

# Schofield & Sims First Mental Arithmetic

## Teacher's notes

### Administering the Entry tests

Two **First Mental Arithmetic** Entry tests are provided:

- Entry test A covers **First Mental Arithmetic 1 to 3**
- Entry test B covers **First Mental Arithmetic 4 to 6**.

Both Entry tests are designed to help you to identify the **First Mental Arithmetic** book that best suits each child. **First Mental Arithmetic** is designed to consolidate children's understanding of concepts already taught. In normal circumstances, therefore, you are unlikely to use the Entry tests to identify children who should be working on a higher level book than their peers.

However, the Entry tests are extremely useful for administering to children in Key Stages 1 and 2 who are struggling with maths: use them to identify the level at which a child is working. The Entry tests will also be helpful if a new child joins your class during the year. Again, you can use one or both of the tests to help you select the most appropriate **First Mental Arithmetic** book for the child. Choose Entry test A or B using your knowledge of the child's work in the topic areas listed on the Contents pages of the individual books.

**Please note:** It may help children's concentration if they tackle part of an Entry test on one day, and the remainder on another day. Use your judgement to decide what is most appropriate for the child or children you wish to test and explain this at the start of the test session.

Before administering the Entry test of your choice, ensure that you have available for each child:

- a sharp pencil
- a photocopy of the relevant test
- some rough paper for workings out.

Explain to the child or the class the following points:

- the purpose of the test is to make sure that the maths work they do on a daily basis is at a suitable level – not too easy or too difficult for them
- only the individual and the teacher will know the results of the test
- the test is not timed
- the questions are arranged to become increasingly difficult as they work through the test
- there will come a point where they are unable to answer any more questions
- they should try to do their best.

You may then distribute the Entry tests and tell the children to start.

## Marking the Entry tests

Use the Entry test marking keys to mark the tests. One mark is given for each correct answer. Where a question has two parts, give half a mark for each part. On the child's test sheet write the mark for each question in the grey box adjoined to the answer box. Total the marks given in each column then add the column marks to find the total score.

It may be that you are administering a test to one child only. If, however, you are using the test with a whole class, note the results on a photocopy of the Group record sheet.

The table below provides best fit suggestions as follows:

**Entry tests A and B: score interpretation table**

Entry test	Entry test total score	Schofield & Sims First Mental Arithmetic book
Entry test A	0–15	Book 1 (blue)
	16–30	Book 2 (light green)
	31–45	Book 3 (orange)
Entry test B	0–15	Book 4 (purple)
	16–30	Book 5 (pink)
	31–45	Book 6 (turquoise)

Use this table, which also appears at the bottom of the Group record sheet, to choose the most appropriate book for each child.

If a child's score on Entry test B is very low (for example, 0–10), consider administering Entry test A to check whether one of Books 1 to 3 might provide a better fit. When a child consistently demonstrates that he or she can achieve high scores on Book 6, consider whether he or she should move to **Schofield & Sims Mental Arithmetic Introductory Book**. This book is most likely to be suitable for pupils beginning Key Stage 2.

## The daily First Mental Arithmetic sessions

Try to make a time each day when the children work through part of a session. Some schools find that 20 to 30 minutes' work is best and some schools ask the children to start this as they come into the classroom at the beginning of the day. When you first introduce the books, tell the children that:

- they should do their best to answer the questions
- they can refer to you or to another adult if they need some guidance
- they can talk to a friend to discuss any question that they find difficult
- if a question is causing difficulty they can miss it out.

## Group marking sessions

Many teachers organise weekly marking sessions in which all the sessions completed during the week are marked together, as follows:

- as you prepare for the session, make sure that you have with you – for quick reference – the book of answers that accompanies the **First Mental Arithmetic** book which you will be working through in the lesson
- ask the children to open their **First Mental Arithmetic** books at the appropriate place and to sit facing the board or whiteboard
- work through the three parts of the test, reading out each question in turn to ensure that everyone is focused and understands the vocabulary
- invite one child to answer the question and to explain how he or she worked out the answer
- clearly explain to the children whether this answer is correct or not, and tell the children to mark their own answers accordingly
- other children may have used a different method to the one demonstrated: discuss which method is the most efficient and why
- if a child gives the wrong answer, model the correct answer on the board or whiteboard.

If a child regularly, over five or six weeks, scores nearly full marks you should consider moving him or her to the next book in the series – provided that this covers concepts already learned.