

Tackling disadvantage?

» Improve early maths!

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1

Support ALL children to become maths confident
by improving maths attitudes among families, educators and society
e.g. through Family Hubs

2

Revise early maths curriculum guidance
to reflect predictive research on the importance of number sense,
spatial reasoning, pattern and problem solving e.g. update
'Development Matters'

3

Provide non-statutory assessment guidance for maths
including informal practical tasks that show educators what to look for
to identify children at greatest risk of later low attainment in maths

Why early maths?

- Early maths is the **strongest predictor** of later achievement at school and work¹, meaning improving adult numeracy starts in early years.
- Children from **low-income families** are less likely to do well in maths² and can benefit most from effective early maths teaching³.

» Improving adult numeracy starts in the early years providing everyone with the necessary 'Numeracy for Life'

» Getting the 'Best Start in Life' requires early maths

The challenges

- Many people have **negative attitudes** towards maths, including educators and parents, which impacts children⁴ (disproportionately the most disadvantaged).
- Early maths is **as important as reading** in families and nurseries, but many are not aware of this and are less confident about how they can support children with maths.
- Curriculum guidance and assessment places **insufficient emphasis** on spatial reasoning, pattern and problem solving⁵ leaving educators in the dark about the specific mathematical understanding that is crucial for future learning and how to ensure no child leaves their class without it.

EARLY
CHILDHOOD
MATHS GROUP



earlymaths.org

1. UCL Centre for Longitudinal Studies (2024) Policy briefing: The importance of maths. <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-importance-of-maths-CLS-policy-briefing.pdf>; Duncan, G.J., Dowsett, C.J., et al. (2007) School readiness and later achievement. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1428-1446; Early intervention Foundation (2018) *Key competencies in early cognitive development: Things, people, numbers and words*. <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/key-competencies-in-early-cognitive-development-things-people-numbers-and-words>

2. DfE (2025) *EYF Profile results 2024-25*. <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/early-years-foundation-stage-profile-results/2024-25>. Coates, A. (2025) Tracking mathematics achievement gaps in England: Gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity. *British Education Research Journal*, 51, 1149-1177. Education Policy Institute (2025) *Annual report 2025: Disadvantage*. <https://epi.org.uk/annual-report-2025-disadvantage/>

3. Education Endowment Foundation (2024) *Independent evaluation of Maths Champions in nursery to develop children's early numeracy: A two-armed cluster randomised controlled trial*. https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/production/documents/projects/Maths_Champions_Final_Report.pdf?v=1774683018

4. Centre for Early Maths Learning (2025) *Evidence Briefing 1: Is there a phonics for maths?* <https://ceml.ac.uk/outputs/evidence-briefings/>

5. Department for Education (2025) *Government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review*. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/690b2a4a14b040dfe82922ea/Government_response_to_the_Curriculum_and_Assessment_Review.pdf