#mathscpdchat 08 September 2020

How have the first few days of the new school year been for you?

Hosted by [Kathryn Darwin](#)

This is a brief summary of the discussion – to see all the tweets, follow the hashtag ***#mathscpdchat*** *in Twitter*

Some of the areas where discussion focused were:

the **results of a poll** tweeted by the host:

- the percentage of the teachers joining the chat who had, at the time of the chat, been **back teaching in school** … for more than one week was 28.2% … for one week was 46.2% … for only one or two days was 25.6%;
- a contributor in Scotland had been back for nearly one month;

whether secondary teachers are presently **'nomadic'** (having to **move from one classroom to another** to teach different groups of pupils who stay in the same classroom for all subjects), or whether they are **teaching all groups in their own maths classroom** as in normal times:

- the **results of a poll** tweeted by the host were …nomadic 69.7%, own room 30.3%;
- nomadic secondary teachers were **teaching maths in various numbers of different rooms (between 3 and 20)** … in many schools each year group is confined to a particular 'zone' (part of the school buildings), therefore **teachers have to move between zones** to teach classes in different years … some schools have set up **one-way movement routes** around the school, and some schools have separate routes for teachers and pupils;
- teachers who are **teaching all their lessons in their own classroom** commented that pupils are coping sensibly and efficiently with 'anti-virus' routines at the beginnings and endings of lessons;
- in order to minimise the movement of pupils and teachers around the school many schools have **changed the timetable-structure to create longer lessons**, some maths lessons now being as long as **two hours** … other changes include moving to a two-week, or even a four-week timetable;

pupils' present general manner, for example where teachers would place their behaviour on a scale from 'quiet' to 'excited':

- that in one school Year 12 students are quiet, and **Year 13 students seem even more subdued**;
- most teachers are delighted to be back in school with their pupils, but they are finding it challenging to 'help keep everyone as safe as possible' even though **most pupils are 'taking it all in their stride'** … but some pupils 'who did quite well over lockdown and completing work' are compliantly struggling with mathematical content to an unexpected extent, because, their teachers believe, they are lacking confidence as a consequence of 'knowing that they have not been in maths lessons for a long time';
- one teacher reported that Year 11 pupils are quiet, while pupils in all other Key Stage 3 and 4 year groups are 'rowdy' in the corridors and 'bubbly' in class … **Year 11 pupils may be quiet because they are 'uncertain about how exams will be for them this year'**;
- in schools that have been back for at least a week, pupils were '**abnormally quiet for the first couple of days, but have returned to their normal selves now**' … pupils who initially appeared to be very anxious are gradually **starting to 'come out of their shells'** … some teachers are finding that pupils are 'chatty with each other, but not so much with teachers' … some teachers reported that pupils being very quiet in lessons and 'the lack of behavioural problems' has allowed them to 'focus on the teaching and technology' …

many teachers are finding that their **lessons are enjoyable because pupils are 'involved and paying attention'**;

how pupils are responding to present classroom teaching:

- that it is **hard to know reliably how pupils are getting on without being able to roam around the classroom**;

- **not being able to circulate around the classroom is 'a real challenge'** … it is much **harder to spot early, and address, misconceptions** as they arise … it is also **harder to gauge if the 'pitch' of the lesson is appropriate** or not … to try to compensate for not being able to circulate teachers are making greater-than-normal use of 'check-in' tests and multiple-choice diagnostic questions … **helping pupils when they get stuck is harder**, and relying on pupils to talk to the teacher when they are stuck is problematic because in present classroom conditions **the whole class can hear what is said**, and therefore **'shy' pupils are reluctant to ask for help** … also it is possible that some pupils may be 'doing a good job of looking as if they 'get it' (when they don't) knowing that the teacher won't be able to come near enough to find out';

- while some teachers reported that pupils have been **more passive than normal** in lessons, other teachers said that they have appeared to be **'keen to learn'**;

- teachers are making much more use than in the past of '**diagnostic questions**';

- teachers are **'pitching' their teaching** at a level that 'seems **just the same as normal**';

- some teachers have done a **'start of year assessment'** with all year groups (as normal) … some are providing pupils with a **'six-part grid' which the pupils use to self-assess their learning**;

- some teachers have been able to create a **wide aisle up the middle of the classroom, or at the side**, so that they can walk up and down (wearing a shield) to 'get a closer look at pupils' work' (pupils pass their work to the end desk) … but, even so, some teachers feel that they **can only talk properly to the outer (nearest) pupils** … some teachers have a **'spare' table to which pupils bring their work**, then leave before the teacher approaches to look at it … other schools have a **zone at the front of the classroom out of which the teacher cannot step**, which means that those teachers don't then have to isolate if a pupil in the class is found to be carrying the virus … teachers who cannot get anywhere near pupils are **using technology (online chat facilities) in the classroom in order to 'chat' with pupils individually**;

- some teachers are 'using a visualiser a lot to work through questions' (the teacher does a 'demonstration example', then pupils do a similar example … repeatedly);

how **nomadic** teachers are **organising themselves in order to maximise pupils' learning time**:

- secondary department teams have been discussing **strategies for getting lessons off to a good start when pupils are in the classroom before the teacher arrives** … in

some schools teachers have given pupils booklets containing tasks on which they are expected to work before the teacher arrives … some useful sources of suitable tasks were suggested (links provided below);

- some teachers take their **own laptop** to each lesson, on which they have stored their lesson plans, pupil seating plans, and with which they take the class register while the main school computer is getting going … some teachers have downloaded 'Remote Desktop' so that they can be **logged into their SIMS (School Information Management System) throughout the day** (link provided below);

- some teachers have set up **procedures for pupils to pass out and put away their books** (in which each pupil touches only their own book), their books then being stored permanently in the classroom where those pupils work all the time;

- some 'nomadic' teachers **prepare all their plans and resources for a whole week, and drop them off at the appropriate classrooms** on Monday morning;

- one teacher **facilitates his lesson-planning and scaffolds his lessons** by fitting all his plans to/on the same **six-part structure (Daily Review, Lesson Content and Modelling, Questioning, Scaffolded Work, Directed Practice, Review)** which he shares with pupils and displays on classroom walls … he says that it shows his 'six things to do' in each lesson, and has thus helped him 'achieve structure in every lesson';

- some nomadic teachers **carry with them their own set of 'basic essentials' such as board pens, calculators, pens and pencils, and other resources needed for particular lessons** ... some carry their own portable visualiser everywhere;

- at the end of each lesson some teachers **set tasks for pupils to do at the start of the next lesson**, so that pupils can carry on with tasks before the teacher arrives, and while the teacher is logging on to the classroom computer;

how teachers are assessing pupils' learning while maintaining social distance:

- (publicly) **questioning, from the front of the classroom, individual selected pupils**;

- asking pupils to **email to the teacher at the end of each lesson a photograph of the latest page of their exercise book** … that not all pupils have smart-phones with them… that not all pupils have what is required on their phones in order to access *Google Classroom* during the lesson;

- some teachers ask pupils to **leave their work on a table at the end of the lesson**;

- formative assessment is facilitated by pupils **showing responses on individual mini-whiteboards**, and by **generating plenty of pair/group/class discussion**;

- using **multiple-choice questions** … in order to communicate their responses each pupil has a square card with one of the letters A, B, C, D printed on each side … they hold up their card with their chosen letter showing at the top;

- using **Desmos tasks** with pupils, each of whom had their own lap-top/tablet, enables the teacher to see everything that each student types or draws;

resources that teachers are finding to be particularly useful now that they are back in school:

- a HUE **camera**;
- teachers each having their **own IPEVO to take from lesson (classroom) to lesson (classroom)**;
- **using 'Firefly' to 'drop all my resources into'** … pupils log in to get digital versions of work that the teacher wants them to do;
- the **teacher's own bank of questions** which he is steadily building;
- booklets of **GCSE-style questions**;

how teachers feel emotionally about being back teaching in school:

- many teachers are appreciating the **companionship and support they derive from working with colleagues as a team**;
- many teachers are **feeling tired**, but are **enjoying the satisfaction of finding solutions to practical problems that circumstances are presenting** … for example, having to carry a great deal of equipment around all day is very tiring … worrying about being late to lessons is tiring;
- most teachers are **enjoying working 'face-to-face' with pupils again**;

strategies for helping 'quiet' pupils who may be overlooked because teachers cannot circulate around classrooms:

- getting all pupils to **use individual mini-whiteboard**s;
- using **exit-tickets** to get a rough idea of what each student has 'taken from' each lesson;
- encouraging **pupils to support each other by collaborating** … sharing and discussing their ideas with each other;
- appointing a **spokesperson for each group of pupils** … for example, one pupil on each 'row' of pupils gives the feedback after a discussion, but is 'allowed' to articulate only the ideas and explanations that (s)he has heard from other pupils in that 'row';

the greatest challenges that teachers have faced so far this term:

- **the need to be personally resilient when faced with challenges** such as 'impossible administrative deadlines' and new situations (such as teaching pupils in a year group with which you have not previously worked);
- **trying to explain to other teachers** who are new to the school how to follow the school's 'systems';
- **trying to teach pupils who are in the classroom while also giving attention to self-isolated pupils who are joining the lesson from home** using video-chat … suggestion that the teacher converses individually with remote learners, who each take their turn;

- **feeling restricted in how one can move about the classroom** … trying to conduct class discussions while having to teach from behind a screen with a microphone located among the pupils (it is difficult to hear everything that is said);
- moving rooms constantly is making some teachers feel uncomfortably disorganised … teachers particularly dislike not being in the classroom at the start of every lesson;
- **not being able to see pupils at the back of the class** without wearing a mask;
- having to teach with the classroom door open when the classroom is near the canteen and another year group are having lunch!

In what follows, click on any screenshot-of-a-tweet to go to that actual tweet on Twitter.

This is a part of a conversation about assessing pupils' learning under the constraints of the present teaching and learning situations. The conversation was generated by this tweet from Kathryn Darwin:

Kathryn MCCT @Arithmaticks · 19h
How are you assessing student learning while maintaining social distance? #mathscpdchat

and included these from Esther Stevens and Kathryn Darwin:

Esther @MrsMathematica · 19h
Replying to @Arithmaticks
It's a serious struggle - working on cold calling and making sure that I sample 3-5 students every single question I ask. Students are engaging better than previously and my quiet ones are more involved! #mathscpdchat

Kathryn MCCT @Arithmaticks · 19h
I've just round a random name generator I can set up on our 'Teacher Toolkit' and you can wieght it and everything. Very excited about it! #mathscpdchat

these from Karen and Mrs Currie:

Karen @karenshancock · 19h
Replying to @Arithmaticks
Yesterday I got them all to mail me a photo of the page of their book at the end of the lesson - mainly so they knew I'd be checking their classwork some how. #mathscpdchat

Mrs Currie @mrscurriemaths · 20h
Replying to @karenshancock and @Arithmaticks
I thought about this but I'm aware not all have smart phones (or data - no access to wifi). I think the return to school is probably highlighting the impact of poverty even more than lockdown did... #mathscpdchat

Karen @karenshancock · 20h

Replying to @mrscurriemaths and @Arithmaticks

We're lucky on that front - all students have access to Microsoft Teams - we're expected to set all homework via that this year.

these from [Partridge Maths](#) and [Kathryn Darwin](#):

Partridge Maths @ah_haMaths · 19h

Replying to @Arithmaticks

High quality questioning. #mathscpdchat

Kathryn MCCT 💁 @Arithmaticks · 19h

Can you give us some more detail? :) #mathscpdchat

Partridge Maths @ah_haMaths · 18h

best way to check understanding is 2 ask q in the moment, otherwise it's often too late to act retrospectively. Usually circulation is king, but questioning is a close 2nd for me. Also retrieval is part of every day good practice so we can find out what they remember through q

and these from [DMaths](#), [Jenny Hill-Parker](#), [Miss Olive](#) and [Nix](#):

DMaths @DeeVijayan · 18h

Replying to @Arithmaticks

Serious problem! If a student has a problem, I get them to leave their book on my table while they step back. I then have a look at the work. Whole class AFL done through MWB

Jenny Hill-Parker @JennyHillParker · 19h

Replying to @Arithmaticks

Mini whiteboards for formative assessment, and will need to quarantine tests before returning to students for summative assessment later in the term #mathscpdchat

Miss Olive @missolivemaths · 19h

Replying to @Arithmaticks

I'm planning on doing a tonne of multiple choice questions from @getdiagnostics also, but just use fingers for answers (not enough whiteboards for a set per bubble at the moment)

Nix @NixxSunshine · 6h

I am printing each student one of these to use for multiple choice questions to avoid fingers going up 🤪👍👍😄
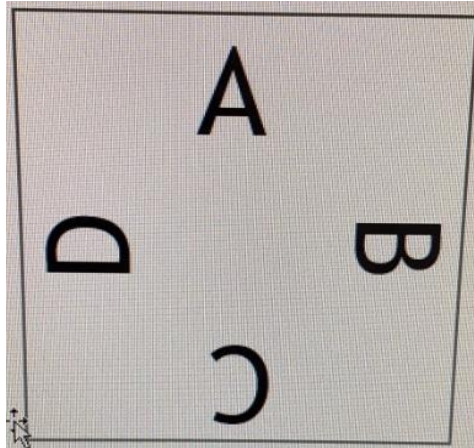
(to read the discussion-sequence generated by any tweet look at the 'replies' to that tweet)

Among the links shared were:

5 tips for newly mobile teachers which is a TES article by Peter Mattock in which he offers some words of advice with the aim of helping to ensure that being a 'mobile' ('nomadic') teacher causes as little disruption to learning as possible. It was shared by Mr Mattock

Bell Work which is a blog article by Colleen Young containing suggested tasks for getting everybody busy at the start of a lesson. These ideas will be particularly helpful for lessons when pupils are in the classroom before the teacher gets there. It was shared by Colleen Young

Mathsbox which consists of '4800+ ready to use resources for busy teachers (Key Stage 1 to A level)'. The resources are categorised under headings such as: Skills Checks, Topic Resources, Numeracy, Differentiated Questions, Quick Cover and Problem Solving. It was shared by Mr Shakespeare

Go Teach Maths which is a free collection of 'handcrafted resources for maths teachers' consisting of 'ready-to-go presentations, worksheets and activities for your classroom'. It was shared by amandajaneq

Maths Teacher Hub's Shop which is a collection of resources from Maths Teacher Hub, such as sets of 'homework questions', that are on sale as TES resources. It was shared by Ays

Remote Desktop which is software from TeamViewer that enables you to connect your computer to material on other computers. It was shared by Miss Konstantine

IPEVO which provides 'step-by-step guides to setting up IPEVO document cameras for video conferencing'. It was shared by Heather Scott

HUE HD Camera which is 'a cost-effective alternative to a standard classroom document camera, and is perfect for stop-motion animation'. It was shared by Karen

ATM Publications which is where you can see all the various interesting books published by the *Association of Teachers of Mathematics*. It was shared by Mary Pardoe

CPD Videos -Teacher Development Resources which is a new collection of fascinating short 10-minute videos from the *Association of Teachers of Mathematics* that are designed to support teachers at all stages of their career. It was shared by Mary Pardoe

NCETM Support for schools addressing ongoing coronavirus impact which are materials and guidance on the new NCETM website that are designed specifically to help primary and secondary schools adapt maths teaching, when necessary, to address the ongoing impact of the outbreak. It was shared by Mary Pardoe