Wentworth Primary School

Foundational Mathematics Skills at Wentworth

At Wentworth, we believe that strong foundations in mathematics are essential for every child's confidence, enjoyment and long-term success. Our mathematics curriculum is carefully designed in line with the National Curriculum for England and informed by Ofsted's research into high-quality maths education.

We prioritise depth of understanding, clear progression and regular practice, ensuring that all pupils build secure knowledge that they can apply confidently as they move through the school.

What Do We Mean by "Foundational Skills"?

Foundational skills are the essential knowledge, understanding and habits of thinking that children need before they can successfully tackle more complex mathematics. These skills begin developing in Reception and are strengthened throughout Key Stages 1 and 2.

Ofsted highlights that pupils who develop secure foundations early are far more likely to succeed later, particularly in calculation, reasoning and problem solving.

Our Focused Foundation Areas

1. Number Sense and Counting

Children develop a deep understanding of numbers through:

- Counting accurately forwards and backwards
- Recognising quantities without counting (subitising)
- Understanding that numbers represent quantities (cardinality)
- Comparing numbers and quantities

These early skills are the cornerstone of all later mathematical learning, especially calculation.

2. Place Value

Pupils learn how our number system works by:

- Understanding tens, ones and later hundreds
- Knowing that the position of a digit affects its value
- Breaking numbers apart and recombining them flexibly

Secure place value knowledge is essential for fluency in addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and decimals.

3. Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division

Children build a conceptual understanding of the four operations by:

- Learning number bonds and key facts
- Understanding inverse relationships
- Exploring equal groups, sharing and repeated addition
- Practising recall once understanding is secure

Confidence with number facts is built on understanding, not rote learning alone.

4. Mathematical Language and Representations

Children are taught to:

- Use precise mathematical vocabulary
- Explain their thinking clearly
- Represent ideas using objects, drawings, diagrams and symbols

Moving fluently between representations helps pupils make sense of new ideas and reduces misconceptions.

5. Reasoning and Mathematical Thinking

We encourage pupils to:

- Explain how they know an answer is correct
- Spot patterns and make connections
- Justify their thinking using mathematical language

Reasoning supports deeper understanding and builds confidence and resilience in learners.

6. Problem Solving

Children regularly apply their mathematics by:

- Solving practical and real-life problems
- Choosing appropriate strategies
- Breaking problems into manageable steps

Problem solving is an integral part of daily maths lessons, not an optional extra.