



Students play chess at a Tres Cantos state school. Photo: Pedro Armestre / AFP

Spanish schools have introduced chess class to boost maths learning

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An hour of chess a week can improve a pupil's performance in maths by 30 percent, as schools across Spain are finding out.

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Eleven-year-old Alvaro Pineda has played chess at home since he was five. Now he plays it in the classroom too. In an effort to boost their pupils' low maths and reading marks, more and more Spanish schools are holding chess clubs - and some could even make it a compulsory class.

"It really increases your mental capacity. I have improved a lot," said Alvaro, at a chess group in his school north of Madrid.

"You have to really focus on the board and on where all the pieces are, and think lots of moves ahead," which helps strengthen the memory, he added.

Spain's parliament this year [unanimously adopted a law allowing regional governments to introduce chess](#) as a compulsory or optional subject in schools.

The law won the rare unanimous backing of lawmakers from rival parties.

The opposition Socialist Party deputy who drafted it, Pablo Martin Pere, cited studies showing that an hour of chess a week could boost pupils' performance in maths by 30 percent.

Education studies by the OECD economic grouping have regularly shown that Spanish pupils lag behind their peers in other developed countries in maths and reading.

School masters

The class Alvaro goes to, in the Aldebaran School in the Madrid suburb of Tres Cantos, is run by masters from the local chess club.



