

The Sentinel

University offers students sum help

By [KathieMcInnes](#) | Posted: April 25, 2016



UNIVERSITY students are helping to teach maths to school pupils as part of the county's first maths fellowship scheme. Six maths undergraduates from Keele University have been spending a day a week offering coaching and one-to-one support to teenagers at The King's CE School, in Kidsgrove.

Now the project is proving so successful that Keele is looking to build the model into its maths degree courses so students can get a taste of teaching as a career. The King's introduced the extra maths sessions to help pupils in the run-up to this summer's GCSE exams. So far, around 30 youngsters have benefited and many have already improved their target grades.

Will Wilson, director of school improvement and maths, said: "It's about raising pupils' aspirations and self-belief. We've also got an enrichment programme, with more students taking part in maths competitions." The maths fellows work alongside school staff to plan the hour-long sessions.

Ellie Brown, who is taking a degree in maths and physics at Keele, wanted to get involved as she is thinking about training to become a teacher. The 20-year-old, who lives on the Keele campus, said: "It's giving me that experience. It's been a real eye-opener. The pupils did a maths paper so we got a broad idea of where they had difficulties and needed the extra help. Sometimes, when a pupil doesn't understand something, they are too scared to ask a teacher. But they will talk to us about it."

Alex Goldsmith, one of the other maths fellows, has also been keen to try out teaching. The 19-year-old maths degree student said: "I wanted to pass on my passion for maths.

"Maths operates on so many levels. And the higher level you study it at, the more careers that are open to you."

Across Staffordshire, many schools are finding it hard to fill vacancies for maths teachers as there is a national shortage of specialists. Alex believes more maths graduates would consider teaching if they had the chance to work with a school as part of their degree programme.

"Jobs in the financial sector can pay phenomenal money, but teaching is a very rewarding career," he added.

King's pupil Bethany Hutton has gained much more confidence in maths through the weekly coaching sessions. The 16-year-old, from Kidsgrove, said: "I really struggled with maths before. Now I'm finding my grades are getting better. It's helped a lot."

Each session is tailored to a pupil's individual needs and can range from brushing up on algebra through to exploring probability. Normal maths lessons have also been revamped at the school so they are much more interactive. One recent activity even saw pupils use the 'speed dating' concept to show off their quick-fire maths skills.