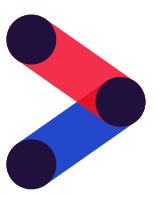


Best Tutoring Practice

Briefing for tutoring organisations

National
Tutoring
Programme



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Introduction

This brief guide aims to help tutoring providers in England to align their work with the tutoring opportunities available through National Tutoring Programme (NTP) Tuition Partners, maximising the benefits of the programme for disadvantaged pupils throughout England. Key messages are based on the best available evidence for the tutoring models which will be delivered. A list of approved Tuition Partners (by region) will be available from November 2020.

For more information see nationaltutoring.org.uk

Rather than a new synthesis of all available tutoring evidence, this guide is based on an overview of studies related to one to one tutoring, small group tuition and teaching assistants, which will be included in the EEF's **Education Database project** (publishing 2021)¹ and a systematic review and meta-analysis of 96 studies featuring tutoring interventions undertaken in the last decade and earlier (Nickow, Oreopoulos and Quan, 2020). Practical key messages for best practice have also been shaped by teachers and specialists at the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).

Evidence confirms the key role of high-quality classroom teaching, which has the greatest positive impact for disadvantaged pupils. It also consistently confirms that tutoring, when effectively implemented, yields substantial positive impacts on learning outcomes, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

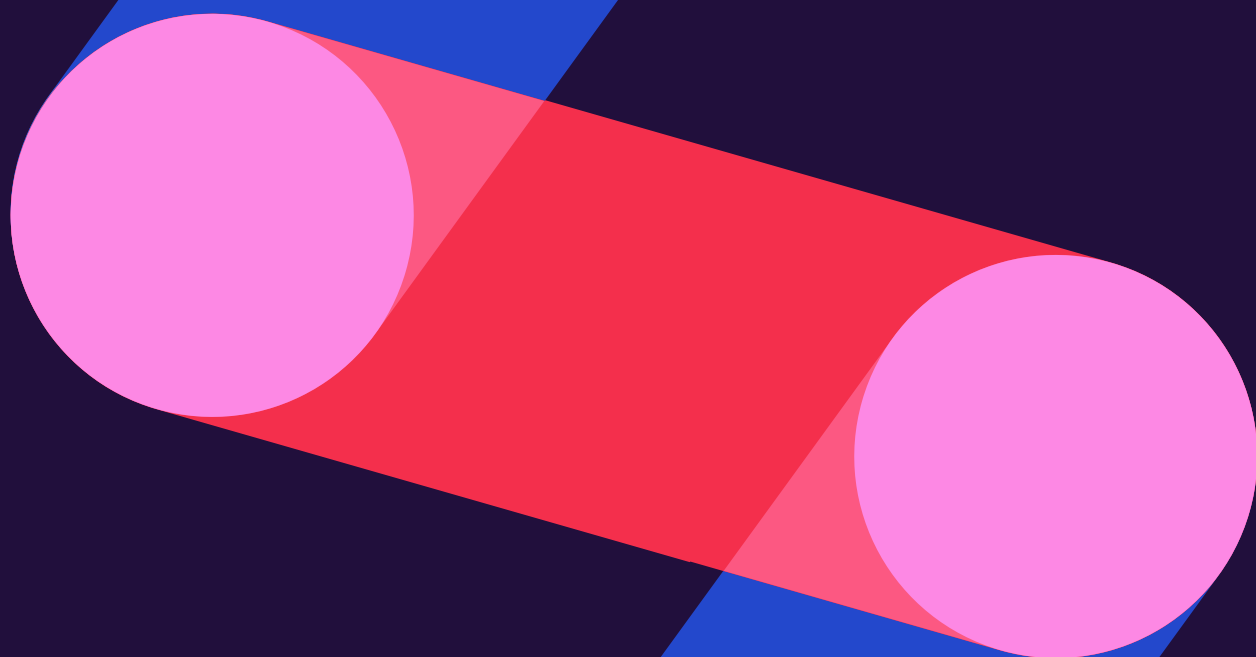
The NTP is designed to be a powerful additional tool for teachers and school leaders. However, studies show a range of effects and we know that it is how tutoring is implemented that really matters. Some elements of implementation are under the control of the schools receiving tutoring, and these aspects are covered in an **accompanying guide** aimed at NTP Tuition Partners schools. Many elements of implementation success fall within the remit of tutoring organisations, and it is these elements that are the focus of this guide.

All NTP Tuition Partners are required to meet rigorous safeguarding standards and to provide high-quality tutoring that aligns with the evidence. However, the success of tuition will often hinge on the quality of the relationships between tutors, teachers and pupils. This guide provides evidence-based advice for how tutoring organisations can recruit and train tutors and deliver tutoring in schools so that these relationships are as successful as possible, with the greatest positive impact.

1. The EEF database team are currently extracting additional information from the studies in the Teaching and Learning Toolkit to give us more information on which approaches, contexts and methodologies lead to differences in impact. The Teaching and Learning Toolkit is available at: <https://eef.li/toolkit/>

This guide aims to answer five key questions, with further iterations to include practical exemplifications of the key recommendations:

- What are the best strategies to follow for effective tutor recruitment and training?
- How should tutoring be delivered in a school setting?
- How should tutors plan the content and structure of a tutoring session?
- How can positive relationships between tutors, teachers and pupils be encouraged and maintained?
- How can information about pupils be effectively shared between teachers and tutors?



What are the best strategies to follow for effective tutor recruitment and training?

The education and experience of those delivering tutoring matters and evidence suggests that those with the highest qualifications and most relevant experience will have the greatest impact on pupil outcomes. Impact is greater, on average, for tutoring delivered by qualified teachers and professional tutors (for example, undergraduate and graduate students) than for nonprofessional tutors, for tutoring delivered by parents or other non-trained community volunteers.

Even tutors who have relevant qualifications will require training to ensure that their delivery is in line with the model offered by the tutoring organisation and that they are supported to communicate

effectively with teachers and pupils. This is particularly the case for small group tuition, where the training of tutors and their expertise is important in ensuring tutors can successfully manage and leverage the learning behaviours and interactions within the group. Any tutoring organisations focusing on pupils with particular needs – for example pupils with SEND, or pupils in Alternative Provision – should think carefully about the training required to deliver effectively to those pupils. The British Dyslexia Association publication [Understanding neurodiversity: A guide to specific learning differences](#) (2nd edition) is a useful resource, as is the EEF's guidance report on [Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools](#).

Key messages:

- When recruiting tutors, think carefully about eligibility criteria – and the level of expertise required.
- Consider both qualifications and experience, and how that might influence the amount of ongoing support that tutors in your organisation will receive.
- Ensure that tutors understand how to engage disadvantaged pupils and are aware of common barriers to accessing tutoring.
- Consider the prior experience of tutors in delivering the model/s of tuition that your organisation will use – for example in-person, online, or a blended approach – and the additional training or support that may be required for delivery of that specific model.
- For tutoring that has a focus on specific groups of pupils with additional needs, make sure that training is sufficient and specifically covers how best to work with those children.

How should tutoring be delivered in a school setting?

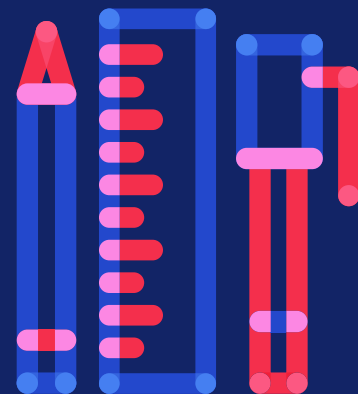
The majority of evidence suggests that tutoring programs conducted during school tend to have larger impacts than those conducted after school. Lower effects found within after-school tutoring may arise largely from difficulties in ensuring that tutoring occurs as planned and encouraging high attendance at sessions should be considered when scheduling tutoring.

Ideally, tutoring sessions would replace whichever time slots within the school day exhibit the lowest risk in terms of the content that may be missed; for example, ensuring that pupils do not miss core English and maths lessons, or any specialist support they have due to SEND requirements.

The majority of established tutoring interventions include sessions of 30 to 60 minutes, on average. For one to one tuition, short, regular sessions over a set period (six to twelve weeks) appear to

result in optimum impact. The evidence suggests that longer tutoring sessions result in higher effect sizes until the point at which students' attention span is affected: therefore, schools may wish to consider sessions on the shorter end of this average scale for younger students.

NTP Tuition Partners will have a focus on small group learning, with an expected group size of three pupils to one tutor. Overall, evidence shows that small group tuition is effective and, as a rule of thumb, the smaller the group the better: with one to one having the largest impacts and effects starting to diminish with group sizes of six or more pupils. Groups of three pupils therefore represent good value-for-money, whilst also maintaining high impacts. One to one and one to two models will also be available through NTP Tuition Partners for pupils who need this support, including pupils with SEND and pupils attending Alternative Provision, as well as other pupils who may have specific needs.



There is limited evidence on the ideal grouping structure for small group tuition and whether small group tuition should be for pupils of mixed attainment or a similar level of attainment, as examples of both have shown positive effects. Evidence for within-class attainment grouping (based on teaching in a classroom setting, by pupils' usual teachers and support staff) shows a positive average attainment impact when pupils with similar attainment are grouped together for tasks. However, there may also be benefits from mixed-attainment tutoring groups; with certain peer tutoring showing consistently strong effects for small groups of students tutoring one another in mixed attainment groupings. There may therefore be benefits from structured, well-facilitated peer-to-peer activity in mixed-attainment tutoring groups.

Tuition Partners should plan for the types of groupings they would recommend to schools and make sure that the training they offer reflects the expected tutoring model. It will then be important to explain the preferred grouping arrangements clearly to schools and together agree on the group sizes that will be delivered.

Key messages:

- Ensure tutors are well briefed on the remit of their role – what is and is not their responsibility – in relation to other professionals that a pupil encounters in a school setting.
- Ensure tutors are equipped to deliver tutoring within the school day, understanding that a pupil will be attending tutoring as one activity within a busy day, possibly in lieu of lessons with peers, or recreational activities.
- Tutors should work with schools to consider and review the most appropriate session frequency for pupils receiving tuition: young children may benefit from shorter more frequent sessions, while older pupils may be able to have longer, less frequent sessions, especially where clear information on areas to work on between sessions is given.
- The focus of the NTP is on supporting disadvantaged pupils, including those eligible for Pupil Premium funding: under this remit schools, who know their pupils best, will have flexibility as to which pupils receive tutoring. Consider any advice you may wish to give to schools to support their selection of pupils.
- During tutor training, think about how to equip tutors to work effectively with small groups of pupils.

How should tutors plan the content and structure of a tutoring session?

It is important that the content of tutoring aligns with classroom teaching and focuses on the areas that pupils need the most support with. The content of individual sessions will vary between tutoring organisations – for example, some organisations will be offering an online/blended approach to tuition, so there may need to be adaptations to make it work (for example, using an online blackboard).

Teachers and tutoring providers should work together to make sure sessions cover the areas that pupils need most support with, and existing school attainment data and feedback processes should play a central role in this. Tutoring which focuses on specific subtopics or skills within a broader academic subject may be an effective way to improve attainment; for example, focusing on specific subskills of literacy, such as decoding and comprehension skills, and reading and sourcing skills for writing.

Although NTP Tuition Partners sessions are focused on academic outcomes, primarily English, maths and science, these sessions should be pedagogically informed by approaches on engaging with vulnerable

and difficult to engage learners (for example, making sure there is input from pupils on the session content, taking time to talk about their lives and making learning relevant to their interests wherever possible).

Schools, who know their pupils best, will continue to lead on social-emotional learning provision, working closely with parents/carers, but it is important to have effective feedback mechanisms from tutors to classroom teachers, so that any concerns from a tutoring session can be suitably passed on, including around motivation and engagement.

A clear aim for each block of tutoring should be agreed with the school ahead of delivery, although tutors will need flexibility to adapt the plan as tutoring progresses. Ensuring that tutoring occurs in a sustained block of sessions is the key aspect of delivery likely to result in a greater impact, rather than minor variations from the planned content of individual sessions. It is therefore important for tutors to support schools by identifying any issues with non-attendance.

Key messages:

- Plan how to work with schools so that the content of tutoring sessions aligns with the school curriculum and focuses on the areas that pupils are particularly struggling with.
- Ensure that a tutor is consistently available to the pupil and can deliver all sessions as planned.
- Ensure tutors are aware of the remit of the NTP Tuition Partners programme and the focus on improving academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Ensure that there is a system in place for monitoring the delivery of sessions and for identifying any issues with tutor availability.

How can positive relationships between tutors, teachers and pupils be encouraged and maintained?

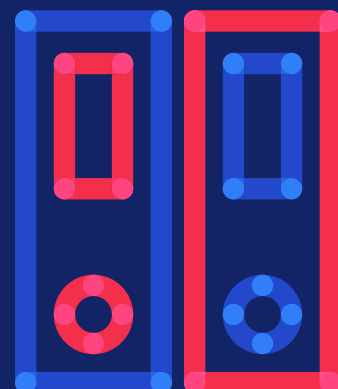
Fostering positive relationships between tutors, schools and pupils and their parents/carers helps to maximise the positive impacts of tutoring.

It is important to ensure pupil buy-in to the tutoring and that there is support to motivate pupils to take part in sessions. Pupil response to the tutoring, and for older children, their input into the areas they are struggling with and therefore the focus of sessions, should be considered when planning new sessions.

How the tutoring opportunity is explained to pupils and communicated more widely to families is key and it should be presented as a positive opportunity to further their learning, with a clear plan for communication formulated in advance of delivery. Schools are likely to lead on this communication,

but organisations delivering tutoring should consider how they can support this by, for example, providing information about the tutors and the tutoring approach that is designed to appeal to pupils and their parents.

Efforts should be made to ensure that school inclusion criteria, based on Pupil Premium eligibility or low prior attainment, is not explicit to pupils, and tutors should make sure not to discuss this with pupils. Tutoring in pairs or small groups may have the additional benefit of reducing any potential sense of stigma that could be associated with being selected to take part in tutoring. Tutor training should include information on how to talk about the tutoring opportunity with pupils.



The evidence suggests that more instruction appears to result in more learning, but there may be a minimum, threshold duration needed for tutoring to be effective, particularly with adolescents, which may reflect the amount of time required to build a positive relationship between tutor and tutee. Pupils will be able to access sustained blocks of 15 hours of tutoring through NTP Tuition Partners and tutoring organisations should consider how to make best use of these 15 hours.

Although tutoring differs from mentoring, there may be similar positive interaction effects as a result. The personal relationship fostered by a tutoring experience may carry over to pupils' positivity toward the educational content of their normal lessons.

Key messages:

- Ensure tutors are trained to identify when they should adapt previously planned content, following pupils' responses, to increase the level of engagement from their tutees.
- Consider setting up knowledge-sharing/peer-to-peer support mechanisms within your organisation, for example, to allow tutors to share their content plans for tutoring sessions and additional feedback on whether these were delivered as planned or adapted, and to what effect.
- Consider how best to support schools to explain the tutoring opportunity to pupils and parents.

How can information about pupils be effectively shared between teachers and tutors?

Effective assessment and feedback both play a key part in the teaching and learning process. Tutoring organisations should consider how they will use assessment data from schools at the start of a block of tutoring, and throughout. Organisations should also consider how they will collect their own information on pupil progress and use this to provide feedback to pupils and their teachers, as well as informing the content of future sessions to ensure pupils are getting as much benefit from tutoring as possible.

The use of assessment data and how to provide feedback to pupils should form a central part of the training provided to tutors.



Key messages:

- Tutors should be trained and prepared to provide students with scaffolding and feedback in tutoring sessions and know how to best structure feedback to pupils of different ages and abilities.
- Tutors are supported to use school assessment data, as well as their own assessments, to identify the needs of all pupils in a group before beginning small group tuition. Tutors work with schools to set clear aims for a block of tutoring.
- Consider how your organisation as a whole and individual tutors are equipped to make modifications based on feedback received on tuition delivery. How is feedback effectively used by tutors for their ongoing professional development?

Working effectively with schools – key checklist questions for NTP Tuition Partners

- Are tutors briefed on the remit of the NTP Tuition Partners programme, how to engage disadvantaged pupils and common barriers to accessing tutoring?
- Has there been a discussion with schools before beginning tuition as to the most appropriate session frequency (for younger/older pupils) and reasons for the delivery model chosen (one to one, one to two or small groups of three)?
- Has there been a discussion with schools before beginning tuition as to how pupils have been grouped (similar or mixed attainment), the school curricular, particular areas that individual pupils are struggling with and any additional needs that they have?
- Are tutors trained to identify when they should adapt planned content, following pupils' responses, to increase engagement?
- What systems are in place with schools to identify and communicate any issues with tutor availability or pupil attendance, for tutors to share any issues raised by pupils in sessions and to monitor the delivery of a block of tuition sessions as planned?
- Have tutors worked with schools to set clear academic aims for a block of tutoring, using school assessment data as well as their own assessments?

What are the best strategies to follow for effective tutor recruitment and training?

- When recruiting tutors, think carefully about eligibility criteria – and the level of expertise required.
- Consider both qualifications and experience, and how that might influence the amount of ongoing support that tutors in your organisation will receive.
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- Consider the prior experience of tutors in delivering the model/s of tuition that your organisation will use – for example in-person, online, or a blended approach – and the additional training or support that may be required for delivery of that specific model.
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- During tutor training, think about how to equip tutors to work effectively with small groups of pupils.
- Tutors should work with schools to consider and review the most appropriate session frequency for pupils receiving tuition: young children may benefit from shorter more frequent sessions, while older pupils may be able to have longer, less frequent sessions, especially where clear information on areas to work on between sessions is given.
- The focus of the NTP is on supporting disadvantaged pupils, including those eligible for Pupil Premium funding: under this remit schools, who know their pupils best, will have flexibility as to which pupils receive tutoring. Consider any advice you may wish to give to schools to support their selection of pupils.

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- Ensure tutors are aware of the remit of the NTP Tuition Partners programme and the focus on improving academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- Ensure that a tutor is consistently available to the pupil and can deliver all sessions as planned.
- Ensure that there is a system in place for monitoring the delivery of sessions and for identifying any issues with tutor availability.
- Consider implementing a mechanism to identify tutors who have expertise and experience in particular subskills and match them to schools where this a specific need for support in these areas.

How can positive relationships between tutors, teachers and pupils be encouraged and maintained?

- Ensure tutors are trained to identify when they should adapt previously planned content, following pupils' responses, to increase the level of engagement from their tutees.
- Consider how best to support schools to explain the tutoring opportunity to pupils and parents.
- Consider setting up knowledge-sharing/peer-to-peer support mechanisms within your organisation, for example, to allow tutors to share their content plans for tutoring sessions and additional feedback on whether these were delivered as planned or adapted, and to what effect.

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- Consider how your organisation as a whole and individual tutors are equipped to make modifications based on feedback received on tuition delivery. How is feedback effectively used by tutors for their ongoing professional development?

Useful tools and resources

Resource	Description	Link
AQA preparing for 2021 support package	Curriculum experts have compiled a range of free subject-specific resources into three key themes to help plan and adapt teaching.	https://www.aqa.org.uk/preparing-for-2021/
EEF Teaching & Learning Toolkit	The Teaching and Learning Toolkit provides an accessible summary of the evidence across 35 different approaches aimed at improving pupil outcomes.	https://eef.li/toolkit/
EEF Guidance Reports	EEF guidance reports provide clear and actionable recommendations for teachers on a range of high-priority issues based on the best available evidence.	https://eef.li/guidance/
British Dyslexia Association Guide	A guide to understanding neurodiversity – a brief overview of the most commonly occurring specific learning differences	https://www.sendgateway.org.uk/resources.understanding-neurodiversity-a-guide-to-specific-learning-differences-2nd-edition.html

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- The following Education Endowment Foundation [Teaching & Learning Toolkit](#) strands:
- [Small Group Tuition](#)
 - [Teaching Assistants](#)
 - [One To One Tuition](#)
 - [Within Class Attainment Grouping](#)
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