

Introduction

Having produced a list of key changes for Primary English aimed at secondary English teachers, I thought it was worthwhile creating a similar list for Maths. It strikes me that the maths changes have been more widely publicised (perhaps because they're easier for the press to understand), but there may be one or two things here that have slipped people's attention

Source: <https://michaelt1979.wordpress.com/2015/08/09/10-things-you-might-not-have-realised-about-the-new-primary-maths-curriculum/>

1. Mental Arithmetic has lost its hallowed place

From 2016 there will no longer be a mental arithmetic test in Key Stage 2. Instead, a written arithmetic test has been added both for 7- and 11-year-olds. It's not really clear yet what difference this might make to outcomes, as the increased focus on knowledge of number facts may make up for it, but it will certainly lead to a change in the tests that are practised throughout Year 6.

2. Written methods are set in stone.

Many secondary colleagues will welcome this, as I would have done when I was teaching KS3. No longer will there be a free-for-all on methods used for standard calculations. The expectations of the curriculum clearly set out that by Y6 all children should be taught the standard written methods of column addition & subtraction, and short and long multiplication and division. In fact, on the written arithmetic test, where questions imply the long methods of multiplication or division, no method marks will be available if any other method is used..

3. History becomes cross-curricular.

For the past few years, calculator tests have been restricted to the highest-attaining pupils aiming for level 6. As the extension papers are removed, there will no longer be any calculator test at KS2, and so the already small amount of calculator-use teaching will quickly diminish.

4. And calculators are history!

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5. The averages confusion may dissipate.

One of the trials of Year 7 often used to be trying to unravel the confusion between mode, median and mean averages. Perhaps in an effort to avoid such misconceptions, only the latter is expected to be taught at primary level now. Of course, primary teachers love a mnemonic rhyme, so it may still crop up in many classrooms.

6. Probability is gone.

It was always a slightly odd feature of primary maths, given that the expectations for level 5 in probability were quite limited. As such, it was often an easy way of gathering evidence or picking up marks to imply the higher level where perhaps it wasn't justified. That problem disappears now as probability disappears from the KS2 curriculum.

7. Fractions are very much there.

In the old attainment descriptors, all a child had to do to with fractions to reach level 4 was to use simple fractions to describe approximate proportions of a whole. In the new curriculum, that's expected in lower Key Stage 2. By year 6, to reach the new expected standard pupils will be expected to become more confident with addition and subtraction of fractions along with a range of other fraction skills. Expect the bar model slowly to gain currency here. But very slowly.

8. They still won't be able to draw graphs

As a Year 7 maths teacher, I once complained to Y6 colleagues that children seemed to have no idea about how to construct a basic set of axes to plot a graph. The explanation was, of course, that it would never occur on a test. That remains the case, and in fact the new curriculum focuses most of its statistics attention on interpreting rather than presenting data. There is some mention of plotting graphs in the (untested) Science curriculum.

9. Some things have been left until later

There's been a lot of hype about things being moved earlier (tables secure by Y4, etc). But there's also a whole vat of content in the new Year 6 maths curriculum. Much of it is familiar; some represents the new higher expectations – including introductory algebra for everyone. But in addition, there are some elements that previously were more spread across the Key Stage. Ratio hardly gets a look-in before Year 6, yet in the Year 6 Programme of Study pupils will be expected to solve ratio and proportion problems..

10. Nobody's too sure about the 'Mastery'

The word has become almost ubiquitous, and yet seems to mean different things to every user. In some schools, mastery has become a descriptor for the highest-attainment pupils, in others it relates to the old Ma1 Problem-solving type tasks almost exclusively. In essence, don't put too much weight on any judgement a school makes about mastery – they may not mean what you think they do!

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