

#mathscpdchat 5 May 2020

Planning to address gaps in learning when schools reopen: what are the issues?

Hosted by [Kathryn Darwin](#)

This is a brief summary of the discussion – to see all the tweets, follow the hashtag #mathscpdchat in Twitter



The graphic features a light blue background with a large, faint white cross. At the top, the hashtag #mathscpdchat is written in a bold, dark blue font. Below it, the text 'TONIGHT - Tuesday, 5 May, 7-8pm' is displayed in a smaller, dark blue font. In the center, there is a rectangular photograph showing a person's hands writing in a notebook next to an open laptop. On the table, there is a blue mug, a white teapot, and a small potted plant. At the bottom of the graphic, the event title 'Planning to address gaps in learning when schools reopen: what are the issues?' is written in dark blue. Below the title, it says 'Hosted by Kathryn Darwin @Arithmaticks' and provides the website 'ncetm.org.uk/mathscpdchat'. A small version of the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics logo is visible in the bottom right corner of the graphic.

#mathscpdchat
TONIGHT - Tuesday, 5 May, 7-8pm

Planning to address gaps in learning
when schools reopen: what are the issues?

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ncetm.org.uk/mathscpdchat

Some of the areas where discussion focused were:

- that some teachers have **not started to write new SoL's (Schemes of Learning)**, because when schools reopen (for all pupils) the teachers are planning to follow their existing SoL, adjusting their teaching to support pupils with 'learning gaps', as they normally would do when pupils had been absent from school for a long time;

- that some teachers are presently trying to ‘get more content into the remote learning of Year 12 students’ with the aim of **‘covering the A level content’ by the end of the spring term 2021;**
- that some secondary teachers are continuing to **follow normal teaching plans with as many pupils as possible** ... that in their ‘virtual classroom’ some teachers are generating ‘interestingly deeper conversations’ with pupils ... how to plan so that what has been gained/learnt by having to teach pupils remotely is not lost when schools reopen ... for example, one teacher will aim to conduct some ‘silent lessons’ in order to recreate conditions that enabled deeper conversations, resulted in more polite pupil behaviour, and provided more opportunities for the teacher to encourage and praise pupils;
- that where pupils **learn maths in ability groups (are setted)** there may be good reasons to **move pupils from one set to another when schools reopen** ... thoughts about how teachers will make decisions about such movement ... whether pupils are likely to regard movement to a ‘lower’ set as a **punishment for not having been able to access work that was presented/delivered online** (worries about pupils being moved to lower sets as a consequence of circumstances that were out of the pupils’ control, such as lack of access to necessary devices) ... arranging to have **fewer pupils (than before the school closures) in each group so that teachers can support them more effectively** ... the need to avoid disengagement of previously conscientious pupils because they are having to repeat work that they have already done and understood;
- that movement of pupils from one set to another may be necessary for **Year 10/11 students whose present attainment puts them on the GCSE Foundation/Higher border** ... that, partly for this reason, some teachers are presently setting tests (as ‘normal’) for present Year 10 pupils to do now ... teachers are planning to devise assessment tasks for **pupils in Key Stage 3** based on work provided for home-learning and what was done before the closures ... that such assessment will be diagnostic, **intended to help teachers adjust SoLs;**
- that some gaps in pupils’ learning (that are a consequence of schools being closed) might be regarded as **‘gaps resulting from disadvantage’** and others as **‘gaps resulting from unnecessary pupil disengagement’;**
- planning for some pupils to work on some topics (that the pupils with gaps are addressing for the first time) in **ways that are likely to deepen their existing understanding, and that challenge them** (by, for example, requiring them to construct chains of reasoning for themselves);

- that some teachers intend to **keep pupils 'in exactly the same groups they were in before lockdown'** (unless movement-decisions had already been made before schools closed), and are now planning how (with pupils remaining in original sets) they will **try to fill learning gaps ... which will be identified when pupils return to school**;
- that some secondary teachers regard the work that they are presently setting for pupils to do at home as 'basic' (but some teachers are concerned that higher-attaining pupils may be losing interest because they are not learning anything new) ... teachers are planning to **re-visit the same content** when schools reopen, but in a way that enables **some pupils to be 'filling gaps' while the learning of other pupils (learning about the same 'content') is extended** ... that is, some teachers are planning to re-visit all the maths that was set for students to do at home, while providing opportunities for students who worked well at home to **work in more depth, and possibly in a different way, on the same mathematics as the other students** ... teachers together planning how to teach so that this aim is achieved ... that this collaborative work is contributing to their professional development;
- that during the Easter break some teachers reorganised their SoLs so that **topics with which pupils are likely to need more teacher support have been postponed** until schools are open;
- teachers are looking at how **'re-teaching something from scratch'** (to pupils who have completely missed something) will differ from **remediating and consolidating learning** that was only partially achieved at home ... that where departments had allocated time/space in their existing SoL for 'consolidation and enrichment' in normal years, they might use (some of) that time for 'filling gaps' when schools reopen;
- that it will be important to show pupils when they return that the **work they have done at home is valued**;
- that teachers are thinking about how to **make tasks addressing a particular mathematical idea more or less challenging** ... some teachers are using the 'FACT' or 'FICT' framework (link provided below);
- that **assessment of the mathematical knowledge and understanding of pupils who move into Year 7 in September** will need to be managed carefully ... that it will be important that such assessment is viewed positively by pupils, and, by some of them, as a first step in helping them to 'catch up' ... that, for teachers, a main purpose will be to identify any gaps that might not have existed had there been no school closures ... that some secondary teachers may use last year's Key Stage 2 tests to guide them in deciding on appropriate 'starting points' for Year 7 pupils in September ... that some teachers are planning to **work with teachers in their**

feeder primary schools to try to provide a smooth Key Stage 2/3 transition for all pupils;

- that when schools reopen some teachers are planning to follow for a short time a **newly-devised ‘overview programme of learning’ covering work that was set during the closures**, before they return to their (normal) existing SoL ... other teachers plan to **carry on with their existing SoL straightaway** ... some teachers who intend to ‘pick up’ their existing scheme as soon as schools reopen, are, nevertheless, planning to reorder some topics, addressing those topics that depend on less prior learning first, so that students can ‘settle-in’ confidently ... teachers have begun to look carefully at the prior learning requirements for all topics;
- that some teachers have already **re-written their Year 11 scheme of learning for 2020/21** to include what has been missed out of the Year 10 scheme owing to the closures;
- some teachers are planning to use a **‘rule of thumb’ (whether 20%, 40% or 80%+ of pupils responded correctly to a particular assessment task)** in order to decide for how long, and with what approach, they will re-teach a topic to the whole class ... if the success rate is 20% or lower the topic will be completely retaught, if it is 40% the teacher will question pupils in order to reveal misconceptions and stumbling blocks, and if it is 80%+ the teachers will move most pupils on to new learning while providing special support for the few pupils who need it;
- that when schools reopen **ongoing assessment for learning** will need to play a significant role in teaching ... that teachers are planning to help **pupils assess their own learning**, identifying gaps and weaknesses for themselves (e.g. “Look at these problems. How do you feel about them?”);
- that, together with ‘skillful formative assessment’ during lessons, **flexibility in not sticking rigidly to lesson plans**, will be necessary;
- some teachers are finding that they have more time than in normal years to **discuss and write new schemes of learning (or adjust existing ones)**, including identifying links between, and the hierarchy of, mathematical ideas;
- whether, when schools reopen, teachers will be expected to teach voluntary (for pupils) out-of-hours ‘catch-up’ lessons in addition to their normal lessons ... that, **if ‘catch-up’ lessons are voluntary for pupils, learning-gaps may widen still further.**

In what follows, click on any screenshot-of-a-tweet to go to that actual tweet on Twitter.

This is a part of a conversation about issues that arise when teachers begin to consider some consequences of moving particular pupils into 'lower' sets when schools reopen. The conversation was generated by this tweet from [Yvonne Osborne](#):

 **Yvonne Osborne** @MrsOsborneMATHS · May 5
Replying to @MathsladyScott and @Arithmaticks
Are your classes in sets? Children, for a range of reasons, might be better placed in a different set when we return. How should we make this decision?

and included these from [Kathryn Darwin](#) and [Director of Maths](#):

 **Kathryn** 🧐 @Arithmaticks · May 5
An interesting idea... do we baseline when we return? Or is that likely to result in "punishment" for students who haven't been able to access all the work set remotely? [#mathscpdchat](#)

 **Director of Maths** @DirectorMaths · May 5
Replying to @Arithmaticks
A baseline for all it might be a good idea but it will need to be very delicately managed. Focused on support rather than "moving someone down". The media is doing a terrible job of making disadvantaged students panic and it will be our job to reassure and rebuild 😊 [#mathscpdchat](#)

 **Kathryn** 🧐 @Arithmaticks · May 5
I love this. This is my worry. Does it feel like a punishment for being unable to access the learning? Or do we make sure any shifts are to gap fill and then regularly re-assess? [#mathscpdchat](#)

 **Director of Maths** @DirectorMaths · May 5
Yeah, unfortunately for deep rooted historic reasons set moves have a negative perception. We've got to make sure it's about filling gaps and that it is regularly reviewed. So many social factors in this 😞 [#mathscpdchat](#)

these from [Heather Scott](#), [Sharon Malley](#), and [Yvonne Osborne](#):

 **Heather Scott** @MathsladyScott · May 5
[#mathscpdchat](#) Yes I think sets may need to be changed in maths - particularly at the higher/foundation borderline. I think Higher is a journey of five continuous years of growing as a mathematician ... We will only know this when we get back. 😊 (We are testing now as normal!)

 **Sharon Malley** @mathsmumof2 · May 5
Replying to @Arithmaticks
I will be keeping my children in exactly the same groups they were in before lockdown unless we had already identified a possible move. [#mathscpdchat](#)

 **Yvonne Osborne** @MrsOsborneMATHS · May 5
[#mathscpdchat](#) have all pupils been engaging in home learning?

 **Sharon Malley** @mathsmumof2 · May 5
No not all but there is a correlation between their sets and how much they are engaging. Also I am in an unusual position of only having year 7 currently BUT ethically I think we have to make the return to school as unstressful as possible.
[#mathscpdchat](#)

and these from [Kathryn Darwin](#), [Heather Scott](#) and [Sharon Malley](#):

 **Kathryn** 🧐 @Arithmaticks · May 5
So keep students where they are and then plan to fill the gaps the group have collectively? [#mathscpdchat](#)

 **Heather Scott** @MathsladyScott · May 5
I agree about the unstressful and this is my constant question ... is it stressful to be in a group where everyone has gone ahead by miles and you can see that ... or is it better to be in a smaller group where you are as it were 🤔 and where you can build up together?

 **Sharon Malley** @mathsmumof2 · May 5
It's all in the context isn't it? Knowing the kids having a relationship with them, knowing how much extra help can be given in class....

(to read the discussion sequence generated by any tweet look at the 'replies' to that tweet)

Among the links shared were:

[Making Every Maths Lesson Count](#) which is a book by [Emma McCrea](#). The author describes 'approaches and strategies a teacher can use to make their pupils better mathematicians'. It was shared by [Emma McCrea](#)

[Making Every Maths Lesson Count](#) which is a podcast in which [Emma McCrea](#) talks about her work in Initial Teacher Education and Further Education, and about why she wrote the book *Making Every Maths Lesson Count* (link above). She also explains the *FACT (FICT)* framework. It was shared by [Emma McCrea](#)

[NCETM Secondary Mastery Professional Development Materials](#) which are very useful materials designed to help develop the subject knowledge and pedagogical knowledge of mathematics teachers. They are not lesson plans, schemes of work or off-the-shelf resources! It was shared by [Mary Pardoe](#)