Education Development Trust

National Tutoring Programme
School-led tutoring and academic mentoring

Final Evaluation Report 2021-24

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) supported schools by providing funding to spend on academic support delivered by trained and experienced tutors and mentors. Education Development Trust (EDT) delivered the National Tutoring Programme Training Course, which was an evidence-based, flexible, and accessible online course focusing on best practice in tutoring. The training was offered to all school staff who were nominated as school-led tutors by their school leaders and to those who were recruited by Cognition Education (one of the other delivery partners working on the NTP) as academic mentors.

This report provides EDT's interpretations of the key findings published in ImpactEd's Final Evaluation Report, providing a holistic view of the impact of the NTP from 2021 to 2024. The key research questions were:

» How was school-led tutoring and academic mentoring implemented in schools, and to what extent was this in line with evidence-informed best practice?

» What change was experienced by pupils as a result of tutoring?

» What change was experienced by tutors, teachers and schools as a result of tutoring?

The full report, including methodology, process and implementation, key findings, and recommendations, can be found here. Find out more about ImpactEd here.

Tutoring sessions had a positive impact on pupil attainment in English and maths at both primary and secondary level.

The proportion of primary pupils working at or above expected standard increased:

Maths

Before tutoring sessions: 21%

After tutoring sessions: 63%

English

Before tutoring sessions: 6%

After tutoring sessions: 49%

IMPACT

Attainment – closing the gap: Tutoring had a positive impact on attainment, particularly for pupils with pupil premium eligibility. For example, the average attainment in maths increased more for secondary pupils with pupil premium eligibility in the participating group compared to their comparison group counterparts; receiving tutoring helped to protect secondary pupils with pupil premium eligibility from getting lower grades at endline assessment, and helped pupils without pupil premium eligibility to improve their GCSE English grades; and tutoring helped to close the attainment gap between participating pupils and their peers for all primary pupils in English and maths.

Attendance: Tutoring sessions positively impacted attendance, with teachers noting how increased confidence, as a result of tutoring, had led to fewer absences in school. Although the average pupil attendance decreased, which is in line with national trends, pupils who received tutoring had higher attendance rates than their comparison groups.

Progress: Tutoring sessions had a positive impact on pupil attainment in English and maths at both primary and secondary level. For example, the proportion of primary pupils working at or above expected standard increased from 21% at baseline to 63% at endline in maths, and from 6% to 49% in English. Participating secondary pupils' attainment increased by 1.2% in maths and 2.3% in English during the period of the tutoring intervention.

Self-efficacy and confidence: Tutoring had a positive impact on pupils' academic confidence, asking questions, seeking clarification, and understanding they could make mistakes. For example, participating pupils saw an increase of 2.5% in the average self-efficacy score.

School engagement: Tutoring positively impacted school engagement. For example, the average school engagement score of pupils in the comparison group showed a decrease of 2.3%, in comparison to those participating in tutoring who saw only a marginal decrease of 1%.

Wider impacts: Professional development opportunities and job satisfaction were important outcomes for tutors taking part in the training.

The final report continues from previous years' successes, demonstrating the positive impact of school-led tutoring and academic mentoring for pupils' progress, attainment, and attendance, alongside socio-emotional benefits to pupil self-efficacy, confidence, and school engagement.

The report provides clear recommendations for school leaders to support the implementation of school-based tutoring and maximise outcomes for pupils, and for policy makers to support the development of future national initiatives.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS

Balance flexibility with encouragement of best practice: Schools all work within different contexts; therefore, the flexibility of the NTP enabled schools to create a programme of tutoring that would work for them, rather than following a 'one-size-fits-all' approach. However, this flexibility must be balanced with easy access to information about best practice, so that schools are able to make informed decisions to enable them to successfully embed tutoring within their own settings. Future similar programmes should ensure that both flexibility and support for schools to access information on evidenced based practice are considered.

Support the transition from TA to tutor: Utilising existing staff (such as TAs) can support schools to embed tutoring effectively by ensuring that staff resource is maximised, as well as benefitting from the existing relationships between staff and pupils. Existing staff can more easily target gaps in pupils' knowledge, as communication channels with the class teacher may exist already or can be readily established within existing school systems. However, schools should be supported to set up a strategic plan for utilising existing staff: communication channels between class teachers and tutors may not happen organically, and continuing professional development for TAs working as tutors must be considered to support their practice. Future similar programmes should therefore ensure that training is available for tutors and offer support to school staff who are responsible for tutoring in their school. This will ensure they can establish effective systems to support existing school staff to tutor with maximum efficacy.

Establish communities of practice: The funding provided to schools during the NTP allowed schools to try out different approaches to find what worked best in their setting. These approaches had varying degrees of success. Therefore, building on the recommendations to support schools in accessing best practice information, and to establish strategic plans for tutoring in their contexts, communities of practice should be established. These would be designed for school staff who are responsible for tutoring in their school, as well as for tutors themselves. EDT's training facilitated online forums for tutors to share their ideas and experiences, which proved to be popular; therefore, this model should be expanded further.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

Select tutors from existing staff: Evidence suggests that tutors with qualified teacher status, and those without, were equally effective in delivering positive outcomes for pupils. Utilising existing school staff can maximise staffing resource, as well as ensure pupils' learning gaps are addressed thanks to relationships between staff and pupils. It also increases ease of access to communication channels between class teacher and tutor.

Tailor group sizes to pupils' needs: Tutoring does not have to be one-to-one to have a positive impact. The research shows that small groups of up to four pupils were most effective, especially grouping pupils together of a similar ability. According to the research, one-to-one tutoring was more effective when a pupil had unique learning needs.

Keep sessions short, frequent and scheduled to suit the context: To have the biggest positive impact, tutoring should be additional to classroom learning, rather than replacing it. The research also found that shorter, more frequent sessions were more likely to maximise pupils' attention and maintain learning momentum. How to implement this effectively is context specific: some schools were able to run tuition outside of school hours, but some schools found attendance was low; other schools took pupils out of small chunks of lesson time, or alternated timetables so that a pupil was not missing the same lesson regularly. The report offers more details on what worked for schools in different contexts, so can be used to understand in more depth the different format and scheduling models.

Align tutoring with teaching and the curriculum: Schools should build tutoring into their teaching offer at school, rather than treat it as an add-on. Communication between tutors, teachers and the wider school is key to ensuring that tutoring content is aligned with the curriculum and therefore truly addressing pupils' learning gaps.

Engage pupils and parents: Tutoring should be presented as a positive opportunity, rather than being referred to as a 'catch-up' task to get buy-in from pupils and parents. Research also found that engaging with parents was key to getting pupils to attend sessions regularly: by sharing the objectives of tutoring with parents, keeping them informed of tutoring logistics and working with parents to overcome barriers to attendance or engagement, pupils were more likely to be engaged. Schools should therefore consider a parent and pupil engagement strategy to ensure buy-in.

For more recommendations, find a summary of last year's evaluation report here.