

# Busy Ant Maths

**Contact:** [collins.co.uk/BusyAntMaths](http://collins.co.uk/BusyAntMaths) **Reviewed by:** John Dabell



Schools are super-busy places, which means we need resources that can make life more manageable. So when it comes to delivering the new maths curriculum you want something that is comprehensive, inspiring, easy to use and strategy-rich. It exists, and it is called Busy Ants Maths.

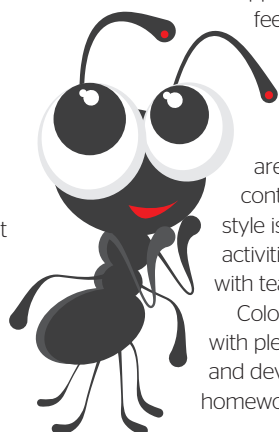
This whole-school programme will set your maths provision up for years to come, and it's as sharp as a razor. It sets very high expectations for all pupils, offers a flexible approach to planning, teaching and assessment and has extensive teacher support throughout. Busy Ant Maths offers as much vigour, depth, conceptual understanding, effective pedagogical methodologies and engaging pupil materials as anything else I have seen.

One quick glance at the teacher's guides and I already feel buoyed. These colossal ring-bound tomes are proper teacher manuals – they're meaty, informative and uber-supportive. They are the core of the course and contain medium-term plans as well as short-term ones made up of getting-started activities, teaching and learning units, resource sheets and answers.

The getting-started activities are ideal warm-ups for the first five-to-10-minutes of a lesson and are suitable for whole-class work. They cover the domain, objective, classroom organisation, resources needed, what to do, and variations.

The teaching and learning units follow next, and it's here you can see just what you are getting. The lessons have all been very carefully written and crafted by teachers, with an overview to each of the 12 units. Units are separated into three weeks, making planning absolutely clear and coherent. There are four lesson plans and a bank of learning activities per week, and these follow the typical bullet-pointed formula of what to do and what to say, which some might feel is too prescriptive, but most will find reassuring and helpful.

Everything is broken down into clear steps to support achievement of the lesson objectives and facilitate interaction. Icons are provided that act as signposts for key areas, such as where you might access a digital resource, or where opportunities for pupil talk should be explored and exploited. Pupil practice and consolidation is differentiated at three levels



and is made up of plenty of practical activities and written exercises. Common errors and misconceptions are included where appropriate to highlight how barriers can be overcome. My only criticism of the guides is that because the pages are going to get well-thumbed, they really could have been laminated or made out of stronger paper.

Obviously, the whole-school programme comes loaded with other resources. The assessment guide very sensibly provides support in both assessment for learning and assessment of learning. These authoritative guides are made up of tasks and resources, exercises, end-of-unit tests, self-assessments and record-keeping formats. They offer admirable assistance in diagnosing pupil readiness, provide short-term on-going assessment, review and record formative assessment, and show individual mastery of concepts against national standards. Test packs are also available, which are written in a SATs style and contain three papers along with teacher guidance and a mark scheme.

Progress guides offer excellent week-by-week support and extension activities that feed admirably into the lesson plans. Then there are stretch and challenge books that cater for children who are exceeding age-related expectations. These are unique resources in that they contain 36 photocopiable newspaper-style issues packed with problem-solving activities and maths challenges along with teacher notes and guidance.

Colourful pupil books provide children with plenty of activities to help them build and develop their skills and there are homework guides similarly bulging with

some superb activities for extending learning beyond the classroom.

Through the use of all this you will find Collins Connect, an innovative online learning platform where you can access even more resources: teaching and assessment materials galore, class records, games and tools and teacher support. I particularly love the editable parent newsletter for each unit, which offers much-needed information and advice for busy parents who want to help their children. The games and tools section offers a variety of activities and hopefully Collins will include more songs as these are always underused in maths teaching.

## Verdict: A master class in maths

**Collins Busy Ants Maths is one of the best whole-school programmes available for making real progress in your maths provision and helping children develop mathematical mastery and fluency. Visiting the website will reveal plenty more resources you will find useful, including Fluency in Number Facts – a systematic approach to the development of mental and written calculations.**

**This engaging, accessible and powerful programme offers rich and deep learning experiences with a real focus on improving understanding, enjoyment and attainment in maths. If it's maths mastery we are all striving for then Busy Ants can help, and at very cost-effective prices too.**