



## Hear from our Sumdog schools: Mairead Thompson at Park Community Academy, Blackpool, UK

Mairead Thompson is a Special Educational Needs teacher and Head of Secondary Maths at Park Community Academy in Blackpool, North West England.

### About the school

Park Community Academy is a mixed school for children and young people aged 2-19 with a wide range of special educational needs and disabilities. The school has a population of 328 pupils of which 63% are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. Mairead teaches ages 14-16 and has been using Sumdog with her pupils for two years.

### Making space for inclusivity in maths

For a lot of children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), there is a lot of processing happening that can be overwhelming for them. Many SEN pupils that have a good level of maths may not have the same level of English and therefore are discouraged by having to read written maths questions. What we were looking for in a maths resource was a platform that could read questions aloud, so that pupils could focus on their maths learning rather than having to process the written questions themselves. Sumdog was the perfect answer to this as they have a read-aloud option for pupils who need it and an option to mute for those who don't.

### Creating an even playing field for SEN pupils

In my class I have pupils working at a variety of different levels so I tend to split the pupils by ability into three different groups. During each lesson one group will be on Sumdog, one will be completing maths worksheets and the other will have 1:1 teacher support. As a general guide, we follow the White Rose Maths aligned curriculum and I love that Sumdog

allows me to set challenges that correlate to the topic we are currently working on. With such stark disparities across the class in terms of ability, Sumdog's low-stakes approach helps to alleviate any stress or pressure around maths and makes it enjoyable for the pupils! While some of our KS4 pupils are working at Year 1 level and others are working at Year 6 level; Sumdog creates an even playing field for children and allows them to build a sense of community with their peers no matter their ability. The children love to challenge each other during lessons so even if they don't have a competition set up, they'll still compete against each other in games.

### Engaging learners of all abilities

As many of our pupils have a very limited attention span, engagement and retention in maths is particularly poor. However, since we started using Sumdog we have seen pupils become much more excited and engaged in their learning. Their favourite feature of Sumdog is the competitions, they are so competitive that they don't even think of it as doing work! Each month I set a competition for the class and regularly print out the leaderboard so that they can see how they are progressing. The pupils love trying to increase their scores and get so excited when they move up the leaderboard. The competitions also motivate pupils to use Sumdog at home as they enjoy using the platform and want to improve their skills. It's fantastic to see so many of them interested in their personal progression and engaging with their learning.

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