



## Hear from our Sumdog schools: **Jen Houghton at New Brighton Primary School, Wirral, England**

Jen Houghton is a Senior Teacher and Maths Lead in Wirral with 20 years of experience. She specialises in maths mastery and supports colleagues in developing a metacognitive teaching approach.

### About the school

New Brighton Primary School is a large, forward-thinking primary school based in Wirral, England. With a strong focus on fluency, mastery and metacognition, the school is committed to creating a rich and varied learning environment for all pupils. As part of its strategic approach to deepening maths understanding across the curriculum, the school introduced Sumdog in March 2022 to help keep key skills alive and accessible through engaging, personalised practice.

### Building fluency through engaging, targeted practice

At New Brighton, we follow a mastery approach built around modelling, scaffolding and metacognitive thinking. One of the key challenges we face in primary maths is that some strands like shape or division might only appear as explicit teaching points once per year. Although we revisit them through retrieval and flashback tasks, there's a real risk of gaps forming when pupils don't get enough meaningful practice. That's where Sumdog really supports us.

Sumdog helps keep those skills alive through targeted, engaging practice that we can easily assign based on our ongoing assessment. We use it daily to supplement lesson time, particularly during soft starts in the morning or straight after lunch. It provides a focused start to the day, especially for pupils who might need help with transitions from home or the playground. It gets them into a calm headspace and focused on learning — and because it's game-based, they're having fun while consolidating their understanding.

### Making maths memorable and motivating

What I really love about Sumdog is how adaptable it is. As a teacher, I can group children and tailor tasks or challenges to exactly what they need. We regularly use it to reinforce key skills identified through our end-of-term assessments. Teachers can jump into the data and say, "Right, let's target improper fractions," then set that strand as a challenge for the class. It's a brilliant way to approach revision or further practise without adding extra workload or pressure.

## Interested in trying out Sumdog?

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The competitive element really drives engagement. The children love both the in-house and national contests. You'll find me watching the leaderboard closely and running round school giving applause to classes who've made it into the top 10 — it creates a real buzz. They love that the table updates daily, so the motivation to improve and hold their position never drops. Even outside lesson time, they'll ask, "Can we do Sumdog?" because they genuinely enjoy it.

### Growing confidence in and out of the classroom

We've also had positive feedback from parents. They love seeing their children excited to do

maths at home and say it feels more like a game than homework. That combination of fun and earning is a win for everyone, it's motivating for pupils and reassuring for families. We even plan to showcase Sumdog at our next parent event, because it's such a strong part of our maths toolkit.

Overall, Sumdog has had a clear impact across the school. It encourages children to engage with maths outside the usual lesson hour and gives those who need help with structure or routine a way to ease into learning. It supports our whole-school strategy for building fluency, deepening understanding and helping every child feel confident and successful in maths.

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