

Frequently asked questions

? Should I only use the materials with one child at a time?

Although the materials are intended to be used with targeted children identified as having specific errors and misconceptions, the materials are flexible. In pilot schools, sometimes they were used with small groups where children had common needs.

In other year groups different children were highlighted at different times – if a misconception was identified, Wave 3 would be looked at to see if any activities would be of use or support. This meant that it was never regularly the same children – children were chosen as and when appropriate.

One teacher said she used some of the activities as a whole-class mental/oral starter when she felt things weren't going too well with a specific area. Another said she felt some activities were useful in reaffirming or refining certain skills and concepts.

A deputy head was in charge of Wave 3 mathematics interventions in her school. She kept the resources in her room and involved the mathematics coordinator and the SENCO in reviewing the materials and deciding which children would benefit from extra help.

Two children from different classes were identified for one-to-one support, and these children were withdrawn on average about twice a week, individually, after the whole-class mental mathematics start to the lesson. The child worked with the deputy head for about 20 minutes of group time, and then returned to the class for the plenary session. Sometimes, though, this proved confusing and potentially disruptive, so the child did their own plenary with the deputy head.

At other times, in some of the classes, it was decided that the deputy head would work with a group of children, using Wave 3 materials but keeping the children within the class lesson.

? However do we fit in Wave 3 with everything else?

Some schools managed their Wave 3 intervention by using teaching assistant time previously deployed on non-specific in-class support for lower-attaining children in the daily mathematics lesson. Other schools used a range of strategies to give space for Wave 3 work, such as diverting some teaching assistant time from other subject areas to focus more on mathematics. In one pilot school every class did their daily mathematics lesson at the same time so that children with similar errors and misconceptions (from various year groups) could be grouped.

To make the task easier, all year groups were asked to teach mathematics at the same time. The small groups using Wave 3 materials were going to be taught for 20 minutes, three times per week. It was agreed that the children would stay in class during the initial teacher input and would then be withdrawn and returned for the plenary. However, it became clear that returning for the plenary disrupted the remainder of the class, and did not make good use of the learning time for the group themselves. It was decided that, for the limited time of the Wave 3 intervention, the group would have their own plenary.

As the pilot progressed, many of the later teaching units included whole-class work linked to the errors and misconceptions, often with a challenge and problem-solving slant. This enabled teachers to weave Wave 3 work into the whole-class context.

? I'm the mathematics coordinator; how can I get a whole-school perspective on Wave 3?

You will need to link closely with senior management, and colleagues will need to identify those children who are demonstrating misunderstandings and errors. You might need to help in the diagnostic assessment, using the tracking charts to support this.

A pilot school mathematics coordinator said that in the new academic year she intended to teach every class in the school and work very closely with the SENCO to judge where best to focus Wave 3 interventions.

? How should we select the children for Wave 3 interventions?

It will be class teachers, in their day-to-day assessment during the daily mathematics lesson and in marking written work, who will note children's errors and misconceptions. They can use the questions in the third column of the tracking charts to confirm their diagnosis.

In one pilot school the SENCO had the main responsibility for Wave 3 mathematics because the mathematics coordinator was new. They planned from the new academic year to work more closely together.

? I'm the SENCO, but my strengths are in literacy so what is my role in Wave 3 mathematics?

You will have an overview of all the Wave 3 interventions in school (not just mathematics) and you will have the SEN Code of Practice in mind. You could coordinate staff who are involved, making sure that there is good communication throughout the school, and supporting class teachers in tracking children's progress so that the impact of your Wave 3 provision can be evaluated.

? Will children be withdrawn from lessons or will Wave 3 interventions sometimes or always be kept within the class lesson?

Pilot schools said their practice varied considerably. In one school, when the teacher wanted to do the Wave 3 work, she stayed in the class working with the focus group while the teaching assistant supervised the rest of the class as they worked on the task the teacher had given them.

Schools where children were regularly withdrawn identified a problem with keeping the teacher informed of those children's progress; the children were also becoming out of touch with the whole-class work.

The Spotlights were chosen to link in with the week's plan for the class. If this was not possible the teaching assistant selected a Spotlight from an area of specific concern or repeated something done previously. The programme was not used as a scheme or in a certain order, but rather as a resource to support what was already happening in the main lessons.

Pupils were taken out of the mental/oral starter approximately three times a week. They worked in a separate room with the teaching assistant. They worked from the Spotlights, although the sessions invariably ran over the five minutes suggested in the pilot in order to ensure that the children gained useful support.

We want to go and visit some schools where their Wave 3 work seems to be going more smoothly than ours. We thought we could send different teachers with a teaching assistant for a few visits then we will all compare notes and see if we can find a better way to organise ourselves.

SENCO

The children have definitely benefited, and their basic numeracy skills and confidence have improved.

Class teacher

Teaching assistants' expertise and opinion has been valued and this has had a positive effect on their motivation.

SENCO

We have been extremely pleased with the implementation of Wave 3 mathematics at our school. It has boosted the confidence of all of the children involved and the positive effects have been witnessed throughout the school. Many teachers have commented on the change in children's attitudes. A Year 2 teacher observed a child who was previously petrified of mathematics lessons and is now much more cooperative and happier during lessons; she is very pleased with the positive influence the group work has had.

Headteacher