

Education Development Trust: School-Led Tutoring and Academic Mentoring

Final Evaluation Report: 2021 to 2024

October 2024



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Executive Summary

ImpactEd Evaluation conducted a mixed methods evaluation of tutoring delivered under the School-Led Tutoring and Academic Mentoring pillars of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) in academic years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24, focusing on how tutoring was implemented in schools and the impact it had on pupils and schools.

Implementation

How was School-Led Tutoring and Academic Mentoring implemented in schools and to what extent was this in line with evidence-informed best practice?

Training for tutors

- ▶ Education Development Trust (EDT) provided a **training course that prospective tutors and schools valued**. The online format made it accessible and participants found the system user-friendly. The training was considered by participants and senior leaders to be high-quality, equipping participants well to deliver tutoring in schools.
- ▶ **Participants strongly endorsed the training** with 95% saying they had learned useful content and 83% saying they had applied what they had learned when tutoring.

Implementation in schools

- ▶ The NTP model gave **flexibility to schools** allowing them to decide how tutoring would be conducted, and which pupils would receive it. **Schools considered carefully how to implement tutoring** and adopted a range of different approaches depending on their circumstances and priorities. School leaders were generally aware of evidence-based practice and were influenced by this in their decision making.
- ▶ More than half of NTP tutors were non-QTS and a **common approach taken by many schools was to recruit tutors from existing staff**, typically Teaching Assistants (TAs). The availability of these staff was one noted advantage, but school leaders also felt that staff who already supported pupils at the school had the relationships in place to work with pupils in a small group tutoring environment. The use of TAs by schools was supported by quantitative analysis that indicated tutor QTS status did not impact attainment outcomes.
- ▶ Schools generally took **great care to select suitable pupils to receive tutoring**. They usually considered a combination of factors including disadvantage (such as eligibility for Pupil Premium), pupils with identified learning gaps, pupils whose learning needs meant they would particularly benefit from tutoring (including pupils with SEND), and pupils who were likely to engage with tutoring.
- ▶ Schools usually **chose to focus tutoring on English and Maths** believing that tutoring was an opportunity to strengthen key areas of learning that would have benefits across the curriculum.

- ▶ Schools chose a range of different approaches for how tutoring was conducted. Senior leaders acknowledged the **importance of keeping the size of groups small** and 71% of pupils who received tutoring were in groups of three or four pupils. Quantitative analysis indicated the efficacy of small groups with higher levels of attainment improvement for groups up to four compared to larger groups. Most schools delivered a package of a defined number of tutoring sessions to individual pupils over a set period.
- ▶ Schools identified a number of factors that in their experience had enabled intended outcomes including:
 - **Effective communication between teachers and tutors** ensuring that tutoring and classroom learning was aligned.
 - **Encouraging pupils and parents to understand the benefits** of tutoring and getting buy-in to support engagement.

Pupil outcomes

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

Social and emotional skills

- ▶ The evaluation found evidence of a **positive relationship between receiving tutoring and pupils' self-efficacy**.
- ▶ There were signs that **tutoring may have acted as a protective factor for school engagement** by reducing the impact of negative trends.
- ▶ Tutors and teachers reported how the environment of small group tutoring had led to **pupils gaining in confidence** and this had been transferred to the pupils' learning in the classroom. School staff felt that the supportive environment of tutoring had made some pupils more confident and enthusiastic about their learning.

Attainment

- ▶ There was evidence of a **positive relationship between tutoring and attainment in primary schools**, where pupils receiving tutoring experienced notably higher levels of improvement than non-tutored pupils. Results were inconclusive for attainment of secondary school pupils.
- ▶ Qualitative research provided examples of progress that some pupils receiving tutoring had made. Tutors often highlighted how **the environment of tutoring sessions had supported learning that may not have occurred in the classroom**.

Attendance

- ▶ There was evidence of a **positive relationship between tutoring and attendance**.
- ▶ Across phases, pupils receiving tutoring observed higher attendance levels at baseline and endline than non-tutored pupils. In secondary, where attendance levels fell for both participating and comparison groups, the reduction was notably less for pupils receiving tutoring suggesting tutoring may have acted as a protective factor.

School outcomes

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

- ▶ Schools welcomed the opportunity to participate in School-Led Tutoring and Academic Mentoring through the NTP and identified a range of outcomes associated with their involvement.
- ▶ Most importantly, the funding provided by the NTP allowed schools the opportunity to **develop the quality of their teaching offer**. Most participating schools had done little tutoring prior to the NTP and the programme allowed schools to develop tutoring alongside classroom teaching. For many schools, this development prompted a rethink of the learning offer, leading to the creation of a more integrated package that included small group support.
- ▶ The focus of the NTP on disadvantaged pupils also encouraged schools to improve their support for these pupils. Schools often implemented tutoring as **part of a wider package of targeted support for disadvantaged pupils**.
- ▶ Sustainability of tutoring after the NTP was not a focus of this research but based on a relatively small amount of qualitative research, senior leaders generally thought it was unlikely their school would be able to find sufficient budget to sustain tutoring as a major initiative after the end of the NTP funding.

1. Introduction and methodology

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) provided primary and secondary schools with funding to spend on tutoring delivered by trained and experienced tutors and mentors. Between 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 the programme offered three routes to support tutoring in schools:

- ▶ School-Led Tutoring, where schools themselves recruited and employed tutors
- ▶ Academic Mentoring, where tutors were recruited by an external organisation and employed by the school
- ▶ Tuition Partners who provided tutors to deliver a package of tutoring purchased by the school.

Education Development Trust (EDT) delivered the National Tutoring Programme Training Course, which was an evidence-based, self-directed and accessible online course focusing on best practice in tutoring.

This training was offered to all school staff who were nominated as School-Led Tutors by their school leaders from the 2021 academic year onwards, and to those who were recruited as Academic Mentors from the 2022 academic year onwards (prior to this, Academic Mentors received training from previous providers).

As the different NTP routes were essentially different means of supplying tutors to schools and did not affect what tutors actually did in schools, tutors from all routes are referred to as 'tutors' in this report.

This final evaluation report presents evidence of outcomes for pupils and schools associated with tutoring delivered under the School-Led Tutoring and Academic Mentoring pillars of the NTP in academic years from 2021 to 2024. The report also presents findings on how tutoring was delivered in schools and factors that enabled and prevented pupils from getting the most out of tutoring.

Research questions

1. How was School-Led Tutoring and Academic Mentoring implemented in schools and to what extent was this in line with evidence-informed best practice?
2. What change was experienced by pupils as a result of tutoring?
3. What change was experienced by tutors, teachers and schools as a result of tutoring?

Evaluation design

The research followed a **mixed methods design** to collect data related to pupil and school outcomes, through engagement with a sample of schools delivering tutoring. Schools were

recruited by EDT, primarily through an invitation to senior leaders of schools who had registered for tutoring. Over the course of the evaluation, we sought to recruit samples of pupils, tutors and schools that were representative of the population engaging with NTP tutoring, based on data provided by EDT.

Four key data collection methods were used to inform this report which are outlined in further detail in the following sections:

- ▶ Details of how tutoring was implemented, collected from schools
- ▶ Data on attainment and attendance, before and after the tutoring, for pupils receiving tutoring and a group of control pupils
- ▶ Pre and post surveys of pupils receiving tutoring to measure changes in self-efficacy, motivation and school engagement
- ▶ Qualitative data through interviews with school leaders, as well as focus groups with tutors and teachers involved in tutoring

Data collection methods

Pupil survey of social and emotional skills: design, sample and analysis

Pre- and post-surveys were used to measure three outcomes for pupils using self-reported, academically validated scales. Due to the wide age range of pupils participating in the research project (including pupils in Year 1 through to pupils in Year 11), accompanying resources were provided by ImpactEd Evaluation to all schools, to support school staff in administering the surveys to pupils.

Data on pupils' socio-emotional outcomes from academic years 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 were included in the sample. Surveys were taken at two time-points: baseline, shortly before tutoring had started, and endline, shortly after tutoring had been completed.

Survey data was also collected from a cohort of 'comparison group' pupils, who were pupils with similar characteristics to the participating ones who did not receive tutoring. All pupils for whom any of the three socio-emotional measures were completed at baseline and endline, were included in the analysis.

The socio-emotional outcomes sample consisted of 725 participating pupils and 149 comparison group pupils.

Most pupils in the participating group were in primary school, with 62% of pupils in Key Stage 2 and 13% of pupils in Key Stage 1. Most secondary school pupils were in Key Stage 3 (19% of the sample) and the remainder (7%) were in Key Stage 4. For the comparison group, most pupils were in Key Stage 2 (43%) and Key Stage 3 (47%).

Average baseline and endline scores were presented for all participating pupils and percentage point change between the two time-points was calculated across the three socio-emotional outcomes (self-efficacy, motivation, school engagement). Pupils' scores were compared to the School Impact Platform benchmark average for the outcomes in years 2021-

24. This benchmark was derived from a national sample of over 100,000 pupils who had completed the surveys on ImpactEd Evaluation's School Impact Platform.

Analysis of sub-group variables was undertaken including primary school vs secondary school, gender, Pupil Premium eligibility, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) status and English as an Additional Language (EAL). Results of interest are included in the report.

Implementation data

At the end of each academic year, schools participating in the evaluation were asked to provide data related to tutoring implementation and pupil attainment and attendance through the School Impact Platform. Schools were asked to provide data in relation to implementation of tutoring, for each pupil who received School-Led Tutoring/Academic Mentoring. Data collected included: **start and end dates of tutoring, size of tutoring group, subject, number and length of tutoring sessions, the role of the tutor and whether the tutor had Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)**. Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and frequency distributions.

Attendance data

This section is based on data shared by schools in the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years. Schools were asked to provide attendance data for participating and comparison group pupils at baseline and endline, in the form of percentage of their attendance over the duration of the entire window. Pupils for whom both baseline and endline data was complete were included in the analysis.

The total attendance data sample consisted of 1,155 participating pupils and 669 comparison group pupils. The majority of pupils in both the participating and the comparison group were in Key Stage 2 (55% and 68% respectively). The remaining pupils were relatively evenly distributed between the other Key Stages.

Averages were produced for baseline and endline attendance scores of all participating pupils. Percentage change between pupils' attendance between baseline and endline was calculated. We then conducted sub-group comparisons (primary school vs secondary school, gender, Pupil Premium eligibility, SEND status, FSM status, EAL status) across outcomes' averages at baseline and endline within this sample and presented findings where there were interesting results. Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests were run to investigate the statistical significance of changes between pre- and post-intervention scores for pupils who received tutoring.

Attainment data

Attainment data was collected from schools in the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 academic years. Schools were asked to provide attainment data for all pupils who received tutoring and for the same number of pupils who did not receive the tutoring intervention (comparison

group pupils). Schools were asked to select pupils who were as similar as possible to the participating pupils based on: their year group, prior attainment and Pupil Premium eligibility.

Attainment data was divided into primary and secondary school attainment data, due to the differences in attainment measurement between the two. Schools were asked to estimate the pupil's attainment level before and after the period of receiving tutoring in the following formats:

- ▶ Primary schools: Not working at expected standard/Working at or above expected standard
- ▶ Secondary schools: GCSE grades 1-9

For primary school pupils, attainment data was only included where pupils received tutoring in reading, writing or mathematics (due to small sample sizes for other subjects). Where the pupil subject was 'reading', 'writing' or 'English' for primary school pupils, it was included in the analysis as 'English'. For secondary school pupils English and Maths were included in the analysis.

The attainment data sample consisted of 809 participating pupils and 560 comparison group pupils. Pupils in the participating and the comparison group were in similar Key Stages. The majority of pupils in both the participating and the comparison group, for whom attainment data was analysed, were in Key Stage 2. At secondary schools, 16% of the participating and 18% of pupils in the comparison group sample were in Key Stage 4.

For primary school attainment data, the percentage of pupils that switched from one of the two options in the dichotomous variable to the other was calculated per subcategory for the participating and comparison group pupils. The percentage of the two options ('Not working at expected standard' and 'Working at or above expected standard') at baseline and endline was also calculated for various subgroups. As the data was not normally distributed, Fisher's exact tests were calculated to explore the statistical significance of this change in the participating and the comparison group.

For secondary school attainment data, mean attainment scores per subcategory were calculated for the intervention and the control group as well as the mean percentage change between pre and post scores. Wilcoxon Signed Rank tests were used to test whether the differences observed were statistically significant in the participating and comparison group.

Average change in baseline and endline scores are presented for all participating pupils and statistical significance testing was conducted where appropriate. Where there were interesting trends, sub-group comparisons (primary school vs secondary school, gender, Pupil Premium eligibility, SEND status, FSM status, EAL status) were made within this sample.

Qualitative research

This final evaluation report presents findings from qualitative data collected between 2021 and 2024. **Qualitative research was undertaken with a total of 63 individuals at schools participating in the NTP.** Through focus groups and interviews this research engaged with 23 senior leaders, 38 tutors and two teachers. The qualitative data was analysed using a

deductive thematic approach with data coded to find common themes. In this report, only key headline findings from the qualitative analysis are included. Two case studies focusing on individual schools are presented in the report. Pseudonyms were used for the names of the schools depicted in case studies.

Limitations

- ▶ This research presents data collection from 36 schools which delivered tutoring in the 2021-24 period through the NTP. 87.4% of schools participated in the NTP in 2021-22, 73.8% in 2022-23 and 57.8% of schools from the start of the 2023-24 year to January 2024¹, and there are around 25,000 schools in England². The sample of NTP schools achieved for this evaluation was therefore very small and so findings should be treated with caution.
- ▶ Schools were asked to select 'comparison group' pupils who were as similar as possible to pupils who received the tutoring, based on key characteristics, namely: year group, prior attainment (e.g. in previous academic year or in national assessments) and Pupil Premium eligibility. However, it should be noted that the sample of 'comparison group' pupils may not be fully representative of the participating group, due to inaccuracies in schools selecting pupils manually and importantly due to schools being unable to select a matching group of pupils e.g. where all Pupil Premium eligible pupils were selected to receive the intervention, they would not be able to select similar pupils based on this factor.
- ▶ Social and emotional outcomes for pupils were reliant on self-reported surveys, although we used validated measures to minimise potential bias.
- ▶ Pupil surveys may not always reflect a 'true' baseline for pupils e.g. some pupils may have undertaken the initial survey after having received some tutoring sessions, due to the timelines of the evaluation. Although schools were asked to ensure that pupils completed the baseline surveys no later than two weeks into the tutoring intervention, we do not know the extent to which this was done.

¹ [National Tutoring Programme, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

² [Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2023/24 - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK \(explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/explore-education-statistics)

2.Implementation

Training

EDT delivered the NTP training course from 2021 to 2024. The course provided training aimed at equipping prospective tutors with skills needed to deliver high quality tutoring in schools. The online course covered core topics including 'Tutoring Implementation Best Practice', 'Creating Safe Spaces for Children', 'SEND and EAL: Putting Theory into Practice', 'Behaviour and Motivation' and 'EDI - Promoting Diversity'. The course also contained subject-specific and phase-specific content that enabled tutors to learn best practice methods tailored to their tutoring context. The training was mandatory for all non-QTS tutors and those that had not completed the training in a previous year. Other tutors were encouraged to complete the training to refresh their knowledge. From 2022/23 there were three basic training pathways: 'Non-QTS' (primary and secondary), 'QTS Early Careers' (primary and secondary) for newly qualified teachers and 'QTS Experienced' for experienced qualified teachers.

Between 2021 and 2024, a total of 20,461 training courses were delivered with a majority (56%) of courses taken in the 'Non-QTS' pathway (Figure 1). Among the two QTS pathways available from 2022/23, the majority of courses completed (86%) were in the 'QTS Experienced' pathway³.

	Non-QTS	QTS
Primary	8223	7076
Secondary	3197	1965
Total	11420	9041
Total (%)	56%	44%

Figure 1: Number of training courses completed by pathway route.

Subject specific training courses were provided from 2022/23. All primary courses covered literacy, numeracy and science, whereas secondary courses were either English, Maths, Science, Humanities or Modern Foreign Languages. Around three quarters (76%) of secondary courses were taken in English or Maths (Figure 2).

³ The number of QTS and non-QTS courses completed were fairly evenly matched in 2021/22. For subsequent years the large majority of courses completed (85%) were non-QTS.

Primary	Secondary				
Literacy, Numeracy and Science	English	Maths	Science	Humanities	Modern Foreign Languages
2718	563	431	160	103	43
100%	43%	33%	12%	8%	3%

Figure 2: Subject pathway training courses completed by phase.

Feedback on training

EDT conducted a variety of surveys to gain insight into the quality of training and how learning gained from the training had supported tutoring in schools. These surveys included a participant survey at the end of the training course, a further participant survey three months after the course and a senior leader survey. ImpactEd Evaluation conducted analysis on the survey data shared by EDT.

Overall feedback on the training was very positive. Participants reported the modules were of high quality and had given them useful learning that would support their tutoring.

Participants were broadly positive about the logistics of the training. The large majority of respondents reported it had been quick and easy to register (80%), the online environment had been easy to navigate (85%; Figure 3) and the training content had been coherent and logical (89%; Figure 4).

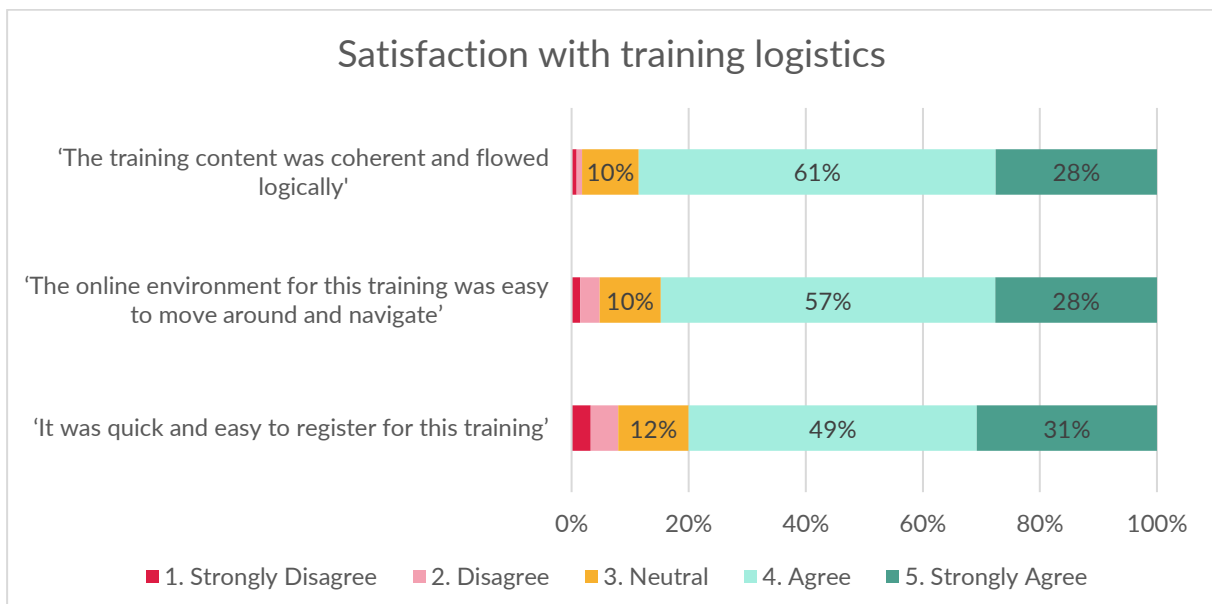


Figure 3: Post-training survey questions about training logistics; n=955

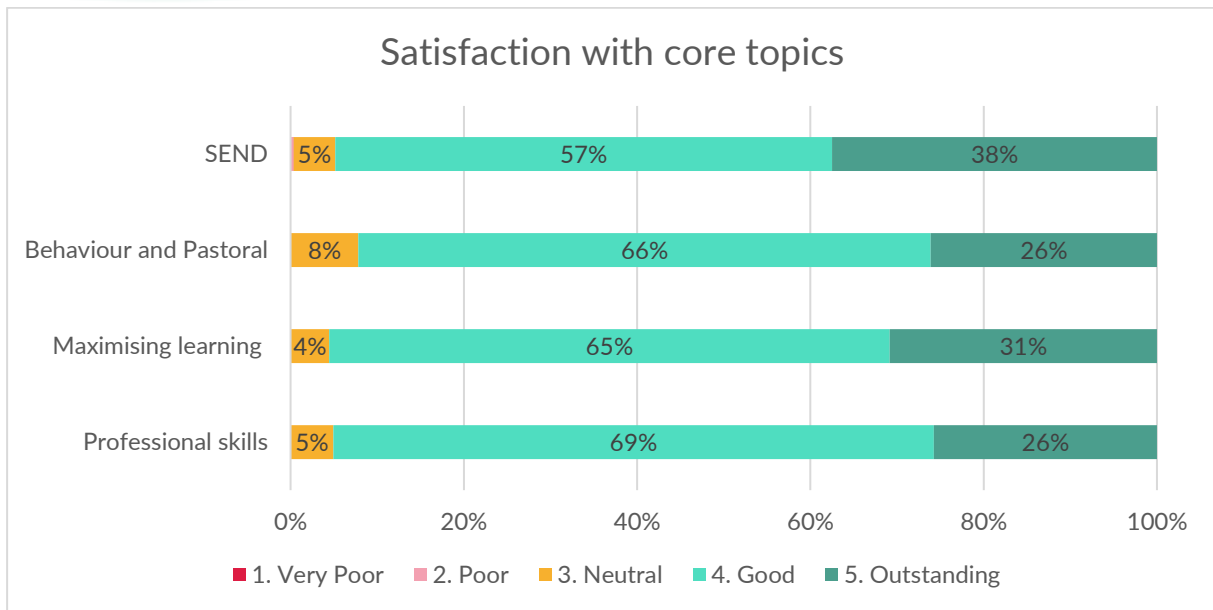


Figure 4: Post-training survey questions evaluating quality of core topics; n=272

Participants were similarly positive about the training modules they had completed, with between 85-93% of respondents giving the respective module a high rating ('good' or 'outstanding'; Figure 5).

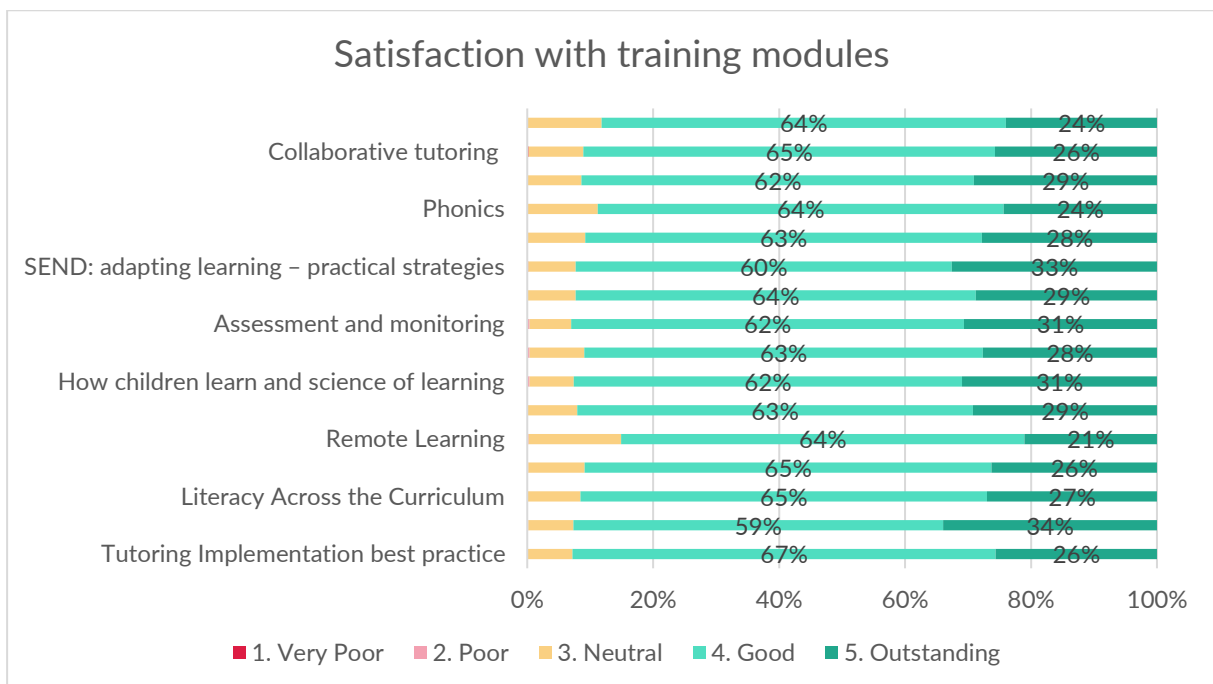


Figure 5: Post-training survey questions evaluating quality of optional training modules; n=570

Participants were also very positive about the overall efficacy of the training. Large majorities reported they had learned useful content from the training about delivering tutoring (95%), that they would apply what they had learned when tutoring pupils (95%) and that they would recommend the training to other teachers tutoring pupils (90%; Figure 6).

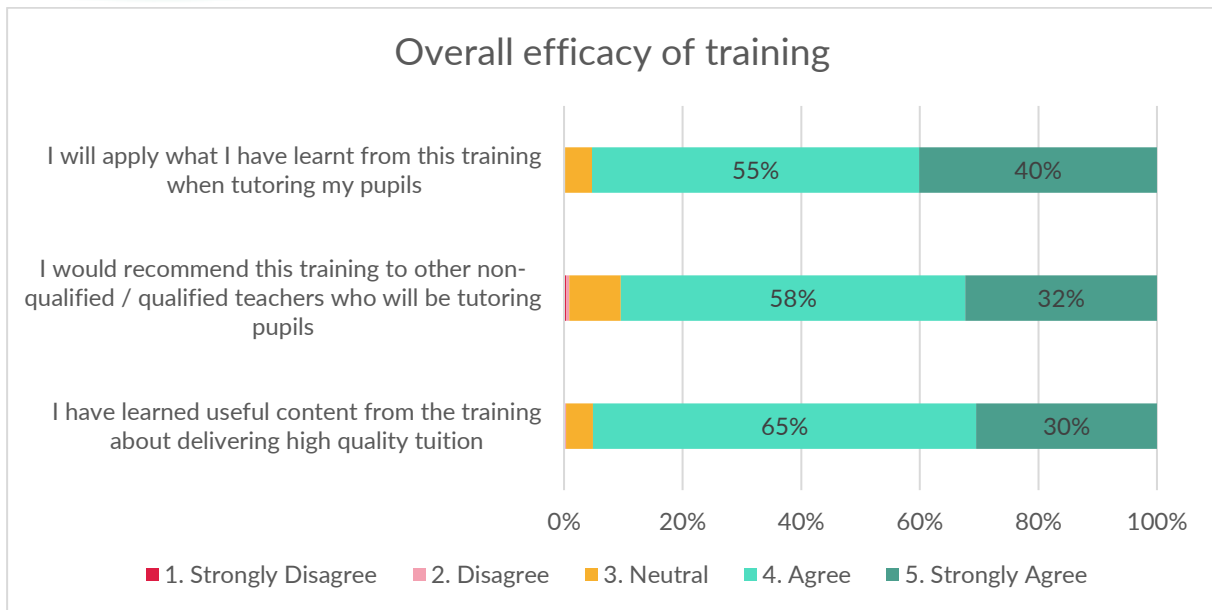


Figure 6: Post-training survey questions about overall efficacy of training; n=574

Participants were also positive about the efficacy of the training three months after completing it with 83% saying they had applied the learning from the training in their tutoring (Figure 7). At this stage with tutoring underway in schools, participants were also positive about the quality of the tutoring they were delivering and that their tutoring was having an impact; 83% said they were confident they were delivering high quality tuition and 83% reported that tuition was helping improve academic progress.

These findings give an indication that the prospective tutors had gained valuable learning from the training which was being applied to their tutoring practice in schools.

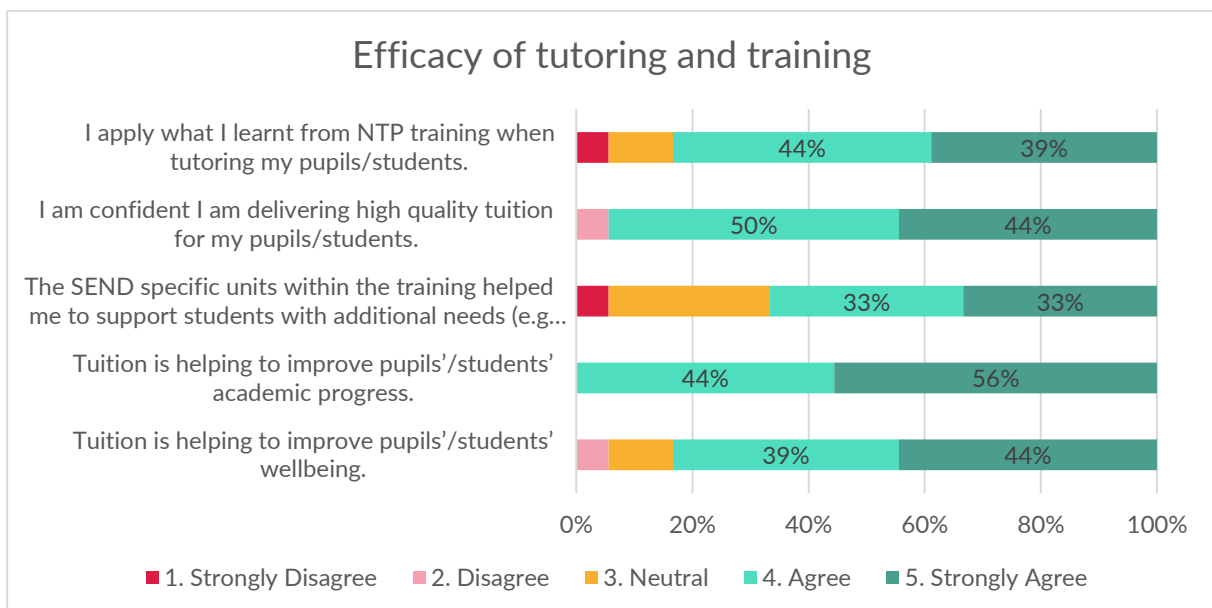


Figure 7: Three month participant post training survey questions about efficacy of training and tutoring; n=73

Both tutors and senior leaders gave suggestions on how the training could be improved. Tutors commented on how the online format could be made more engaging with fewer long passages of text and increased video or audio content. Some tutors also suggested that it would be useful to have access to a course tutor to ask questions when someone has difficulty understanding a topic.



Some of the areas were too text heavy and needed more visual representation to help fully understand what was being discussed.

Tutor, Primary School

Implementation in schools

An important task for senior leaders was setting up tutoring at their school. Schools needed to decide which pupils would receive tutoring, who would deliver tutoring and in what format e.g. group size, length of sessions and number of sessions. These were important strategic decisions that could have an impact on the efficacy of tutoring. Overall, the evaluation found that schools adopted a considered approach in implementing tutoring, using evidence to inform their practice but also using approaches that reflected their circumstances.

Key finding: Schools adopted a flexible approach to implementing tutoring but used evidence on effective tutoring strategies to inform their school's approach.

Many senior leaders were aware of the evidence and advice on effective tutoring practices such as tutor group sizes, duration and number of sessions. Senior leaders were mindful of these factors when they implemented their tutoring strategies, but they also reviewed their approach if the needs of pupils required it, particularly as experience of the programme progressed.

Schools welcomed the flexibility of the two NTP tutoring pillars of interest to this report: School-Led Tutoring where the school would recruit and employ the tutor and Academic Mentoring where the tutor was externally recruited and then assigned to a school. Schools were particularly attracted to the School-Led Tutoring route which allowed them to employ staff already working at the school and therefore familiar with pupils. Schools offering School-Led Tutoring generally favoured using existing staff and used staff with QTS (e.g. teachers) and without (e.g. Teaching Assistants) as tutors. Schools often felt that Teaching Assistants (TAs) and particularly Higher-Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) were sufficiently experienced to deliver small group tutoring while they also had the advantage of already being familiar with the pupils. Quantitative data showed that 53% of tutors did not have QTS compared to 47% who did. The use of TAs and HLTAs by schools was supported by quantitative analysis that indicated tutor QTS status did not impact attainment outcomes.

Other differences were present, for example the decision to have tutors within the main classroom or working in a separate space, and whether sessions were held during the school day or before or after school. There were many similarities in the factors that school staff

reported enabled positive outcomes for tutoring, for example effective communication between class teachers and tutors and careful selection of tutees. Similarities also existed in the challenges that limited the take up and impact of tutoring, for example the level of parental engagement, and pupil attendance at school.

Pupil selection

Schools generally took great care to select suitable pupils to receive tutoring. Often a combination of factors was taken into consideration including the following:

- ▶ Disadvantage e.g. Pupil Premium status
- ▶ Pupils with identified learning gaps
- ▶ Pupils whose learning needs meant that they would particularly benefit from the close attention provided by tutoring e.g. SEND pupils
- ▶ Pupils likely to engage with tutoring.

Schools would generally use data to identify pupils who were experiencing learning gaps. Reviews of attainment data and progress reports would help identify these pupils and identify the areas of learning tutoring could address. Staff would also use their personal knowledge of pupils to determine whether a pupil was likely to engage with tutoring.

All schools included pupils eligible for Pupil Premium in their tutoring strategies. Senior leaders, class teachers and tutors also identified pupils not eligible for Pupil Premium who would benefit from participation in tutoring, for example pupils with SEND and students who had other learning needs that required small group or one-to-one support. In their planning, educators also considered other factors, for example if a pupil was already receiving an additional intervention, or whether limited parental engagement would result in poor student attendance.

“... we have an unofficial vulnerable children's list as well [...] we do try and mix it where there's other children if it's appropriate for them to be involved, certain pupil premium children, some SEND pupils [...] some pupils where English is in additional language”

Senior Leader, Primary School

“... there's some children that Covid just wiped out their confidence, their social ability. So actually being able to interact with an adult and build up their confidence in a small group, or one-to-one basis, is key”

Senior Leader, Primary School

Group size

Senior leaders were aware of key considerations in their implementation of effective tutoring. They discussed how they aimed to limit group sizes, with the majority of tutors supporting

between three and six pupils in each session. There were a number of examples where one-to-one tutoring was in place, primarily with pupils who had SEND or where students experienced emotional or behavioural challenges. There were also examples of schools increasing tutor group sizes as the academic year progressed.

“... ideally it's one to three and that's what we have, most of the time. Having said that, particularly this time of year, Year 11 [...] pupils [...] will self-refer. They will say to their teacher 'we've heard about the Academic Mentors, I feel I need a bit of help with this because I'm really not understanding it' [...] therefore we can have up to six students”

Tutor, Secondary school

“... we did have our pupil premium students at first and then we were saying to them 'if there is anyone that you think would want to come along then they're welcome too' [...] I didn't tutor necessarily all of them, they just enjoyed having that space to work in [...] knowing that it's a really safe environment that they can ask questions”

Tutor, Secondary School

These findings regarding group size were corroborated by the quantitative data. A majority of pupils were tutored in groups of 3 pupils (60%), followed by 6 pupils (16%) and 4 pupils (11%; Figure 9). This pattern was broadly similar across primary and secondary phases.

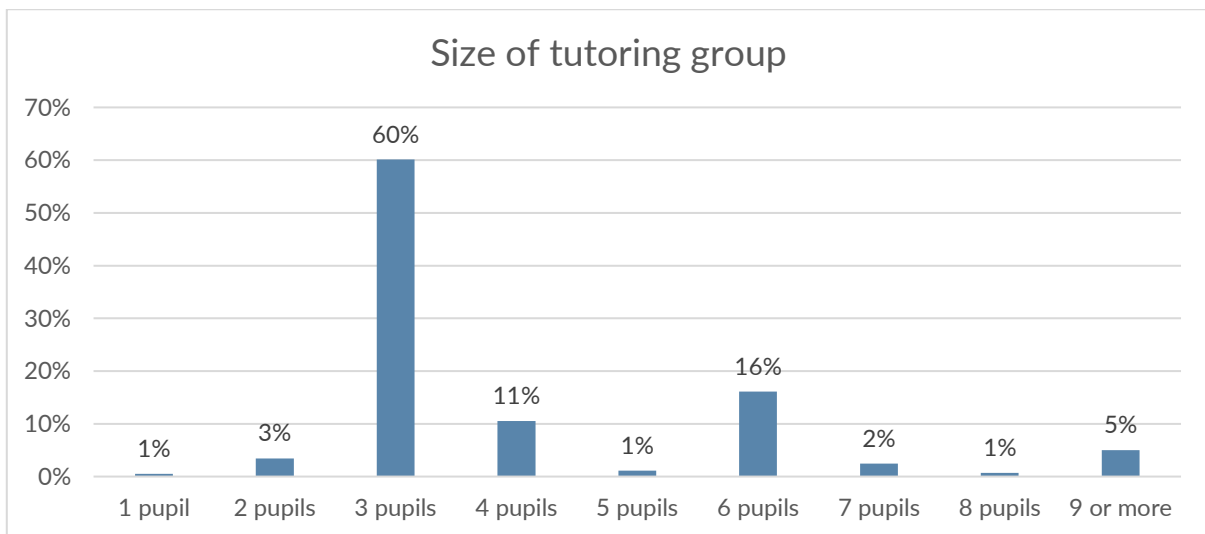


Figure 9: Proportion of different size tutoring groups; n=1089

Quantitative analysis was conducted to investigate the impact of the size of tutoring groups on pupil attainment. Analysis found higher improvement for groups up to four compared to larger groups, which was a statistically significant difference.

Duration and length of tutoring sessions

The quantitative data showed that the majority of pupils (52%) received between 11 and 20 tutoring sessions (Figure 10). About a quarter of pupils (28%) received 21-30 tutoring

sessions, 10% received 10 or less tutoring sessions and 10% received more than 31 tutoring sessions. Shorter packages of tutoring (20 sessions or less) were more common for primary schools than for secondary schools.

Qualitative research showed some variation in the duration of the blocks of tutoring. Many schools adopted a strict format with groups lasting a term or half term with new pupils starting at each interval. Where tutoring was seen as particularly beneficial some groups were run for the full academic year. Some schools adopted a more flexible approach with tutoring continuing beyond the regular package for pupils where learning gaps were still evident.

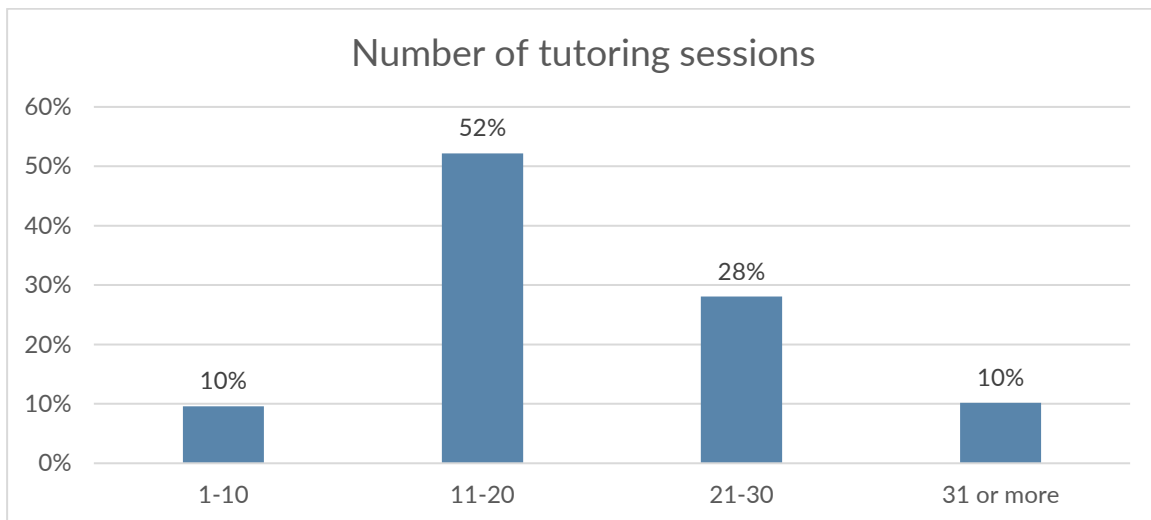


Figure 10: Number of tutoring sessions attended by pupils receiving tutoring; n=1086

Quantitative data showed that the most common length of tutoring sessions was an hour, which was the case for 61% of pupils, with almost all other pupils receiving shorter sessions than this down to a minimum of 10 minutes (Figure 11). For primary schools there were more longer sessions and for secondary schools more shorter sessions.

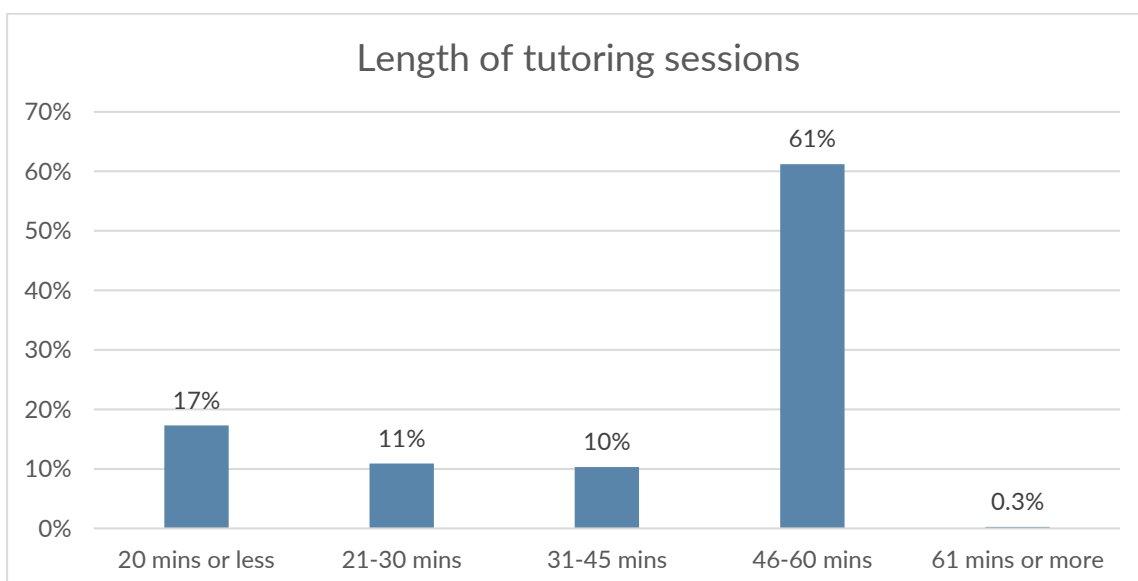


Figure 11: Reported length of tutoring sessions; n=1080

Timing of sessions

There were mixed views on the timing of sessions, with some senior leaders scheduling tutoring before and after school, and others limiting the tutoring to within the school day. A minority of schools offered tutoring during and outside school hours. Some school leaders were restricted as to when they could offer tutoring due to a lack of capacity during the school day or because a school's rural location meant pupils were bused in and out, which allowed for no flexibility on timing. For many school leaders there were clear reasons for their decision to provide tutoring outside school hours, often because they did not want to take pupils out of lessons. Other senior leaders expressed concern about attendance, if tutoring was not held within the school day:

“...the ones that we wanted to engage - and those ones will not in any way, shape or form engage with tutoring if it's outside of the school hours. And that's been our biggest problem, you're taking children out of lessons to catch up, to then slot them back into lessons that they then need to catch up. It's frustrating [...] to try and deliver that [...] we rota the children round [...] so it's not always the same lesson”

Senior Leader, Primary School

Other schools chose to have tutors within the main classroom and therefore tutoring took place within timetabled lessons:

“... as a school, [we are] big believers of pupils learning best and making the best progress when they're actually in their lessons day in, day out. And they're getting that same type of curriculum that everyone else does ... for example we don't want to take them out their English lesson because they're missing the expertise of the English teacher”

Senior Leader, Middle School

Subjects covered

Most schools used tutors to teach core subjects, English and Maths, with 86% of pupils receiving tutoring in these two subjects. A small proportion of tutoring was delivered in additional subjects; Science in primary and Science, Humanities and Modern Foreign Languages in secondary.

This focus on English and Maths was related to a widely held perception that tutoring was an opportunity to strengthen key areas of learning that would have benefits across the curriculum. Senior leaders thought that tutoring could be used to strengthen key areas that would provide a foundation for wider learning.

“... we looked at Maths [as] we thought we could get a few quick gains in areas of the curriculum that the kids had missed, so we plugged some gaps in Maths for the first year. It quickly turned into a writing focus after the first year, so they’d lost two years, so we just focused solely on writing”

Senior Leader, Primary School

Tutors

One feature of the NTP that was welcomed by schools was the freedom to recruit their own tutors. The School-Led Tutoring NTP route allowed schools to do this and was the preferred route for most schools⁴. Schools used this route to recruit tutors themselves, often choosing TAs or teachers already working at the school. A small number of schools chose the alternative of using Academic Mentors, where an external organisation recruited a tutor for the school who then completed their training with EDT.

Schools that used the School-Led Tutoring route spoke favourably of the advantages of using staff from within their school to deliver tutoring. These staff would be familiar with specific resources used at the school e.g. curricula and Maths schemes. But what was viewed as most important was the pre-existing relationships staff had with pupils. Staff that already worked with the pupils, it was widely believed, would have a relationship that would facilitate effective tutoring. As one senior leader put it:

“... we always knew that School-Led Tutoring for us was going to be the best, we need adults that can work with our children from the moment they meet them - or already have those relationships [...] we've got some kids that already had major gaps and then it was made even more stark by the lockdowns that happened”

Senior Leader, Primary School

With many schools choosing to use non-QTS staff to delivery tutoring, e.g. Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Higher-Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs), we conducted quantitative analysis to investigate the impact of tutor QTS status on pupil attainment. Analysis found no significant difference between tutors with QTS and tutors without.

Factors that enabled intended outcomes

Supportive small group environment

Schools reported that the small group supportive environment offered by tutoring was particularly beneficial to pupils who found learning in the mainstream classroom challenging. This was particularly the case for pupils with SEND and those with anxiety or behavioural

⁴ 80% of NTP courses started in 2021/22 used the school-led route and this pattern continued for the duration of the programme; <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/national-tutoring-programme/2021-22>.

challenges. These pupils often responded well when tutoring sessions were held in a dedicated space away from distractions and the tutor's style was more relaxed.

Tutors also found that pupils often developed their academic confidence in the small group environment of tutoring. Teachers reported that pupils who normally would not ask questions in the classroom did so in tutoring sessions.

Communication between teachers and tutors

Teachers and tutors highlighted the importance of good communication so that tutoring could be aligned to classroom teaching. Tutors felt that it was important for them to have an understanding of the pupil's progress in the subject so that sessions could be crafted to compliment classroom learning and address particular weaknesses. Conversely, it was important for teachers to get regular updates on the progress made by pupils in tutoring sessions. As one tutor said:

“ ... having some discussion so that whoever the tutor is, they know the starting points, I think that needs to be in place [...] knowing your children and knowing what they need to do, I think it's really beneficial because the difference you can make when you're only working with a small group of children is massive”

Tutor, Primary School

School staff welcomed it when tutors were proactive about gaining this pupil information, as a senior leader explained:

“ She [tutor] is very good at having those conversations with the class teachers. She also helps mark any assessments and do data analysis [...] So she knows exactly where all of our children are at [...]”

Senior Leader, Primary School

Good communication between tutors and class teachers was also reassuring for teachers whose pupils were being taken out of lessons. As one senior leader explained, regular updates from tutors helped overcome teachers' resistance to allowing pupils to be taken out of lessons:

“ ... the communication with the teachers - what's happening, why we're doing it [...] That's been one of the key factors in getting that staff buy-in because they're willing to let the children go to these groups [...] they're seeing the impact [...] 'this is what Jimmy has done; this is the progress that he's made; these are the things that you can consolidate within the classroom”

Senior Leader, Primary School

Talking to pupils about tutoring aims

Getting pupils to engage with tutoring was considered a crucial factor. Schools highlighted that an effective way of achieving this was by explaining the aims of the tutoring sessions planned. Teachers described how it was helpful to present tutoring to pupils as an opportunity to advance learning not as a remedial task to address deficits. It was also useful to highlight how tutoring sessions were different from classroom learning: more relaxed and a small group format. When presented in these positive terms, pupils often warmed to the opportunity to try something different.

“And I think, actually, the students in some ways realising why this was valuable to them was really important, and where that was explained clearly they engaged better with what they were doing”

Senior Leader, Secondary School

“I say to them that ‘this is a time for you to really ask questions and if there's anything that you don't know or are not sure on, we can work together to figure that out”

Tutor, Secondary School

Factors that impeded intended outcomes

Pupil attendance

A number of schools had an ongoing challenge with low levels of pupil attendance in tutoring sessions. Where low attendance was a known issue for a pupil, this often influenced pupil selection for tutoring. It also affected whether pupils were retained in tutoring groups despite having an identified need. Overall, school staff reported that attendance was a major barrier for tutoring that negatively affected its impact for certain pupils.

“I think the biggest thing for us - and this is pre-Covid, this is post-Covid, this is while Covid was happening - it's attendance of the children ... attendance is an issue for us ongoing, we've worked hard on it, but it still is the case”

Senior Leader, Primary School

“... we've had a few who are on the list and were persistent absentees, so we've changed [them] and maybe come up with other people. And I've liaised with LSAs or teachers to come up with other people who would be suitable, who are in need of catch up”

Tutor, Secondary School

Parental engagement

Low attendance of tutoring sessions was often related to lack of parental support. A number of schools said that parental engagement was important to making tutoring work and reported that they had found it challenging to get parents on board. Effective approaches to improve parental engagement included letters, online letters, texts and discussions at parents' evenings.

“ There's been a lot more need for me to have close contact with parents, once it's getting up and running, making sure that they come in, making sure that they understand what the reason is. A lot of our parents first thought, 'Oh, is it because my child's a bit stupid?' and it's 'no that's not what it is. All kids have missed areas of the curriculum, but we see that this is a positive thing [...] this is to get them back on track to where they would be’”

Senior Leader, Primary School

One senior leader felt it was important to give responsibility to tutors to liaise with families:

“ ... building that kind of communication between tutors and those families was the key to making that work and where that was the case, that's where those groups were more successful.”

Senior Leader, Secondary School

CASE STUDY 1: FIR TREE MIDDLE SCHOOL

Fir Tree Middle School is located in a rural setting in Worcestershire, supporting the education of pupils in Years 6 to 8. Nineteen first schools feed into Fir Tree with pupils coming from predominantly small village schools.

The school participated in the NTP from the outset. At the start of the 2020 academic year, Fir Tree employed a Tuition Partner to deliver online tutoring to small groups of children predominantly eligible for Pupil Premium, however:

“... to be really honest it didn't have the impact, or any impact really. Although we had given them specific gaps to fill in terms of content, they tended to just go off and do what they had already pre-planned.”

Assistant Headteacher, Fir Tree Middle School

Consequently, a decision was made to bring the tutoring in-house for the following academic year, and four TAs completed the online tutor training provided by Education Development Trust.

The two maths tutors, a TA and a HLTA, worked with pupils across all academic years, with 12 pupils in Year 6, 12 in Year 7, and six in Year 8. The two English tutors, both HLTAs, supported English across all three years, but with slightly fewer pupils as one of the English tutors worked part-time.

The school's belief was that tutoring should optimise pupils' learning while they remained in their lessons therefore receiving the same curriculum as their peers, unless, as a tutor commented, “*there is a very specific need*”. How tutors delivered support varied, for example, going round tutees within the main class, or working with a small group of tutees on a separate table within the main class. As with the online tutoring the previous year, the tutees were primarily eligible for Pupil Premium with identified gaps in their Maths or English learning. But tutors also supported some children with special educational needs (who may also have been eligible for Pupil Premium).

Owing to its rural location the majority of children took buses to school, which restricted the scope for the delivery of sessions. The Assistant Head noted this challenge and commented that if they were not reliant on school buses he would have considered after school tuition. The tutors highlighted the benefit of having well established relationships with tutees, particularly given the learning and emotional challenges experienced by a number of pupils:

“... they're familiar with us and we're familiar with them, so you can tell when they're having an off day and whether it's something to do with that subject, or whether they're just having an off day.”

TA Tutor, Fir Tree Middle School

Staff also emphasised the importance of frequent communication between teachers and tutors in order to maximise their support and pupils' progress. Tutors talked about the changes they had observed in their tutees, including those who have special educational needs such as autism:

“... it's that extra work with an adult who talks quietly and calmly and makes them feel less panicked, able to achieve more. And with that [develops] confidence, and socially, they feel more included as well I think.”

TA Tutor, Fir Tree Middle School

While the Assistant Head noted the benefits of the tutoring programme, he also expressed concerns as to whether the school would be able to continue if the funding contribution by the government was significantly reduced:

“... it's that layer of paperwork - and I believe they're going to introduce a new portal that we have to use to justify the spend ... I understand why there have to be checks and balances ... but at the same time, it's a barrier ultimately... If funding [was significantly reduced] then I would have to seriously question whether it would be worthwhile doing it.”

Assistant Headteacher, Fir Tree Middle School

The Assistant Head also felt there would be benefits if the overall funding system was simplified with tutoring funding included in Pupil Premium funding:

“I think, ideally, if this sort of programme was to carry on and not just for this year... if there is a pot that the DfE are saying 'we want to prioritize this', if it could be merged with the Pupil Premium funding and everything ... it'll just make everything so much more streamlined, so much more efficient.”

Assistant Headteacher, Fir Tree Middle School

3. Pupil outcomes

Social and emotional skills

The evaluation investigated whether there was a relationship between receiving tutoring and the level of social and emotional skills of pupils. The idea was that tutoring would stimulate feelings of self-efficacy, motivation and engagement with learning and school more generally. Measures were taken at the beginning and end of each academic year using standardised measures for self-efficacy, motivation and school engagement.

Overall, there was some evidence of a positive relationship between tutoring and social and emotional skills. Pupils receiving tutoring experienced an increase in feelings of self-efficacy compared to non-tutored pupils. There were signs that tutoring may have acted as a protective factor for school engagement, by reducing the impact of negative trends affecting all pupils. In qualitative research teachers noted how pupils had become more confident in their learning as a result of tutoring.

Key finding: Participating pupils scored higher in self-efficacy after receiving tutoring.

Pupils receiving tutoring **scored higher in self-efficacy at endline compared to baseline across 2021-24**. Average scores increased from 3.53 at baseline to 3.62 at endline, a 2.5% improvement which was statistically significant (Figure 12).

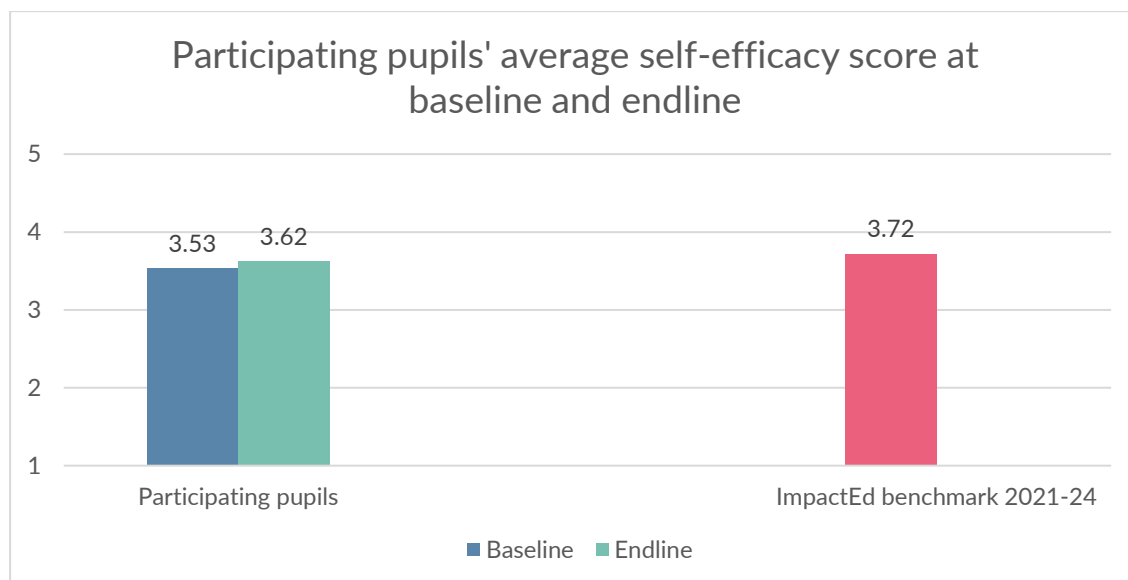


Figure 12: Participating pupils' self-efficacy score at baseline and endline; n=430

This increase was evident across phases with an increase of 2.6% for primary pupils and an increase of 0.8% for secondary school pupils. There was also a similar increase across gender with an increase of 2.0% for female pupils and 2.4% for male pupils. None of these sub-category changes were statistically significant.

Pupils' average motivation scores for both participating and comparison groups remained stable between baseline and endline in line with no statistically significant change observed. Primary school participating pupils' average motivation score stayed relatively stable with a 0.6% increase between baseline and endline, but secondary school pupils' scores decreased by 2.0% (neither of these changes was statistically significant).

Key finding: Participating pupils' experienced less reduction in school engagement scores than comparison pupils suggesting tutoring may have acted as a protective factor.

Both participating pupils' and comparison pupils' average school engagement scores decreased from baseline to endline. The average score for participating pupils declined slightly from 3.82 (out of 5) at baseline to 3.78 at endline, a 1% decrease which was not statistically significant. Comparison pupils experienced a larger reduction from 3.83 at baseline to 3.74 at endline, a 2.3 % decrease which was statistically significant.

The difference in reduction of school engagement scores suggests that tutoring may have acted as a protective factor, reducing the extent of this reduction for pupils who received tutoring. This finding was corroborated in qualitative research, with teachers noting how pupils had become more confident in their learning as a result of tutoring.

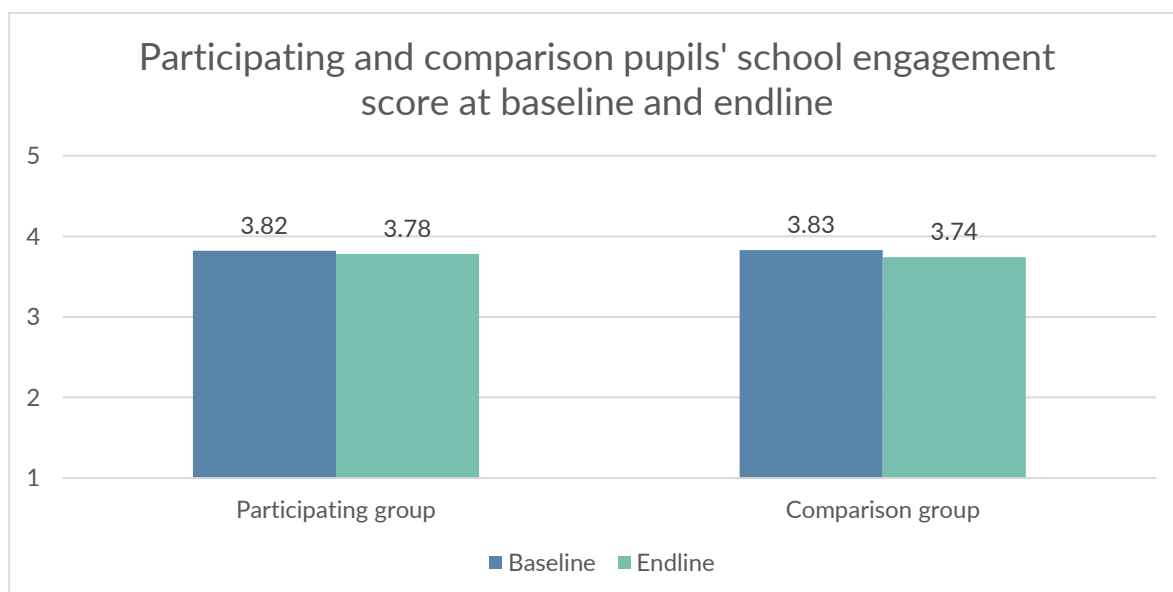


Figure 13: Participating and comparison pupils' school engagement score at baseline and endline; n=520 participating group pupils, n=135 comparison group pupils.

Key finding: Qualitatively, increased academic and social confidence was a key outcome of tutoring.

Qualitative research found examples of the ways in which tutoring had positively impacted pupils' social and emotional skills. Tutors and teachers reported how the supportive

environment of small group tutoring had led to pupils to gain in confidence in their learning style; asking questions, seeking clarification and understanding they could make mistakes. These skills were then transferred to the pupil's learning in the classroom. According to these reports, tutoring had given pupils the confidence that they could learn and this had impacted their general approach to learning.

“When they [tutees] went back to their English lessons they were more ready to edit and more ready to evaluate what they've written and change things. And they are more willing to talk about how things could be changed or written differently or improved. So that they were more confident in those kinds of activities”

Tutor, Primary School

“It's definitely helped with confidence, that they've got somebody there to show them the right way to do things for them, not necessarily the right way to do things for [the] average pupil”

Tutor, Secondary School

“I think for me the biggest thing is their confidence. I can see that in their normal lessons now that they just have that confidence [...] experiment a bit more, take some more risks and be work proud [...] And sometimes you do just need those small, focused groups to give them the time that they need and that confidence and then they're taking that elsewhere now, which is fantastic.”

Tutor, Secondary School

Attendance

School attendance is a key outcome affecting pupils' attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. The Department for Education states that “The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the Key Stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.”⁵ Attendance has been an ongoing challenge for schools since the pandemic.

The evaluation investigated the relationship between receiving tutoring and school attendance. The idea was that the support provided by tutoring may produce a learning 'boost' for pupils which led to improved engagement with school and improved attendance.

Overall, there was some evidence of a positive relationship between tutoring and attendance. Across phases, pupils receiving tutoring observed higher attendance levels at baseline and endline than non-tutored pupils. In secondary, where attendance levels fell for both participating and comparison groups, the extent of the reduction was notably less for pupils receiving tutoring. This finding suggests tutoring may have acted as a protective factor for

⁵ Department for Education, May 2022. [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

attendance, reducing the impact of negative trends affecting all pupils. In qualitative research, teachers noted how increased confidence as a result of tutoring had led to less absences at school.

Key finding: Secondary participating pupils' experienced less reduction in attendance than comparison pupils suggesting tutoring may have acted as a protective factor.

In secondary schools, both participating and control group pupils experienced a reduction in attendance, but this reduction was notably less for participating pupils; participating pupils decreasing by 5% and comparison pupils by 10% (Figure 14). This finding suggests that tutoring may have acted as a protective factor reducing the impact of this trend for those pupils that received tutoring.

Overall, participating pupils across the three academic years observed a slight decrease in attendance from 92.3% to 91.8%, a decrease of 0.5%, which was statistically significant. Attendance for comparison group pupils was relatively stable with only a very small increase in attendance of 0.1% from 90.4% to 90.5%, which was not statistically significant. Pupils who received tutoring therefore had higher attendance levels at both baseline and endline than pupils who didn't. This difference may be explained by the relative engagement of tutored pupils: one factor often used by schools to select pupils for tutoring was whether they were likely to engage with the activity.

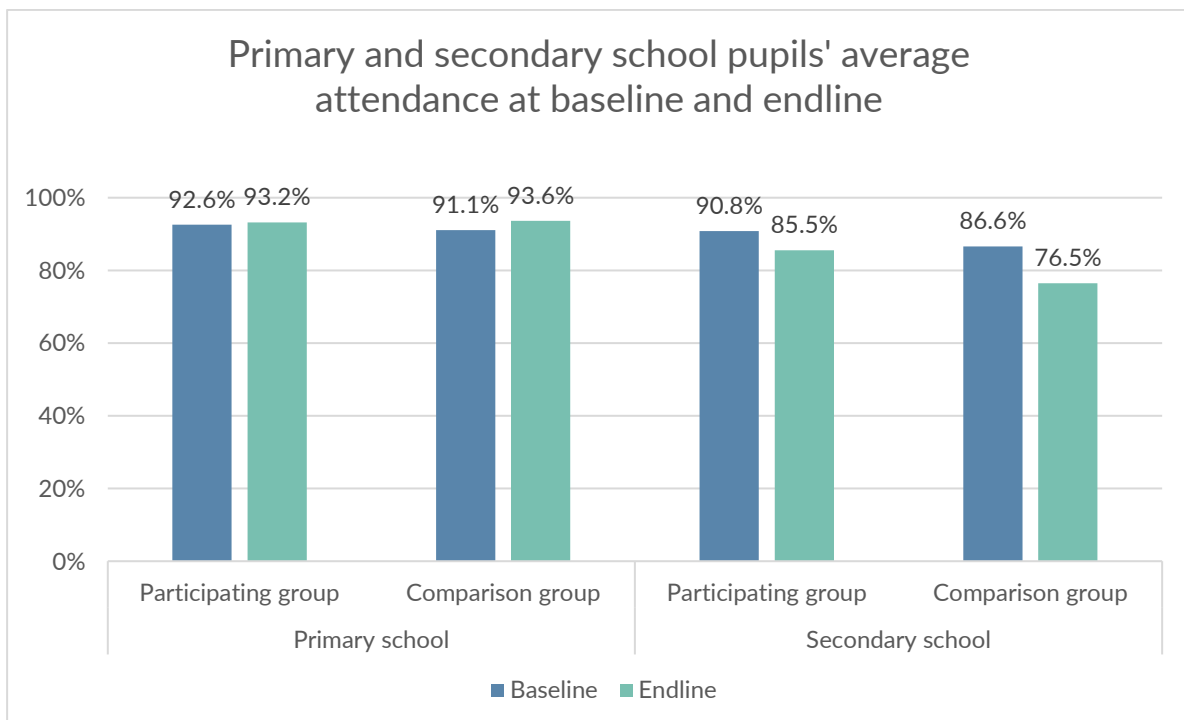


Figure 14: Participating and comparison pupils' average attendance at baseline and endline; n=486 participating primary, n=489 comparison primary, n=121 participating secondary, n=118 comparison secondary.

Qualitative research provided examples of the impact that tutoring had had on pupil attendance. School staff felt that the supportive environment of tutoring had made some

pupils more confident and enthusiastic about their learning. In one case this had translated into, first, a willingness to attend tutoring sessions, even though they did not attend school regularly. Secondly, this had also led to increased attendance in their timetabled lessons. As one tutor described:

“Slowly, over time, I managed to get him to the stage where he would start to come into school more [...] We worked extensively on Maths because I could tell he is an intelligent lad [but] he was totally disenfranchised from class. And slowly built up confidence in maths [...] So then he started going back to the lesson.”

Tutor, Secondary School

CASE STUDY 2: WILLOW TREE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Willow Tree Secondary School is situated in a town in north Leicestershire. Until recently the school catered for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but this academic year the intake was widened to include Year 7 pupils.

The new deputy headteacher had experience of an online tutoring offer at her previous school, and Willow Tree was also using online tutoring when she took up her post. The deputy had concerns about measuring the impact of online tutoring, saying the school was:

“... not really getting under it and see it having the benefit that it could and should have.”

Deputy Headteacher, Willow Tree Secondary School

With the agreement of the senior leadership team, the provision moved to face-to-face tutoring at the start of the current academic year. Two TAs were appointed as tutors, one to support the Maths department and the other to work with the English faculty. The third tutor, a former pupil applying to study medicine at university, worked in the science department. All completed the online training provided by Education Development Trust.

The main focus of the tuition was on Key Stage 4 pupils (and predominantly Year 11) but tutors also supported those in Year 7 who were working below age-related expectations. Faculty heads were responsible for analysing pupil data and identifying those pupils in need of tutor support. Tuition was usually with pupils one-to-one or in small groups and often outside the main lesson, although sometimes additional support would be provided in the classroom.

The English tutor discussed the benefits of tuition:

“...the tutor has got time - a different quality of time ... to talk to individuals and to focus on what they actually need and whether they're getting proper understanding ... I really think that there is a role for tutors in education and not just as a catch up.”

English tutor, Willow Tree Secondary School

Year 11 pupils also had tutoring sessions during registration time:

“... every disadvantaged student we had in school in Year 11 received tuition in maths, English or science ... and they were getting two or three of those a week for six weeks.”

Deputy Headteacher, Willow Tree Secondary School

The English tutor, who supported approximately 40 students, felt the level of interaction she had with teachers provided her with sufficient information about her tutees.

The deputy headteacher, however, felt the discussions between educators could be more extensive. The deputy cited lack of time as the main challenge for effective communication and expressed concern that, as a result, the support was not as personalised as it could be. The deputy head also felt there was scepticism amongst some teaching staff, who questioned why pupils who did not engage in their lessons deserved tuition. She described how she had justified providing these pupils with tutoring support:

“...I explained that these pupils can't access regular learning. It's because they find it difficult and therefore, the tuition is supposed to help them get back into that place. It's been a real challenge to explain to some teachers why those students are receiving the tuition.”

Deputy Headteacher, Willow Tree Secondary School

The deputy headteacher spoke at length about the challenges in demonstrating the impact of tutoring, when there were numerous variables to take into consideration:

“You've got tuition, you've got all the pastoral support, you've got all of the apps, the teaching itself that's happening day in day out, being able to pinpoint 'yes, this is having an impact' is really complex.”

Deputy Headteacher, Willow Tree Secondary School

However, demonstrating impact was a critical factor in the deputy's mind since she was looking ahead to when funding for the NTP ceased:

“I'd really like to embed the tutor model, but it's having the backup to say, 'actually yeah, this is having an impact' in order to prove its worth... for it to come into the mainstream staffing budget.”

Deputy Headteacher, Willow Tree Secondary School

Attainment

A key objective for tutoring was improved attainment for pupils receiving tutoring. The idea was that the unique nature of tutoring would facilitate accelerated learning above and beyond what would be achieved in the regular classroom. The evaluation investigated this outcome by comparing baseline and endline assessments for the participating group and the comparison group of pupils.

Overall, there was some evidence of a positive relationship between tutoring and attainment. In primary schools, pupils receiving tutoring experienced notably higher levels of improvement in English and Maths than non-tutored pupils. In secondary schools, pupils receiving tutoring experienced higher levels of improvement in English. In Maths there was higher improvement for pupils with Pupil Premium eligibility compared to their counterparts in the comparison group. In qualitative research teachers highlighted the progress made by pupils receiving tutoring.

Key finding: Maths and English attainment levels in primary schools improved more for tutored pupils than for non-tutored pupils indicating the positive impact of tutoring.

For primary schools, attainment levels in Maths and English improved more for participating than for comparison pupils. For example, for Maths 21% of participating pupils were assessed as at or above expected standard at baseline and 63% at endline (43% increase). The comparison group made a more modest improvement from 48% to 64% (16% increase). There was a similar difference in performance in English, with the participating group improving from 6% to 49% (43% increase) and the comparison group improving from 35% to 49% (14% increase) (Figure 15).

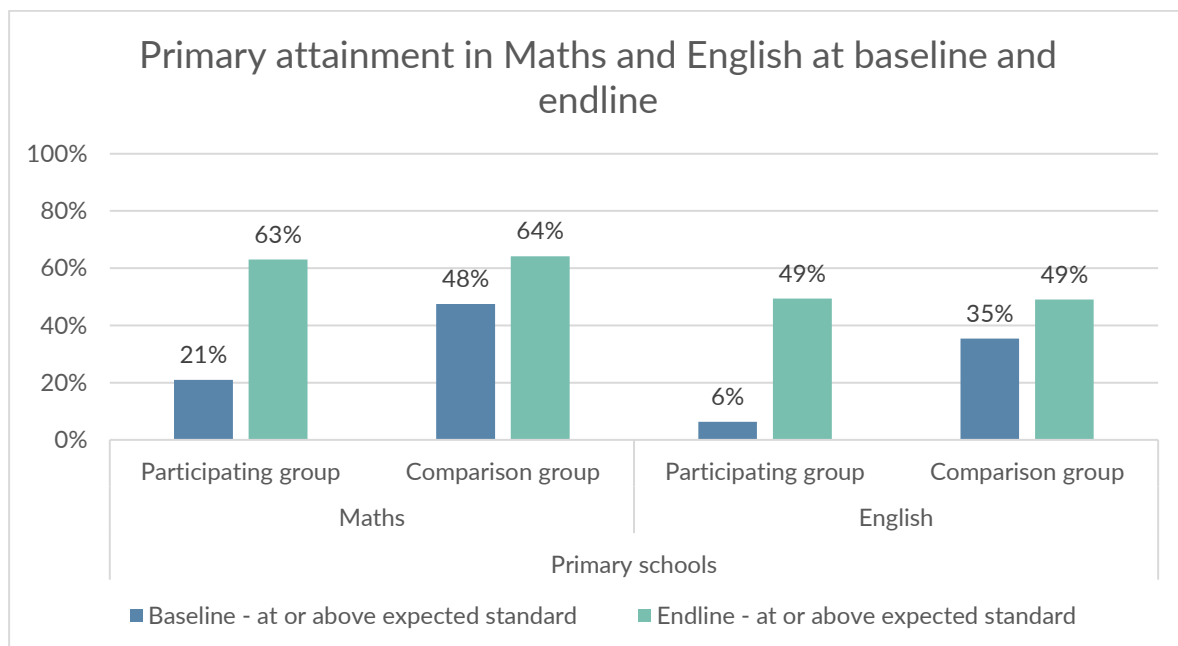


Figure 15: Primary participating and comparison pupils' attainment in Maths and English at baseline and endline; n=324 participating Maths, n=341 participating English, n=145 comparison Maths, n=239 comparison English.

For the secondary analysis, we compared the change in pupils' attainment between baseline and endline. The evaluation found similar levels of improvement for Maths (1.2% for participating pupils and 1.9% for comparison pupils). For pupils with Pupil Premium eligibility there was higher improvement for those in the participating group (2.4%) compared to those in the comparison group (1.6%).

For English, participating pupils improved by 2.3% and comparison pupils worsened by -2.2%. Pupils with Pupil Premium eligibility experienced a decrease across the participating and comparison groups but the decrease was notably less for participating Pupil Premium pupils (-1.6% compared to -3.9%). This difference suggested tutoring protected pupils with Pupil Premium from getting lower grades. It is important to note that the secondary sample was small, and none of these changes were statistically significant.

Qualitative research provided examples of advances that some pupils receiving tutoring had made. Tutors often highlighted how the environment of tutoring sessions had supported learning that may not have occurred in the classroom.

“ I did have one student in my first mentoring [tutoring] session [...] and she was probably on a grade three for her exam and she came out with a five at the end [...] all the work that she did to get that grade five was done in the sessions because she just couldn't focus in class”

Tutor, Secondary School

“ I have a student in one of my tutoring groups...this extra tutoring has really given him time to consolidate the learning he's had in class. And before his writing was illegible, now he can fully form all his letters.”

Tutor, Primary School

4. School outcomes

Schools welcomed the opportunity to participate in the NTP and identified a range of outcomes associated with their involvement. Most importantly, the funding provided by the NTP allowed schools the opportunity to develop the quality of their teaching offer. Most participating schools had done little tutoring prior to the NTP and the programme allowed schools to develop tutoring alongside classroom teaching. For many schools this development prompted a rethink of the learning offer, leading to the creation of a more integrated package that included small group support.

The focus of the NTP on disadvantaged pupils also encouraged schools to improve their support for these pupils. Schools often implemented tutoring as part of a wider package of targeted support for disadvantaged pupils.

Teaching capacity and quality

The addition of tutoring to the teaching portfolio at schools represented a departure from conventional class learning. Small group tutoring offered a more personalised approach tailored to the particular learning needs of the pupil. With the addition of tutoring, schools were able to provide a more comprehensive teaching package that offered targeted support for individual pupils alongside conventional classroom learning. As one tutor reported:

“... it allows me to target the pupils that the teacher wished they could have the time to target. It's providing just that extra reach and coverage [...] it's allowed them to get that coverage that they need to raise the quality of the teaching overall. I think that's really important”

Tutor, Secondary School

School-Led Tutoring also provided an opportunity for staff development. Staff who became tutors developed a range of skills: teachers developed skills in small group support and non-QTS staff learned important aspects of teaching. Overall, the programme led to an upskilling of school staff with some tutors without QTS encouraged by the experience to consider teacher training.

Improved support for disadvantaged pupils

The NTP focus on 'catch-up' learning for disadvantaged pupils encouraged schools to think critically about how they supported this group. Many schools used tutoring as part of an improved package of support for these pupils using data to identify disadvantaged pupils who might benefit from support. Pupils with special educational needs who often found the classroom environment challenging were a particular focus of tutoring in some schools. As a primary school senior leader describes:

“For SEN pupils it's a fantastic opportunity for those teachers to be leading some small group work. So obviously, when we come under our Ofsted [inspections] or our SEN reviews, we're really showing that those teachers are getting to spend some quality time with the pupils that the school day quite simply doesn't allow quite often”

Senior leader, Primary School

“... we've got some very low readers, and we hadn't been able to put intervention in the school day for them because we just didn't have staff to do that, so we have offered literacy tutoring for that”

Senior Leader, Secondary School

Tutoring beyond the NTP

While senior leaders said they valued tutoring and felt it had made a difference at their school, they were uncertain about the prospect of it continuing. With the end of NTP funding, senior leaders generally thought it was unlikely their school would be able to find sufficient budget to sustain tutoring as a major initiative. Some senior leaders were considering using part of their Pupil Premium budgets towards tutoring and one commented they were also considering asking parents to pay a contribution. But for most schools, severe budgetary challenges put ongoing tutoring provision in doubt:

“I've got a lot of children who are accessing that support [and] I think if the funding wasn't there we genuinely would struggle and I'm not sure what else we'd be able to put in place.”

Headteacher, Primary School

Only one senior leader was able to state that they would definitely continue to offer tutoring after the NTP:

“... Tutoring will continue, absolutely, regardless of the NTP funding we got in ... because we have such a hefty Pupil Premium budget based on the area we're in.”

Deputy Head, Primary School

5. Lessons learned

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP) originated in 2020 as part of the government's education recovery initiative created in response to school closures during the pandemic. The programme was aimed at supporting small group tutoring in schools and provided various means of support: supplying tutors to schools where needed (via Tuition Partners and Academic Mentors), providing training to tutors recruited by schools and providing guidance for implementation in schools.

With the introduction of the school-led NTP route in 2021-22, which allowed schools to recruit their own tutors, Education Development Trust was commissioned to deliver training to these prospective tutors. The experience of the programme since 2021 provides an opportunity to consider lessons learned regarding the implementation of tutoring in schools and supporting tutoring in schools at a national level. Some key themes are outlined in the commentary below; 'School implementation', highlighting effective approaches used by schools to deliver tutoring, and 'Programme support', identifying systems and mechanisms that can support schools.

For school leaders – implementing tutoring in your school

Selecting tutors

Schools generally preferred the flexibility of recruiting tutors themselves and often did so from existing staff. Using staff who already supported pupils at the school and had relationships in place was seen as an effective way of setting up a small group tutoring environment. Schools recruited QTS teachers as well as non-QTS staff to work as tutors, with the non-QTS staff typically Teaching Assistants (TA) or Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTA). Evidence suggests that QTS and non-QTS tutors were equally effective in delivering outcomes.

Group size

The unique value of tutoring stems from its small group learning environment. It is therefore important that the size of groups is limited. Our research found that one-to-one and small groups of up to four pupils were most effective and when the size increased above six effectiveness was notably reduced. Small groups are recommended for pupils of similar ability whereas one-to-one tuition is suitable when a pupil has unique learning needs. Schools reported that one-to-one tuition was particularly beneficial for pupils with SEND and with English as an additional language (EAL).

Session format and scheduling

Tutoring should aim to be additional to classroom learning. It is therefore preferable to avoid taking a pupil out of their subject class for tutoring in that subject. Some schools made their

tutoring 'additional' by scheduling sessions outside of school hours. But getting pupils to attend outside of the school day could be challenging and sometimes resulted in low attendance. There were also approaches to scheduling tutoring during the school day that helped to retain this valued 'additionality'. One example was by substituting tutoring sessions for classes in non-core subjects e.g. PE, art or music.

The length of tutoring sessions varied ranging from 20 minutes to an hour. The wider research suggests that shorter and more frequent sessions are associated with higher attainment, particularly for primary pupils. A key takeaway is that short and frequent sessions are more likely to maximise pupils' attention and maintain learning momentum.

Alignment to class teaching

Tutoring should be properly integrated into the teaching offer at a school and not treated as an add-on. The content delivered in sessions should be aligned to the subject curriculum being taught in the classroom.

Schools found information sharing and communication with tutors to be key to ensuring that content was aligned with the curriculum. Subject teachers should ensure that information about the pupil's subject knowledge is shared with the tutor. The tutor can then use this to tailor their sessions to the needs of the pupils.

Pupil and parental engagement

A key factor determining outcomes for tutoring is pupil engagement: pupils who 'buy in' to tutoring sessions are much more likely to benefit from it than those who don't. Getting pupils on board can be challenging but schools shared some strategies that might be effective. First, tutoring needs to be presented in a positive light. Schools reported that presenting tutoring as a positive opportunity to learn was more effective than presenting it as a 'catching up' task. The distinctive atmosphere of tutoring should also be conveyed; a more relaxed environment compared to the classroom with a tutor who really gets to know pupils. Second, gaining parental engagement is important. Explaining the objectives of tutoring and gaining their support is important to getting their child to regularly attend sessions and getting them engaged. Third, logistical barriers can be reduced. For example, scheduling tutoring sessions at a time that is convenient for the pupil and family, providing snacks etc.

For policy makers – supporting programmes and similar initiatives

Flexibility alongside encouragement of best practice

Schools appreciated the flexibility of the NTP model; choosing whether to recruit their own tutors or employ tutors from an external organisation and choosing how to implement tutoring at their school. Allowing schools the autonomy to craft their own pathway allowed them to feel they were in control rather than being forced to adopt a 'one size fits all' model.

Alongside the benefits of flexibility is the risk that schools make misguided decisions about what is likely to work best. This underlines the importance of making information on evidenced practice readily available to schools to encourage informed decisions as far as possible, and ensuring this is embedded within programmes and initiatives.

Supporting the transition from TA to small-group tutor

The large majority of schools favoured the 'school-led' route and employed existing staff to act as tutors. This was seen as a quick and effective way of implementing tutoring: staff were already set up at the school and were familiar with systems and teaching approaches of the school. For many schools, the 'school-led' route meant employing TAs as tutors. These staff were experienced in supporting classroom teaching alongside a teacher but not necessarily leading small group teaching. As the use of TAs as tutors was a common approach used by schools, the NTP model and training could be more tailored to support this approach: providing training modules addressing gaps in skills and providing guidance to schools about how to support TAs making this transition.

Community of Practice (COP)

In implementing tutoring, schools tried out different approaches with varying degrees of success. This process of trial and error can be made more effective by encouraging participants to share ideas: practitioners sharing their ideas and experiences helps to support the learning process and creates a supportive community spirit. EDT facilitated this COP model for tutors by using online forums to facilitate communication between participants. This type of community of practice can be an invaluable way of supporting the process of experimentation and learning and should be embedded within programme design and development in similar future initiatives.



Supporting our purpose driven partners to make better decisions using high quality evidence.



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