolidate their understanding. According to research by the Educational Endowment Foundation, the average effect is equivalent to approximately five additional months' progress.

Struggling learners and learners with SEND benefit the most from peer tutoring, which is most effective as an 'add-on' to your regular teaching practice, rather than as a replacement.

### **Use effective interventions**

Interventions let you provide personalised support outside of your regular lessons and are a great way to ensure your struggling learners are making progress. Working from a research-based framework will help you see improved results.

When considering interventions at St Michael's we use the EEF recommendations and their eight principles:

Intervene early – when possible, we use pre-teach and same day intervention approaches.

Use tried-and-tested strategies

Use explicit and systematic teaching

Use staff strategically

Link to whole-class teaching

Make interventions fun

Balance interventions and classroom activities

Use your time wisely

### **Use differentiation/Scaffolding strategies**

Varying the depth of learning lets you differentiate/scaffold within mixed-ability teaching. It also lets you teach the same topic but at the right level for different learners.

For struggling learners, we differentiate by providing concrete resources to use alongside pictorial representations.

Supporting struggling learners in the mastery classroom means helping them see their own potential, encouraging collaboration and providing targeted support when needed.

In the maths mastery approach, 'struggle' is a temporary state that learners experience when they find it hard to learn something new. Struggling doesn't define a learner and doesn't determine their maths potential.