IMPLEMENTING
EFFECTIVE
TUTORING

A 'how-to guide' with practical tips and considerations for school leaders and teachers.

Based on evidence from evaluations of the National Tutoring Programme conducted by NFER and its partners.

NFER
Classroom

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WELCOME TO THIS PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE TUTORING

We know the Covid-19 pandemic has put a huge amount of pressure on schools, teachers and pupils, and that you are using a range of methods to help children recover from missed learning. Tutoring may be one of the ways you are offering additional support to learners – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

This guide gives practical tips for school leaders and teachers looking to implement effective tutoring for children, including those in challenging socio-economic circumstances. It is based on evidence from evaluations of the first two years of the National Tutoring Programme, conducted by NFER and its partners. From this research, we have drawn out seven key themes and actions you may wish to consider.

School leaders: You can use this guide to support an overview of tutoring in your school, including planning, managing and scheduling tutoring.

Teachers: This guide may help you consider how to engage with your tutors and align tutoring to your learners' needs.

We know from our research that attending more sessions is related to better outcomes, so there are tips on helping your pupils attend and engage with tutoring.

The guide has been structured into themes to help you identify specific aspects of tutoring you'd benefit from focusing on. We have also created a poster with key tips from this guide which you can [download from our website](#) and print out for your staffroom.

For some themes, there are a number of questions for which further research will be hugely valuable. NFER will be considering next steps in research over the coming months, so look out for future research projects that you might be interested in participating in.

We were delighted to partner with Kantar Public and the University of Westminster on the evaluation of the first year of the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), which was funded by the Education Endowment Foundation; and also to carry out the evaluation of the second year, which was funded by the Department for Education. You can read the full evaluation reports and keep in touch with NFER's future work in this area via links at the end of this guide.

Dr Ben Styles,
Head of Classroom Practice and Workforce, NFER

> " Having evaluated the National Tutoring Programme, NFER is well placed to support teachers and school leaders in implementing effective tutoring for children. Disadvantaged pupils in particular have been hard hit by the effects of Covid-19 and so it is right that this useful guide puts an emphasis on this group.

Geoff Barton,
General Secretary, ASCL

ASCL Association of School and College Leaders

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Making high-quality tutoring accessible to all pupils that need it, not just those from families that can afford it, has significant potential to help narrow the attainment gap between rich and poor. This requires clarity on the characteristics of effective tutoring, and the conditions under which it is likely to be most impactful. This guide will help tutors, teachers and school leaders tailor their approaches to personal and small-group tuition, by providing evidence-based insights into what has worked so far, and in what contexts.

Nick Brook,
Deputy General Secretary of school leaders' union, NAHT, and Chair of the DfE Strategic Tutoring Advisory Group

SUMMARY OF **KEY TIPS**

▶ **Schedule planning and management time up front,** and consider how you will monitor attendance and pupils' progress.

▶ **Consider which pupils will benefit from tutoring and why.** Engage their parents in the value of tutoring and any practicalities they can support with.

▶ Attendance is key to better outcomes, so **use skilled tutors who can establish a good rapport with your learners.** Remind teachers, pupils and parents about their sessions.

▶ **Use small groups of similar abilities to encourage a positive group dynamic and tailoring,** but where individual personalisation is key (perhaps for SEND or EAL pupils) consider one-to-one tutoring.

▶ **Dedicate a quiet space for the sessions,** and check your broadband and devices ahead of online sessions.

▶ **Ensure tutoring adds to regular class teaching** rather than substitutes for it. Consider rotating timetables when scheduling sessions.

▶ **Think 'regular and short'** – at least weekly with sessions lasting for around an hour. The more sessions pupils attend, the better their outcomes.

▶ **Share information about your pupils and your curriculum with your tutors.** Ask for feedback on your pupils' progress, so that tutoring can meet your pupils' needs.

Theme 1:

What do I need to consider when planning tutoring in my school?

This theme helps school leaders consider how to plan and manage tutoring in your school. Whether your tutoring is school-led or provided by external tutors (such as via Tuition Partners), there are a number of areas you may want to think about as part of your planning:

1 **Schedule planning and management time up front,** for example allowing time to find suitable high-quality tutors.

2 **Schedule ongoing management time to oversee delivery** and maintain relationships with tutors and tutoring organisations.

3 **Set the strategic aim of tutoring for your school,** including what role it can play supporting disadvantaged learners. Whilst schools can decide which pupils they select for tutoring, the evidence is clear that children from disadvantaged backgrounds have fallen further behind their peers. The NTP has been designed to provide additional support to help these children make faster progress.

4 **Decide how you will fund tutoring,** for example, will you use your pupil premium funding to support tutoring in your school?

5 **Consider how you will monitor tutoring,** including monitoring pupil attendance in sessions (see also theme 5), tutoring quality, and the impact of tutoring on pupils' progress.

6 **Engage parents in the value and purpose of tutoring,** as well as the practicalities e.g. if the tutoring is outside school hours, or involves online tasks to complete at home.

Key elements of tutoring quality are covered throughout this guide including tutors' skills, sharing information/feedback with teachers, tailoring to pupils' needs, aligning with the curriculum, and creating a good rapport with pupils.

You may want to consider what kind of tutoring will suit your school, teachers and learners best. Some schools have valued using external tutoring organisations to secure additional experts to deliver tutoring, whilst others have found it beneficial to embed their own tutors in the school.

The themes in this guide are relevant, whichever tutoring route(s) you are using.

Theme 2:

What do I need to consider when selecting pupils and tutors in my school?

Things to consider when selecting pupils for tuition

- Which pupils are likely to engage with tutoring, and why? What can you do to support those pupils who might find it more challenging to engage?

- Which pupils will benefit most from tutoring, and why?

- Are there certain pupils whose learning was particularly disrupted during the pandemic – if so, who? How are you supporting disadvantaged pupils to make progress?

- Are there particular groups of pupils you want to receive tutoring?

- And importantly, is there other support available for pupils who you don't think tutoring would be suitable for?

Questions you might discuss with colleagues are: How will you know which pupils are likely to engage well? How will you assess pupils' needs? What data can you draw on to help you select pupils for tutoring? And how will you monitor the impact of tutoring on pupils' progress?

Selecting suitable tutors

The match between pupils and tutors is important – having tutors with the right skills to support your pupils and who establish a good rapport with your learners, will help your pupils to engage in the sessions for the duration of the course. Depending on your pupils' needs, you may want to look for tutors with:

- Specific subject knowledge.

- Specialisms working with children with SEND.

- Experience in working with primary and/or secondary school children.

- Teaching experience e.g. with qualified teacher status, or those experienced in working one-to-one or in small groups e.g. teaching assistants, or other tutoring experience.

- Good knowledge of the curriculum.

- In our research, older pupils (in year 11 in our evaluation) benefited from sessions with tutors with a specialist postgraduate qualification. Younger pupils (primary school) tutored in maths benefited from having a tutor with an undergraduate specialism, whilst in English having a tutor with qualified teacher status helped.

- Further research would help the school community to understand how tutors' different qualifications and skills are suitable for and benefit different learners.

> " Having a tutor with really good knowledge of the curriculum, who can turn their hand to all aspects of the year 6 curriculum has been really useful...
>
> **Primary teacher**

Theme 3:

What group size should I consider?

It is important to choose a suitable group size to meet the needs of pupils being tutored. The table below highlights some of the key things you might consider.

Some teachers report that small groups (e.g. of three pupils) of similar ability work well, allowing tailored learning and some personal attention.

One-to-one tutoring

✓ Tailored to pupils' individual learning needs

✓ Particularly suitable for pupils with SEND and pupils with EAL

✓ Useful for pupils who are easily distracted

? Less cost effective/more expensive per pupil than group tuition

Small group tutoring

✓ A group dynamic

✓ Pupils potentially more likely to engage

? May need to ensure similar abilities within a group so that sessions can be tailored

? Less flexibility for individual attention

▶ In the first two years of the National Tutoring Programme (academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22), tutoring was typically in small groups (mainly groups of three in year one of the programme, and in groups of four in the school-led tutoring in year two of the programme).

▶ In primary schools, small group tuition in English seemed beneficial, more-so than one-to-one tuition – small group tuition was associated with better English attainment outcomes. In maths, pupils did equally well in terms of academic outcomes when tutoring was one-to-one as they did when tutoring was in small groups.

The EEF toolkit provides evidence relating to one-to-one tutoring, and to small group tuition.

Theme 4:

Should we choose face-to-face or online tuition?

Face-to-face and online tuition each offer different opportunities. The feature below highlights some of the key things you might consider.

Face-to-face

✔ Engaging and interactive

✔ Appropriate for younger pupils

✔ Non-verbal cues

✔ Tactile resources

✔ Teacher can meet the tutor in person

? Requires a dedicated quiet space

? Can be affected by Covid-related pupil/ tutor absences

Our research found that schools generally felt face-to-face tuition is more engaging and particularly appropriate for primary pupils. Tutors find it easier to build relationships with pupils and school staff when tuition is face-to-face. The quality of sessions and pupil attendance are also more easily monitored and supported when delivered in person at school. The presence of the tutor at school readily allows for contact with tutors including conversations about pupils' progress.

Online

✔ Flexible scheduling e.g. outside of school hours

✔ Reach pupils not attending school

✔ Efficient in terms of space required

✔ Online content available between sessions

✔ Online feedback platform

? Requires IT equipment, headsets and cameras

? Harder for schools to monitor quality

Although face-to-face tuition is often favoured, online tuition also has its benefits. The flexibility of online makes it possible to reach pupils who are at home and might not be able to attend sessions in school. Online delivery can also accommodate sessions outside of normal school hours, for example in the evening and at weekends if desired. Some schools report that online tutoring delivery sometimes comes with sophisticated feedback tools that allow for real-time feedback to the subject teacher.

Other practical things to consider

▶ Secure a quiet space to hold sessions in.

▶ Ensure safeguarding procedures are strictly followed, especially for online tuition.

▶ Check broadband coverage is sufficient for both the pupil and tutor for online sessions.

▶ Check devices used for online sessions have a camera/microphone for video conference calls.

▶ Check if you'll need headsets for online sessions.

Theme 5:

How do I best schedule the sessions – when and for how long?

Tutoring aims to be additional to classroom teaching; in other words, it should add to the regular class teaching received rather than substitute for it. In a busy timetable this can be challenging but there are a number of approaches schools use to balance competing needs.

This theme sets out considerations around timetabling sessions, including how many and how long for, which you may like to discuss with your colleagues.

Timetabling/scheduling

Ideally you will want to avoid sessions clashing with core subjects. Our evaluations found that some schools substituted sessions for non-core subjects but care should be taken so that pupils do not regularly miss the same subject or their favourite subject. Some schools report a rotating timetable works well. Non-class times e.g. lunchtime/after school can work but attendance can be more challenging.

Frequency and length of sessions

Think "regular and short" for the optimal format for tutoring sessions. To maximise pupils' attention and maintain momentum, you may want to consider scheduling sessions at least weekly, and lasting around an hour (perhaps half an hour per session for primary school pupils). Evidence suggests that maths tuition benefits from high intensity and frequent sessions over a short period of time.

How many sessions

Better outcomes are generally achieved with more hours of tutoring. Many schools follow the model of providing pupils with a programme of 15 hours of tutoring in an academic year.

Tips for monitoring and encouraging pupil attendance:

✔ Promote tutoring to pupils and parents as a positive opportunity rather than about underperformance.

✔ Brief parents so they know how to support tutoring, including if it is scheduled outside of school hours.

✔ Use email and text messages to remind teachers, pupils and parents of sessions.

✔ During school, collect pupils from classrooms and take them to their session.

✔ Consider incentivising attendance (e.g. raffle tickets, providing drinks and snacks).

✔ Ask tutors to keep a live register.
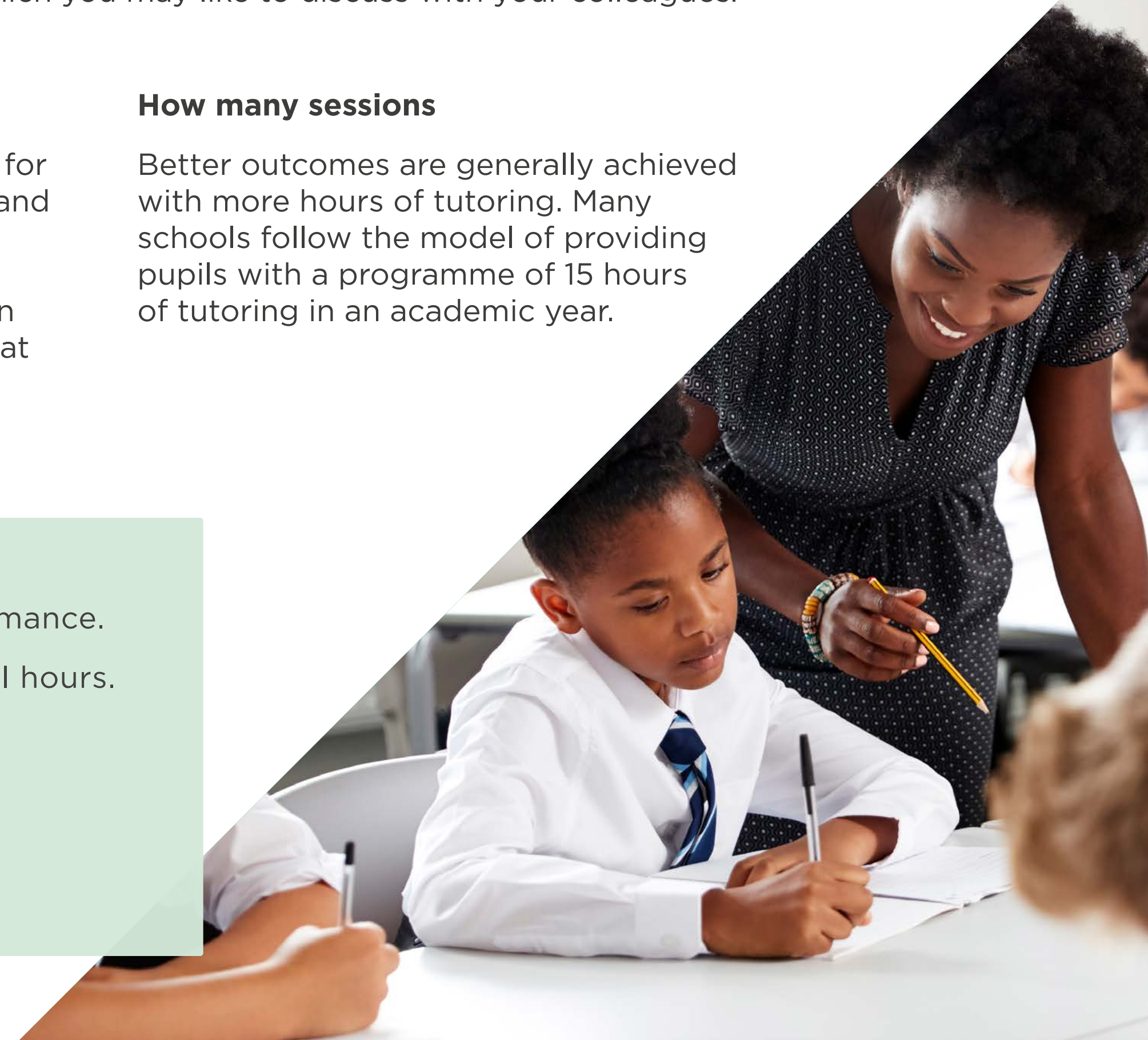
Theme 6:

How can we promote good information sharing and communication with tutors?

This theme highlights how to promote good information sharing and communication between teachers and tutors, in order to help everyone get the best out of the tutoring sessions.

A key aspect of effective tutoring is the sharing of information about pupils which can help learning. Prior to the start of sessions, aim to share information with the tutor about the pupil's subject knowledge and their areas of strength/weakness. A subject teacher or class teacher might be best placed to do this. The tutor can use this information to tailor their tutoring. Ask the tutor to provide the teacher with regular feedback on the pupil's progress.

Our evaluations found that schools that engaged with parents about the value and purpose of tutoring (such as through emails and phone calls), had higher pupil attendance in tutoring including outside of school hours. More evidence is needed on how schools are informing parents about their child/ren's progress with tutoring.

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We have regular, informal discussions with tutors about progress. Tutors speak to class teachers when necessary in order to discuss progress about individual children.

Primary teacher

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I plan alongside the year 3 and 4 teachers, so I know exactly what they are delivering and planning is aligned. Teachers can see that learning from the tutoring in the morning is feeding through into afternoon lessons and they feed this back to me because we do have close contact and we keep each other up to date.

Primary tutor

Theme 7:

How will I ensure that the tutoring meets my pupils' needs?

This theme aims to help you focus the tutoring on your pupils' needs. Our research found this was key to teachers' and tutors' views about how effective the tutoring was.

Tailored sessions

Providing tutors with information about pupils means they can tailor their teaching to the particular needs of the pupils (see also theme 6). Tailoring can sometimes be harder in small groups – and so you may want to consider the group dynamic and pupils' abilities to help with this (see also theme 3).

As in theme 2, finding the right tutors to meet your pupils' needs is important – for example, tutors who make the sessions fun and engaging and who are proactive about developing a supportive relationship with pupils. Overall, tutors can take advantage of the unique learning environment offered by one-to-one/ small group tutoring to personalise their teaching as much as possible.

Alignment to classroom teaching

It can also be helpful if tutoring content is aligned to classroom teaching in the subject. The importance of alignment might vary by age, subject and your particular school context.

Feedback from tutored pupils involved in focus groups and interviews

Our research found that where sessions were tailored to pupils' needs this particularly helped their confidence.

"It's a lot more relaxed and a lot less intense than normal learning so you don't really dread it."
Secondary school pupil

"I'd never normally put my hand up to read in class. She helped me feel more confident."
Secondary school pupil

"I got to practice. I didn't know one multiplication before, but now I do. I think I'm a lot more confident at maths because I didn't like maths before."
Primary school pupil

"My tutor gave me full liberty of what I wanted to do so it's not like a normal lesson where I'm limited to do what the teacher says. She gave me my own freedom and I could have my own opinion throughout my creative writing."
Secondary school pupil

"The tutor understood me... I personally don't like English but when I was doing the sessions with her I used to be way more comfortable in answering questions, reading and doing things with her."
Secondary school pupil

▶ In our research, we found that for English tuition, alignment to classroom teaching was less important because pupils need to develop a foundation and be confident with comprehension, reading, and vocabulary basics.

▶ For maths, it was important that teaching methods were aligned with the classroom teaching method; for example, a tutor teaching long division should be aware of the method used in the classroom so as not to confuse pupils.

In this guide we have highlighted some of the key practical aspects of tutoring for you to consider in your school. We have also outlined some of the findings from our research, and suggested where further research might be valuable.

If you would like more details on the findings from our research, you can read the full year 1 evaluation report and year 2 evaluation report on our website.

If you found this guide helpful, don't forget to share it with your colleagues and download the key tips poster to put up in your staffroom.

To be the first to receive future Research Bites from NFER Classroom, sign up to our newsletter and follow @NFERClassroom on Twitter. We look forward to supporting you with more insights soon.

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