

Making a Difference with Effective Tutoring

Introduction and background

In the wake of the pandemic, educators across the country are working hard to get pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, back on track. Many have taken advantage of the government's National Tutoring Programme (NTP) in order to do so. The EEF's Teaching and Learning Toolkit indicates that with high-quality tuition aligned to classroom teaching, pupils can make up to 5 months additional progress with one to one tuition and up to 4 months additional progress with small group tuition. The studies underpinning the toolkit show that tuition may be particularly impactful in supporting progress in literacy at primary level. However, when well implemented, it can also be a useful tool to ensure effective progress across all phases and areas of the curriculum.

Although the impact of tutoring is positive on average, this is not true for all studies, so schools should consider how they are dedicating sufficient time, funding, and resource to implement tutoring effectively. This resource from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) offers evidence-based advice on the core components of effective tutoring. It is accompanied by a checklist of [key tutoring questions](#) for school leaders.

Key points

Effective tutoring – definition and principles

- Small group tuition is defined as one teacher, trained teaching assistant or tutor working with a group of 2 to 5 pupils. This allows the teaching to focus exclusively on a small number of learners, usually in a separate classroom or working area. One-to-one tuition involves a teacher, trained teaching assistant, or other adult giving a pupil intensive individual support. On average, one to one tuition is very effective at improving pupil outcomes.
- There are 3 principles which underpin effective tutoring. These are: effective selection of pupils and scheduling of sessions; aligning tutoring with curriculum and assessment; and creating a sustainable tutoring model.
- should at least compensate for the time spent away from class.
- Group sizes of 3 are likely to maintain good impact and represent good value for money. Once group sizes increase above 6 or 7, there is a marked decrease in effectiveness.

Aligning curriculum with curriculum and assessment

- Evidence suggests that tuition is likely to be most effective when it is targeted, making use of diagnostic assessment and timely feedback. Targeted tuition is likely to be well matched to a pupils' current curriculum, so that they can reinforce learning from tuition sessions in their classroom practice.
- Diagnostic assessment ensures that tutoring is targeted by addressing pupils' misconceptions, adjusting the level of challenge, reteaching concepts where necessary, and realigning curriculum materials in the medium or longer term.
- In the report, a primary headteacher from Bristol describes a '3 strand' approach which they developed for literacy tutoring. One to one same day intervention was linked to gaps or misconceptions identified in lessons. Small group reading comprehension tuition was linked to specific gaps in pupils' language comprehension, vocabulary, or inferencing based upon class texts. Finally, pre-teaching sessions focussed on phonics and reading fluency based on a text which pupils would be studying in a whole class setting.
- Hinge questions are a useful diagnostic tool. Often multiple-choice in format, that clearly identify whether a pupil has understood the task or objective. They are designed in a way that, if a pupil answers incorrectly, it is quick and easy for the teacher to see why they made the error. One example might be to give pupils a set of

Selecting pupils and scheduling sessions

- In selecting pupils, schools should consider whether they are focussing on Pupil Premium pupils or those facing other types of disadvantage.
- The EEF Toolkit finds that frequent sessions (around 3 times a week), lasting up to an hour and taking place over a period of 6 to 12 weeks, tend to have the greatest impact. This may be particularly the case for younger pupils, who are likely to benefit from more regular, shorter sessions.
- In the report, a headteacher from Rotherham provides an example of effective scheduling: 'We planned our tuition timetable with consistency in mind: ensuring clarity around where sessions would take place to allow for prompt session start and end to build routines; consistency of tutor and pupil groups. We also rotated timings so as not to overly impact learning in any particular subject.'
- If pupils are removed from their normal classroom teaching to receive tutoring, the tutoring programme



5 sentences and ask them to place apostrophes in the correct place in each sentence.

- An Assistant Headteacher from London describes how hinge questions helped the school to align tutoring to their curriculum: 'Hinge questions became the starting point to a quick and easy feedback loop for us: teachers would share the question and a pupil's answer with the tutor, and vice versa. Whilst it was only one piece of the jigsaw puzzle, this allowed us to be more confident that curriculum content was aligned.'
- Professional development (PD) can help tutors to deliver effective tutoring which is aligned to the curriculum. PD should build knowledge through short manageable chunks and provides opportunities to revisit material. It should also identify specific development goals and develop techniques through modelling and opportunities for rehearsal. Finally, it should embed practice with follow-up tasks, reminders, and encouraging teachers to monitor their progress.

Creating a sustainable tutoring model

- A sustainable tutoring model is one which consistently monitors and evaluates the impact of tutoring.
- Monitoring can take many forms including gathering staff and pupil feedback, tracking attendance, assessment, or parent/carer surveys.
- Ensuring tutors take time to build relationships with pupils and understand needs is a key part of a sustainable tutoring model, as are positive relationships with parents and carers. Potential strategies may include initial parent/carer contact to share reasons for and logistics of tutoring, followed by regular digital communications, charting attendance milestones, and celebrating tutoring successes.
- One of the case studies in the report describes how a primary school in Newcastle-upon-Tyne set about developing a sustainable model. They introduced 'reflective practice' meetings for the tutoring team to review provision twice each half term. In these meetings, tutors and class teachers discussed the effectiveness of the tutoring groups and adapted provision accordingly. These groups took place twice each half term, and gave tutors and class teachers the opportunity to discuss the effectiveness of our tutoring groups, and to adapt provision. At the meetings, staff carried out 'book looks' from both tutoring sessions, and pupils' class work, to check that pupils were applying their learning to their independent work. This exercise also enabled tutors and class teachers to discuss the topics they were covering, identify areas of progress, and agree next steps for individual pupils. The school collected Pupil Voice information and sent out a parent/carer survey to find out how pupils and families felt about tutoring, including what was going well and what could be improved.

The full documents can be downloaded from:

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/support-for-schools/making-a-difference-with-effective-tutoring>