

1 November 2017 16:15- 17:00

Portcullis House, London

Present:

Minister Nick Gibb

STA Colin Watson

STA Andy Hackett

Alison Borthwick

Fran Watson

Katy Russell

Summary

The 45 minutes discussion was very professional and the conversation flowed well. We demonstrated that the joint Primary group can both support and challenge ideas within mathematics education. It was helpful having two colleagues from STA present as we were able to express thanks for being invited to attend the KS1 and KS2 expert test review panels. We also expressed interest in supporting the curriculum division within the DfE. We used a range of sources (the Minister's speeches, KS2 TA evidence, children's work) to provide supporting evidence for the points we were making; e.g. that children should not be using a standard method for all questions in the NC tests, but they often do because teachers are led by the limiting mark scheme. All parties agreed this was not conducive to children learning. The meeting ended positively with all parties agreeing that opening lines of communication through this meeting had been helpful and would be useful to continue in the future.

1. Our remit was to introduce the Primary group to the Minister and open positive lines of communication.
2. We did not intentionally pursue a calculations only driven discussion, as other members of the mathematics community have covered this previously. We did however, return to this several times, to discuss how, for many children, the formal method is not the most suitable, when for example, a mental calculation could be performed.
3. The discussion focused on the mismatch of the curriculum, the tests and the Interim Frameworks, and the fact that too many teachers teach to the test, something everybody around the table agreed was not helpful.

Other areas/ themes discussed/suggested:

- What does an 8 year old need to be able to do mathematically?
- How can the joint primary group offer support? We have linked with the standards division within STA; now we need to link with the curriculum division.
- Children 'need' to be able to use the correct written algorithm for all calculations.
- Are the cognitive conditions (of the curriculum and tests) beginning to limit children's creative and critical thinking?
- How to discourage teachers from just teaching to the test.
- The use of textbooks.