

bettermarks®

**CONTACT:** collins.co.uk/bettermarks **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN DABELL

Someone once said that animal testing was a terrible idea because they get all nervous and give the wrong answers. Some colleagues think that testing students is a terrible idea too, for much the same reason, especially if they don't get a second bite at the cherry; side-effects can include broken confidence, disenfranchisement and feeling trapped like a delirious wasp inside a locked conservatory, especially when we're talking about core subjects, like maths. Happily, bettermarks® from Collins is here to help.

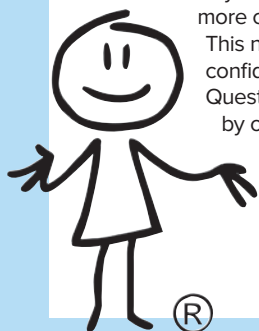
bettermarks® is a sharp online platform for GCSE maths that employs very sophisticated technology so that students can access personalised learning. Now we've heard all this sort of thing before and indeed, adaptive learning isn't new. Some publishers market their resources as 'personalised' but what it amounts to is automarking and fancy graphs. That isn't optimal teaching and learning. Collins' bettermarks® is better than that; much better. The platform is described as pioneering and I think that claim can be upheld as it is quite a few steps in front of the competition and streets ahead in some cases. This is the only truly personalised online learning programme for the new GCSE maths on the market and covers all topics for AQA and Edexcel, Foundation and Higher.

### Closing the gaps

So what makes bettermarks® different? Well, what you get is actual real-time feedback at every stage with content that continuously adapts to develop students' understanding. This helps learners and you to diagnose weaknesses early rather than after the horses have bolted, and plug learning gaps together through practice. If students get something wrong then it's an opportunity to learn and have a second go, with bettermarks® providing personalised and specific feedback.

There are thousands of questions available to access and the adaptive technology checks the thousands of competencies needed across the curriculum. It flags up any knowledge gaps and then helps students by giving them exercises to become secure in a topic by starting off easy and then moving onto more challenging questions.

This naturally boosts student confidence and motivation. Questions are accessed by online books and are randomised. Here students are tested and can submit answers – there is a hint box if they need a reminder or a bit of help



and they can click on the textbook for more detailed support. Students can always access an explanation after submitting an answer, which uses the variables in the question, so they can see a worked out solution to aid their understanding. The ability for students to track their own learning means that they can develop valuable self-monitoring skills and engage in their personal learning progress. As the teacher, you can see what students do via a 'Reports' section and you can also assign work easily where you see a gap that needs filling.

Online platforms have to be straightforward and intuitive so does bettermarks® fit the bill? Absolutely yes. It feels instinctive and spontaneous and it needs to be, because students are expected to work independently and at a pace suited to their needs. The clever technology at work here means that students access and stay in the zone of proximal development by providing the right lesson at the right level of difficulty and the right time.

### SKILLS SUPPORT FOR GCSE SCIENCE (9-1)

Build confidence, support the development of key skills and provide plenty of practice with targeted AQA GCSE Science workbooks from Collins, new for the (9-1) specifications and ideal for use with any AQA GCSE Science course. Engage and motivate students in the 1-4 grade range with targeted Foundation Workbooks for AQA Combined Science that help develop key literacy and numeracy skills, as well as building confidence in answering open response questions. Help your borderline students focus on key topics and reach their full potential with Grade 5 and Grade 8/9 Booster Workbooks for AQA. Ideal for use in class, and for revision or homework. [www.collins.co.uk/ScienceSkills](http://www.collins.co.uk/ScienceSkills), [education@harpercollins.co.uk](mailto:education@harpercollins.co.uk)



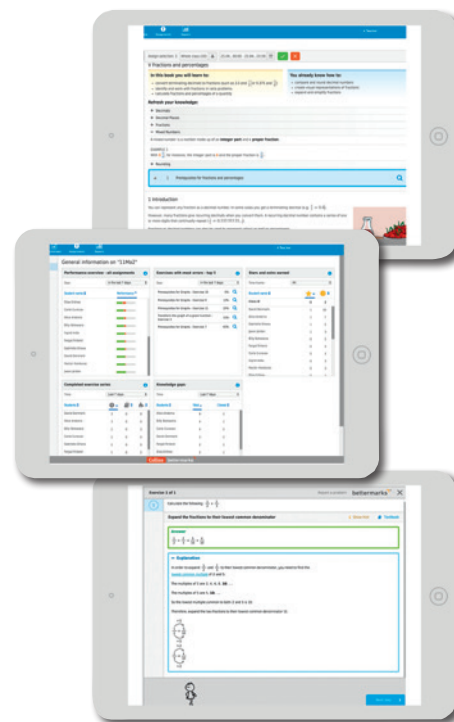
### Track and progress

I think you will like the dashboard bettermarks® have made, because it is here where you will find performance overview of students, completed exercises, rewards earned and two features that I think are worth their weight in gold: exercises with the most errors and knowledge gaps. If something can tell you at the drop of a hat what learners' top five errors are then you can attack, attack, attack and eradicate the weaknesses. So if your dashboard is telling you that 65% of children haven't managed to calculate the area of a circle given its radius then you can parachute

in and do your bit to make sure they can. Continuous formative assessments formed by bettermarks® throughout the learning process help shape the process itself. As every interaction is tracked in real-time, there is parallel insight into student thinking and strategies. Based on this comprehension, individual learning paths can be dynamically generated to guide the student to advance through the curriculum.

What this amazing new technology will do is dramatically cut down your workload by slashing marking time and give you a highly transparent overview of progress. You can create your own tests and worksheets using the thousands of questions available and these are simple to share with colleagues.

Can you access bettermarks® on an iPad and Android app? I feel foolish for asking but yes, no problem. Is it pricey? Well, something this good is never going to be cheap – but you certainly get what you pay for. In fact, I think you get a cracking deal, and you could use pupil premium funding, too.



**VERDICT:**  
**NOTHING BETTER**  
 bettermarks® is a class act. Full support with set-up and beyond ensures your school has the security of help when needed. This is a resource that has been designed to get students working like maths pros – and ensure no one should get left behind.