

*‘Maths — No Problem! creates an opportunity for children to excel and for teachers to support them. Every learner can achieve, no matter their needs or background’.*

— Tom Best, Maths Lead at Ysgol Sandycroft

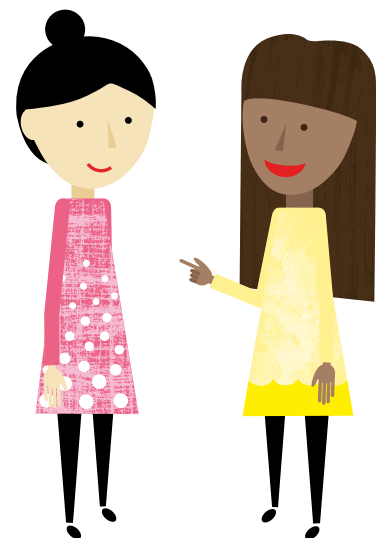


# How Ysgol Sandycroft in North Wales has developed a **more inclusive culture** through Maths — No Problem!

## About the school

Sandycroft school faces the challenges reported by many schools in Wales: mixed-age teaching, high pupil mobility and more recently, an increasing number of pupils with complex Additional Learning Needs (ALN). Based in Sandycroft, just over the border from Chester, the school welcomes learners from diverse and sometimes disadvantaged backgrounds, as well as pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL). The school often receives pupils midway through the year. Many children arrive with maths scores significantly below age-related expectations, with baselines below the national average.

Despite this, Sandycroft has built a reputation for being a high achieving, welcoming school with strong learner outcomes. By the time pupils leave for secondary education, many children show significantly improved mathematical attainment compared to their original baseline, often exceeding the expected standard. This reflects the positive progress children make across their primary school journey and clearly demonstrates value added. Pupils are also highly articulate, passionate mathematicians. The school has become known for its strong culture of curiosity and communication underpinned by its ethos of ‘Love, Kindness and Learning’.



## A positive shift in the whole-school culture

Tom Best, Sandycroft's Maths and Numeracy Lead, points out that one of the key reasons for this strong and inclusive learning culture is thanks to their long-standing partnership with Maths — No Problem! First implemented in 2016, the programme has become the pedagogical backbone of the school, positively influencing the entire teaching and learning approach across the whole curriculum. Tom says, 'Maths — No Problem! has been a massive part of our school from the moment we introduced it – it's helped us shift our whole culture. The impact has been incredible and it's transformed the way we teach and the way our pupils learn. Not only has our children's maths improved, but so has their confidence in talking and expressing their ideas'.



Sandycroft, which has recently become an advocate school for Maths — No Problem! is keen to share best practice and support other schools facing similar challenges. Tom has championed Maths — No Problem! since his initial teacher training days when he used it during his placement year. He now leads training within his school, coaching other teachers and teaching assistants to embed the programme effectively. Tom says, 'Maths — No Problem! has created meaningful coaching and training opportunities for all our staff. We have an open-door culture meaning teachers regularly observe each other, share ideas and learn together. As a result, it's made our teachers and teaching assistants feel really confident using the programme'.

The programme's play-based approach has been especially effective in Early Years. Sandycroft uses the Foundations picture books to develop skills such as noticing patterns, pairing and grouping objects, and having fun with counting in a safe and supportive environment. This aligns closely with the Welsh education philosophy, which values play-based and experiential learning as a foundation for developing mathematical understanding.



## A more inclusive environment for learning

Sandycroft school has seen a positive impact with using Maths — No Problem! to support a more inclusive classroom. In their mixed-age classrooms, the flexible structure and pedagogy of Maths — No Problem! has been highly beneficial, allowing every pupil to fully participate in the lessons. Through the problem-solving Explore task, every pupil is encouraged to engage in the discussion and participate in a non-intimidating way, regardless of their ability or background. Tom comments, 'The programme is highly adaptable for different learner needs and it enables every child to make progress. With the Explore task, children are curious, they have a go, and they are confident to solve problems in different ways. Maths — No Problem! fosters a safe space for them to contribute and succeed no matter their starting point'.

Regular participation in open-ended Explore tasks has helped to boost children's confidence and communications skills. As a result, children at Sandycroft have become very articulate and confident when talking about mathematics. The programme's emphasis on discussion with structured sentence starters encourages pupils to express their thinking and share ideas. Sandycroft have even started using an exploratory task in other subjects, and have noticed similar benefits here too. Tom explains that 'pupils are able to reason, debate and present their ideas with confidence, giving them a strong foundation for secondary school and beyond'.

## Creating an opportunity for pupils to excel

For Tom and his team at Sandycroft school, the impact of Maths — No Problem! has been profound. 'Everything begins with noticing or exploring something, and that thread runs right through the school', Tom says. With its structured, safe, and adaptable approach, children are able to engage fully in lessons. Maths — No Problem! has inspired a whole-school culture of curiosity and communication, creating an inclusive environment where children of all abilities can explore, reflect and practice. Tom reflects, 'We love Maths — No Problem! here at Sandycroft. The programme creates an opportunity for children to excel and for teachers to support them. It means every learner can achieve, no matter their needs or background'.

