

## Paradigm Shifts in Mathematics

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School students might be forgiven for thinking that once mathematical ideas are fixed, they are fixed forever. Mathematics is right or wrong. Yet, mathematicians know that this is not the whole story. In 1962 Thomas Kuhn introduced the term ‘paradigm shift’ to the philosophy of science. The purpose of this paper is to identify paradigm shifts that have occurred in mathematics, and discuss their relevance to school mathematics. These ideas can promote awareness that mathematics adapts to different cultural-historical contexts. In the words of the Australian Curriculum, this will assist students, “to develop an understanding of the relationship between the ‘why’ and the ‘how’ of mathematics”.