Working Walls That Work: Building a Year 2 Maths Wall Pupils Actually Use

A friendly guide to 'working walls' in Year 2 maths classrooms—interactive displays that help children solve problems and build confidence.

What is a maths working wall?

In many Year 2 classrooms (children aged 6 to 7), you might hear your child mention a 'working wall'. Unlike a traditional display that stays the same all term, a working wall is a living space. It is a dedicated area of the classroom that changes weekly to match what the children are learning in maths. Instead of being purely decorative, it is designed as a tool for the children to use while they work. It is usually placed at the children's height so they can easily see and refer to it without needing an adult's help.

How does it work in the classroom?

The wall focuses on the current topic. It often includes 'worked examples'—problems that have already been solved to show the steps to take—and visual models. These might include 'ten frames' (grids of ten squares used to help children see numbers) or 'bar models' (rectangles used to represent parts of a whole). It also features key vocabulary, helping children learn the right words for their maths. Because it is updated regularly, the wall stays relevant and avoids becoming cluttered, ensuring the children don't feel overwhelmed by too much information.

What this means for your child

The goal of a working wall is to encourage independence. When your child is working on a task and forgets a step or a word, they can look at the wall for a hint. This builds their confidence and teaches them how to find answers for themselves. For children with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) or those learning English as an additional language, these visual prompts are especially helpful as they provide a constant, clear reference point that doesn't rely solely on spoken instructions from the teacher.

Simple ways to support at home

You don't need to create a wall at home, but you can mirror the 'visual' approach in playful, everyday ways. When cooking or tidying, you could draw a quick sketch or use objects like pasta pieces to show a maths problem, similar to the models they see at school. If your child mentions a specific tool they used on the wall, such as a ten frame, you could ask them to explain how it works. Keep it light and low-pressure; the aim is simply to make maths feel like a natural part of their world.

Common questions

Parents often ask if these walls replace traditional learning. They don't; they support it by making the teacher's lessons visible. You might also wonder if every school uses them. While many do, the way a wall is set up varies by school and individual teacher. If you would like to know more about the specific models your child is using in their classroom, your child's teacher will be happy to show you or explain the current focus of their maths wall.

Sources

- Department for Education, National Curriculum in England: Mathematics programmes of study
- GOV.UK, Special educational needs in England