



## ASK THE EXPERT

# “Progress requires building blocks”

**Stella Formosa** explains why we must focus on crucial knowledge in order to address lost learning

### Why is crucial knowledge so important?

With student and staff absence, schools have been decimated by Covid. Add the summer learning loss yet to come and many children will continue to struggle. It's a mountain to climb. I don't see myself as an expert but have upskilled my team to be experts. Children need building blocks to progress to the next stage of learning. Our routines and structures focused on crucial knowledge mean we all work on establishing the same firm foundations..

### How does this work in practice?

We have written our own curriculum, which is stripped back to crucial knowledge and made relevant for our children. Even enrichment of the curriculum is linked to crucial knowledge. We prioritise reading to enable progress in other subjects with strong phonics in place, and every half term we have a re-cap week, so children are confident before new learning is added. However, maths presents the biggest challenge as new knowledge can't be acquired easily, unlike reading.

### How do you address lost learning in maths?

We use tuition and catch-up provision to fund afterschool and in-person tuition. We use White Rose Maths for materials, and work with Whizz Education and the virtual tutor Maths-Whizz to keep enthusiasm going. Maths-Whizz is great as we can set homework and use it in class to back up learning. Despite the challenges, we have a positive perception of maths as Maths-Whizz pitches lessons for individual's needs and so children feel successful.



#### EXPERT PROFILE

**Name:** Stella Formosa

**Job title:** Head teacher, Chesterton Primary

**Area of expertise:** Organisation and developing staff to build a team of experts that deliver crucial knowledge and prioritise learning effectively

**Best part of my job:** Seeing children progress

### How important is assessment?

We know there are gaps in learning. The data provided by Whizz Education enables our maths coordinator and class teachers to continually assess, identify and target lessons. The virtual tutor automatically focuses on weaker areas for individual students. If we identify a whole-class issue, we tend to pull back and re-align. In this way we can use the real-time data to 'course correct' to ensure we are addressing all areas of crucial knowledge.

### How have you made maths a positive experience?

As a result of Covid, we have children with attachment issues – some just don't want to be in school after so much time at home, and having Maths Whizz helps. It's been a tough time for everyone. Maths has traditionally been the subject no-one likes! However, with Maths-Whizz children are motivated with games, awards and trophies. It works for parents, children and staff, and enables us to make progress in challenging times.

## ASK ME ABOUT

**IMPACT:** Keep it simple. Focus on prioritisation and what creates the greatest impact on learning crucial knowledge

**CPD:** Upskill and empower staff to become the experts in edtech, and ensure everyone drives a key area

**IMPROVEMENT:** Every aspect of the school needs to be working towards improving learning outcomes. If not, change it!

**W:** [whizz.com](https://www.whizz.com)