

Press release for Newham Recorder

PARENTAL MATHS INITIATIVE AT MARYLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL, STRATFORD

In 2013, the Headteacher, Lorna Jackson, and Deputy Headteacher, Lorraine Cooper, undertook a fact-finding trip to schools in Finland and The Netherlands to understand what they were doing for their children to be top of the attainment league tables in Europe in mathematics and what we might learn from them to bring home to improve standards here.

What we discovered was quite surprising. The PISA league tables actually measure 15 year olds and it is in secondary school that both those countries sustain achievement and do much better than us. However, we found out that our 11 year-olds in England, Newham included, were in fact doing *better* than theirs, because over 80% of our 11 year olds achieve or exceed curriculum expectations, which are at a higher level than either of those countries, because children start school later there.

Nonetheless we learned much from our trip. We observed two important factors in both countries that we knew would enhance our teaching in our school. Firstly, the concentration in primary school on **arithmetic** or pure number work prepared their children to tackle more advanced maths much better. Children need to be very fast with their times tables and number bond work (quick mental adding and subtracting calculations). Secondly, the support children get at **home** from their parents is vital in this area for children to manage the maths curriculum. The secret to this is **a little and often**.

We ran a test for 5 months with 31 pupils between the ages of 7-11 years old, all of whom were falling behind in maths. They were struggling with basics like, $4 \times ? = 12$ and $20-?=7$. They could do the sums, but were very slow. We then started to give them daily practice for 5 minutes every day, taking them out of class and presenting 15 questions each day, giving them 5 seconds to answer each one. After 5 months, **every** child had speeded up and most were getting all or most questions correct every day. We were replicating what we knew would be ideal home support. All that was needed now was a resource that parents could use that would be similar to the way teachers might approach this work.

It was for this reason, to make home support easy for parents, that I wrote the book, **Mental Maths 5 a day** (5 a day in the title refers to 5 minutes practise a day, every day). Because I knew we wanted to provide every parent with a free copy and that would be very costly, it was important that the one book contained all the mental maths practice for every age of child in their primary years, from 5-11 years.

We launched the book to our parents in September 2013 at our first parents' evening of the year and are getting great feedback (see comments below). In our February 2014 parents' survey, we were told that 91% believed the initiative to be important to their child's progress. Other schools in Newham are showing interest and taking the book on for their parents too.

We didn't stop there, though. We had a maths evening in December 2013 for our parents to come in to find out from their child's teacher how we teach certain aspects of maths to their children followed by demonstrations of some interactive maths games for parents and children to play together. We always have a huge turnout of parents to our special events and these were no exception.

Here are some of the comments we have received about the **Mental Maths 5 a day** book:

"Very easy and convenient to use"

"I know exactly what my child can and can't do"

"It's helping my child but helping me as well!"

"Just what I need – I don't have to try and make it up myself"

"She is keen. 5 minutes is just enough but we do a bit more sometimes "

.... and from children

"I'm definitely getting faster."

"5 minutes a day goes quickly, so I don't get bored with it."

The logo for Newham Recorder features the word "Newham" in a smaller, black, sans-serif font above the word "Recorder" in a large, bold, red, sans-serif font. To the right of the main title is a small, light blue square icon. Below the title is a horizontal navigation bar with several links: "Home" (highlighted in red), "News" (highlighted in dark grey), "Sport", "Entertainment", "What's On", "Contact us", and "iWtn". Underneath this bar is a secondary navigation menu with links: "Business", "Crime & Court", "Education", "Environment", "Features", "Health", "Heritage", and "Olympic F".

Stratford deputy head teacher's five a day solution for better maths

15:43 03 March 2014 | [Kay Atwal](#)

A Newham deputy head teacher has written a book on mental maths to help parents improve their children's performance with numbers.

The book is called Mental Maths 5 a day and follows a fact-finding trip by Maryland Primary School head Lorna Jackson to Finland and The Netherlands.

Both she and the deputy headteacher, Lorraine Cooper wanted to understand what those countries were doing for their children to be top of the attainment league tables in Europe in mathematics and what they might learn from them to bring home to improve standards at their Stratford school.

Lorna Jackson said: "We observed two important factors in both countries that we knew would enhance our teaching in our school. Firstly, the concentration in primary school on arithmetic or pure number work prepared their children to tackle more advanced maths much better. Children need to be very fast with their times tables and number bond work (quick mental adding and subtracting calculations).

"Secondly, the support children get at home from their parents is vital in this area for children to manage the maths curriculum. The secret to this is a little and often."

The school ran a test for five months with 31 pupils between the ages of 7-11-years-old, all of whom were falling behind in maths. They were given daily practice for five minutes minutes every day, taken out of class and presented with 15 questions each day, with five seconds to answer each one. After five months, every child had speeded up and most were getting all or most questions correct every day.

Lorna said: "It was for this reason, to make home support easy for parents, that Lorraine Cooper wrote the book, Mental Maths 5 a day because she knew we wanted to provide every parent with a free copy and that would be very costly, it was important that the one book contained all the mental maths practice for every age of child in their primary years, from 5-11 years."

The book was launched to parents in September 2013 and has received great feedback. In the February 2014 parents' survey, the school was told that 91per cent believed the initiative to be important to their child's progress. Other schools in Newham are showing interest and taking the book on for their parents too.