Outcomes First Group

Mathematics Curriculum Policy

Mountfield Heath School

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Document History

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1.0	New policy — supersedes Maths Deep Dive (v4.0, Jan 2025). Reframed as a policy document to sit alongside the English Curriculum Policy within the MHS curriculum policy suite. Aligned to OFG Maths Curriculum (v1.8.1) and Capabilities framework.	Sam Dugan	June 2026

Contents

1. Introduction and Curriculum Intent

This policy sets out Mountfield Heath School's approach to the teaching and learning of mathematics. It should be read alongside the Curriculum Policy (February 2026), the Assessment, Feedback and Evidence of Learning Policy (January 2026), and the Curriculum Experiences Collection. Those documents carry the full detail of the Capabilities Approach, the school's assessment model, and the rationale for pathway-based provision; this policy does not replicate that content but is shaped by it throughout.

Mathematics at MHS sits within the group-wide curriculum framework established by the OFG Maths Curriculum (v1.8.1), which is the governing curriculum document for mathematics across Outcomes First Group. That document draws on the principles of Teaching for Mastery, as developed by the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM), and identifies the five big ideas underpinning the approach: Coherence, Representation and Structure, Mathematical Thinking, Fluency, and Variation. This policy describes how those principles are enacted at MHS through the school's own Capabilities framework and three-pathway model.

Mathematics is a human capability — a way of making sense of the world, exercising agency, and participating in everyday life with confidence and dignity. At MHS we do not treat mathematics as a body of content to be sequenced and tested against age-related expectations. We treat it as something pupils encounter, engage with, and gradually make their own through meaningful experience in real contexts.

Our mathematics curriculum is organised around the fundamental mathematical experiences that structure adult life: number and quantity; exchange and value; time and sequence; space and measurement; and data and decision-making. These are not introduced at a particular age and left behind. They recur across a pupil's time at MHS, and what develops is the nature and depth of engagement — from immersion and sensory encounter, through supported participation, to increasing independence and agency in real-world situations.

This curriculum is backwards-chained from adulthood. The question shaping every planning decision is not what a pupil of a given age should know, but what mathematical capability a person needs to live well: to navigate a community, manage daily routines, make informed choices, and participate in the economic and social world around them.

Within the school's Capabilities framework, drawn from the work of philosopher Martha Nussbaum, mathematics develops a cluster of capability domains central to flourishing. Practical Reason is the most direct — the capacity to plan, reason, and make choices based on understanding of the world. Control is equally central: the goal is not mathematical performance but pupils' growing capacity to use number, time, money, and data to influence their own lives and outcomes. Senses, Imagination and Thought is developed through engagement with pattern, spatial reasoning, and problem-solving. Bodily Health connects through measurement, food preparation, and the functional numeracy underpinning independent self-care. Play is present in the exploratory, joyful encounters with number, shape, and pattern at every pathway. Affiliation is developed through collaborative mathematical activity. Life itself is at stake: mathematical capability is a precondition for independent participation in almost every domain of adult life.

Our curriculum deliberately positions the primary National Curriculum programme of study as a reference point rather than an organising framework. The volume and age-related benchmarking structure of the NC is a barrier to progress and positive engagement for our pupils. Progress along each pupil's own mathematical journey, evidenced through EfL and ITEP review, is the measure that matters.

Through the mathematics curriculum, we aim to support all pupils to:

- develop a positive relationship with mathematics, built on success, security, and genuine engagement rather than performance anxiety and perceived failure
- experience number, exchange, time, space, and quantity as things that are real, purposeful, and present in daily life

- build the functional mathematical skills needed for independence in community, daily living, and — where appropriate — further education and employment
- develop resilience and problem-solving dispositions, recognising that mathematical thinking is a tool for navigating the world
- use concrete resources, visual representations, and technology purposefully and with increasing independence as tools for mathematical access and agency
- understand that mathematical capability is something they can develop, and that with the right support and context they can experience genuine mathematical success

2. Curriculum Organisation and Approach

The OFG Maths Curriculum establishes the group-wide framework within which MHS operates, including the use of White Rose Maths as a coherent starting point for curriculum planning across formal and semi-formal pathways, and the Equals and Numicon programmes for pupils working at pre-formal levels. The curriculum's structure is built on the concrete-pictorial-abstract (CPA) progression, beginning always in the concrete and moving toward abstract representation only where a pupil's profile and progress support it. Staff should be familiar with the OFG Maths Curriculum and use it as the primary planning reference for curriculum organisation and sequencing.

At MHS, pupils are placed on one of three curriculum pathways — Curiosity, Discover, or Explore — according to their stage of development, communication profile, and individual need. These pathways correspond broadly to the pre-formal, semi-formal, and formal phases in the OFG Maths Curriculum. The Curriculum Policy sets out the full rationale for pathway-based provision; what follows describes what that means for mathematics specifically.

Mathematics at MHS is structured around four interconnected strands, encountered across all pathways at the appropriate level of depth and with the appropriate form of support.

Early mathematics and number sense

This strand focuses on early encounters with quantity, pattern, ordinal and cardinal understanding, subitisation, and the mathematical language of comparison and change. On the Curiosity pathway, this is experienced as sensory immersion — more and gone encountered through juice poured and food eaten, full and empty through unhurried handling of real objects, one-to-one correspondence as a natural feature of daily routines. On the Discover pathway, number becomes something that functions in real life — counting out snacks, knowing a place in a queue. On the Explore pathway, number is a tool for independence — managing quantities in cooking, understanding the mathematical logic of everyday transactions.

Number, calculation, and place value

This strand develops pupils' understanding of the number system and the operations that work within it. In line with the OFG Maths Curriculum and NCETM guidance on Teaching for Mastery, significant time is spent developing depth of understanding at each stage rather than accelerating through content. Pupils are not rushed. Consolidation is planned, not incidental. The five big ideas of Teaching for Mastery — Coherence, Representation and Structure, Mathematical Thinking, Fluency, and Variation — are enacted here: staff select representations that expose mathematical structure, value the thinking process over the final answer, and vary elements carefully to deepen understanding without causing unnecessary disruption for pupils who rely on predictability.

Functional mathematics

This strand addresses time, measures, money, fractions, shape, space, and data — the mathematical content most directly connected to adult independence and community participation. It is explicitly cross-curricular, embedded in cooking, Forest School, community visits, life skills sessions, and PSHE. On the Discover pathway, pupils encounter time as something that organises

life and measurement as something purposeful in the context of making and doing. On the Explore pathway, time becomes something to be managed — reading a timetable, planning a journey — and financial exchange becomes something to be understood in real community settings, including planning purchases, understanding change, and beginning to engage with budgeting and financial independence.

Problem-solving, reasoning, and mathematical thinking

This strand underpins all three above. Many of our pupils arrive with significant anxiety around problem-solving, often rooted in prior experiences of failure. We recognise that problem-solving depends on an interconnected set of cognitive, language, and emotional regulation processes. Our approach creates time and space for pupils to develop resilience and tolerance for uncertainty in low-stakes, real-world contexts before encountering more abstract challenge. On the Explore pathway, pupils engage with logic and reasoning as tools for navigating real situations and begin to develop metacognitive awareness of their own mathematical thinking.

Across all strands and pathways, teaching follows the school's wider pedagogical principles: low demand, high trust; concrete and contextualised before abstract; built on relational safety and the assumption of capability. Manipulatives are central to all pathways; the OFG Maths Curriculum provides detailed guidance on recommended resources and their use.

Where assessment indicates a specific numeracy learning difficulty such as dyscalculia, the school draws on additional expertise when necessary from within OFG. Understanding a specific learning profile can be a significant source of confidence and self-knowledge for pupils, reframing difficulty as difference and difference as something that can be responded to with the right strategies.

3. Feedback and Responsive Teaching

Feedback in mathematics is governed by the OFG Feedback and Responsive Teaching Guidance (June 2026) and the MHS Assessment, Feedback and Evidence of Learning Policy (January 2026), both of which should be read alongside this policy.

Verbal feedback is the primary method of feedback across all pathways. It is immediate, relational, and accessible. In mathematics, feedback focuses on the process of mathematical thinking, not solely whether an answer is correct: effort, strategy, perseverance, and the use of concrete resources are all valid indicators of progress that adults should recognise and name.

Written marking is not the expectation at MHS. For most pupils, delayed written feedback does not support learning. Where marking codes or symbols are used, these follow the approach set out in the OFG Feedback and Responsive Teaching Guidance, adapted to individual communication profiles and pathway. Staff should avoid approaches that over-emphasise speed as a measure of success, create unnecessary anxiety around mistakes, or discourage mathematical discussion and risk-taking. In mathematics, mistakes are treated as an important part of the learning process.

4. Assessment and Progress

Assessment of mathematics at MHS is developmental and ipsative, in line with the Assessment, Feedback and Evidence of Learning Policy. Progress in mathematics is understood in relation to each pupil's own starting point, profile of need, and context of learning — not against age-related expectations or national benchmarks.

In line with the Independent School Standards, the school maintains a framework to evaluate pupils' work and performance regularly and thoroughly. Because mathematics is assessed ipsatively, this framework refers to the school's own curricular aims as provided to parents — the development of

each pupil's capabilities for a life of meaning, safety, connection and independence — rather than to national norms, which are not an appropriate measure of progress for our pupils. Pupils' mathematical progress is reported to parents through the annual review of the EHCP and the school's regular reporting to families.

Evidence of mathematical development is captured through Evidence for Learning (EfL) and may include observation notes, photographs, video, and examples of pupil work in any form. EfL entries are tagged to ITEP targets and Capabilities achievement statements. Progress is recognised when pupils demonstrate capability in ways that are new, more independent, self-directed, or generalised across contexts.

Each pupil's mathematics-related learning priorities are reflected in their ITEP, aligned to their EHCP outcomes in the cognition and learning domain. ITEP targets are reviewed termly and progress recorded using the ZEDSM framework — Zero, Emerging, Developing, Secure, Mastered. Movement between stages does not follow a fixed timeframe and reflects the complexity of each pupil's profile.

The Capabilities achievement statements most directly relevant to mathematics are Practical Reason, Control, Senses Imagination and Thought, Bodily Health, Play, Affiliation, and Life, though mathematical learning may evidence progress across other capability domains.

Pupil progress in mathematics is discussed at termly pupil progress meetings involving the class teacher, senior leaders, and therapeutic colleagues. Where limited progress is identified over time, this prompts professional inquiry — review of targets, adaptation of provision, and consideration of whether the context and form of mathematical encounter is appropriately matched to the individual — rather than automatic escalation to a named programme or tool.

Where a standardised or diagnostic assessment of mathematics is considered appropriate and in the pupil's interest — for example, to inform the annual review process — this is arranged on an individual basis in consultation with the class teacher, SENCo, and clinical team. Such assessments supplement rather than replace EfL evidence, ITEP review, and professional judgement.

5. Quality Assurance

Leaders monitor the quality of mathematics provision through:

- pupil progress meetings
- EfL monitoring and moderation
- learning visits and lesson observations
- work scrutiny where appropriate to the pathway
- annual reviews and EHCP review evidence
- governance reporting

Monitoring focuses on the impact of provision on pupil engagement and progress, the quality of adult-pupil interaction, the appropriateness of resources and approaches to individual need, and consistency with the school's Capabilities framework and the OFG Maths Curriculum. Leaders should not monitor quantity of written marking alone.

From September 2026, the Mathematics Scheme of Work sets out the planned sequence of mathematical experiences across the three pathways and is the principal scheme of work supporting this policy. Leaders monitor its effective implementation through the activities above, including learning visits, the tagging of EfL evidence to its strands and achievement statements, and pupil progress meetings. The embedding of a newly introduced framework is understood as a planned process; leaders anticipate that its full impact on measured outcomes will develop as it becomes established, and monitor accordingly.

This policy is reviewed annually by SLT. Substantive changes are reported to governors through the Quality of Education governance report.

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