Response from Maths Recovery
to

Better Literacy and Numeracy for Children and Young People

A Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy in Schools

Maths Recovery (MR) welcomes the publication Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy and its intention to improve levels of numeracy\(^1\) for all young people. In particular, Maths Recovery welcomes the proposal in the plan to continue the enhanced support for numeracy development in disadvantaged schools. MR also welcomes the proposal to develop a programme for all schools (DEIS and non-DEIS) that adopts the principles and practices of Maths Recovery to empower teachers to deal with a range of numeracy issues in the classroom.

Maths Recovery welcomes the opportunity to make the following comments on the Draft National Plan.

Maths Recovery offers a unique approach to extending children’s number knowledge, understanding and strategies. The programme offers an extremely detailed profiles-based assessment of pupils in respect of these areas and provides a framework for individual, group or class-based instruction which is suitable not only for pupils who are experiencing difficulties but also for average and more able children.

Maths Recovery has enjoyed significant success with DEIS schools over the last number of years not only in terms of improved pupil attainment but also in terms of nurturing and inspiring teacher professional development in the area of numeracy. Developed by Prof R.J. Wright at Southern Cross University in Australia, Maths Recovery is an evolving research-based professional development programme for teachers and has been introduced to great effect in many jurisdictions over the last 25 years. Originally, it was developed as an individualised programme for low-attainers. While maintaining its strong focus on individualised, intensive instruction and intervention, it has, over time, evolved and is now also used as a classroom numeracy programme addressing the needs of all ages and levels of ability. Established national and state-wide mainstream maths programmes such as Count

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\(^1\) For the purposes of this response, we are using the definition of numeracy as that defined in the Draft National Plan.
Me in Too in New South Wales, Numeracy Development Project in New Zealand attribute their origins and influences to the work of R.J. Wright in developing Maths Recovery. Similar transitions have been made in the UK and the US, of particular note is the state-wide mathematics intervention in Kentucky and the work of the National American Indian, Alaskan & Hawaiian Educational Development Center. The impression is given in the footnotes on p.33 of the Draft National Plan that Maths Recovery is an intervention which operates within a purely interventionist framework. It is true that it a very structured programme, focused on improving the number knowledge and attainment of pupils. It is important to note that Maths Recovery encourages and supports local implementation on the basis of school profile, resources and pupil needs. In the context of the DEIS initiative where well over 300 schools are implementing Maths Recovery, the vast majority of these schools have mainstreamed and localised Maths Recovery as part of their overall school maths plan. As a professional development programme for teachers, Maths Recovery mirrors the contention of Carpenter et al. (2004) from their work on scaling-up innovative practices in Mathematics and Science that ‘fundamental reforms in mathematics and science learning and teaching are most likely are most likely to be achieved through (a) pursuing professional development based in teacher inquiry and student conceptual understanding and (b) travel focused on teacher generative learning and the fostering and support of teacher professional community.’ The nature of and the supports offered by the Maths Recovery programme allied to the professionalism of the teachers implementing the programme in Ireland has resulted in exemplary models of generative, adaptive, self-sustaining and effective numeracy interventions.

In relation to the proposals outlined in the Draft National Plan to Improve Literacy and Numeracy, Maths Recovery makes the following recommendations:

1. Developments in numeracy need to be led by those with advanced expertise in numeracy; this expertise is very different from expertise in literacy.
2. It is essential that the integrity of Maths Recovery is maintained as a coherent and comprehensive approach to teaching number.
3. The design, delivery and support for the implementation of the Maths Recovery programme and of programmes using the principles and approaches of Maths Recovery needs to be led by Maths Recovery experts.
4. Professional development in relation to the Maths Recovery programme and of programmes using the principles and approaches of Maths Recovery needs to be led by Maths Recovery experts.
References


