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Research and analysis

Independent review of tutoring in schools: phase 1 findings

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Applies to England



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Executive summary

The government has made tutoring a priority following the COVID-19 pandemic in order to help pupils to catch up. Tutoring can be particularly helpful for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, who have been most affected by the disruption to their education. [\[footnote 1\]](#)

The evidence for the efficacy of tutoring is strong. The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) highlights that targeted, frequent and consistent small-group tuition sessions can help struggling pupils to make around 4 months' additional progress over the course of an academic year. However, tuition is also an expensive intervention and difficult to access by children from disadvantaged communities. [\[footnote 2\]](#)

Since November 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) is investing £1 billion into the National Tutoring Programme (NTP). This scheme is intended to provide additional support to children and young people affected by the pandemic so that they can catch up through accessing high-quality tuition. The NTP currently offers 3 routes to subsidised tuition:

- tuition partners – external tutoring organisations, quality assured by the DfE
- academic mentors – employed to work as full-time, in-house staff members to provide intensive support to pupils who need it
- school-led tutoring – offering flexibility for schools to use their own staff to provide tutoring, which may involve personnel they currently employ, or staff newly engaged for this purpose

The DfE commissioned Ofsted to carry out an independent review of tutoring. This includes assessing the progress and, where possible, effectiveness of the NTP. [\[footnote 3\]](#) The review is focused on tuition provided through the NTP over 2 years, from September 2021. This report sets out the findings from the first phase of our study. We have previously shared our emerging findings with the DfE. This has supported the focus of the DfE's updated guidance for schools published in September 2022.

Between September 2021 and July 2022, His Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) carried out research visits to 63 schools. These visits involved discussions with leaders, teachers, tutors and pupils. We wanted to explore schools' tuition strategies and how well they had integrated these. Inspectors also observed tuition sessions to see what pupils were typically being taught and how effectively tutors were managing sessions.

We found that **leaders in schools were more likely to choose the school-led tutoring approach**. This gave them greater control and oversight of quality compared with using academic mentors or tuition partners. Only around two fifths of schools that we visited were using tuition partners. Fewer were using academic mentors.

Encouragingly, **the tutoring that pupils were receiving was strong in over half of the schools visited**. The purpose of tutoring was well understood in these schools, and it was well planned and implemented in practice due to how content directly supports the curriculum being covered in the classroom. High-quality tutors were involved to make sure that pupils were benefiting from the intervention. In a further 21 schools, there were some strong features of tutoring that were embedded, but often inspectors identified several limitations in quality that could hinder pupils' progress.

However, in 10 of the schools we visited, the tutoring provided, whether school-led tutoring or through tuition partners or academic mentors, **was haphazard and poorly planned**. In these cases, the curriculum rarely aligned with what was being provided in the tutoring sessions and there was often a lack of understanding of the DfE's guidance on the purpose of small groups and frequent sessions. [\[footnote 4\]](#) They also misjudged when to stop tuition for individual pupils because of poor assessment procedures. This meant that arrangements could continue indefinitely or when pupils no longer needed them.

Some **schools were reluctant to extend the school day for tutoring**. This was because leaders were finding it difficult to allocate tutoring sessions at times that were convenient for teachers, tutors, pupils and their parents. This was leading to many providing tutoring during the school day. The better schools providing tuition had put in place mitigations to

minimise the impact of tuition on other lessons during the school day and on the extra-curricular activities that pupils enjoyed after school. Mitigations included flexible tutoring times and shortening the length of tuition sessions. However, in one fifth of the schools we visited, leaders had not thought through the risks of disruption to the curriculum despite DfE guidance suggesting schools should factor in how tutoring fits into the school day.

Where schools tended to provide tutoring before or after school, **pupil attendance was the main concern** with this approach. To manage uptake, the stronger schools promoted the benefits of tutoring to both parents and pupils. This is so that both understood the considerable impact it could have on pupils' learning.

The stronger schools providing tutoring were **using a range of information to prioritise pupils for tuition**. This typically focused on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, these schools used wider assessments, supplemented by teachers' knowledge, to identify the pupils who could benefit most from tuition. This was more effective when the assessments focused on the component knowledge of the curriculum to identify who had fallen furthest behind or had developed misconceptions. A few weaker schools targeted specific groups for tutoring but without considering other information available. This often led to less coherent tutoring sessions. Typically, **schools were prioritising tutoring on English and maths**, although secondary schools often had more capacity for tutoring to cover a wider range of national curriculum subjects.

One of the main features of effective tuition observed was quality teaching. In line with the evidence from existing research, **sessions taught by qualified teachers tended to be of higher quality than those taught by other types of tutors.** [\[footnote 5\]](#) Teachers' wider subject knowledge and sophisticated pedagogy enhanced sessions considerably. This is also associated with some leaders' rationale for choosing the school-led tutoring route: it gave them immediate access to high-quality teachers who understood their pupils. This was not always the case with tuition partners or academic mentors.

Nevertheless, our evidence suggests that **tutoring cannot**

really work, however good the teaching is, **without a well-considered and constructed curriculum** in place. The provider's curriculum underpinned the most effective tutoring that we saw. In these cases, teachers and tutors were able to use the schools' curriculum to identify the core knowledge that pupils had either missed or did not fully understand and made sure this could be covered in tutoring sessions. This was either targeted at specific gaps in pupils' knowledge (the traditional tutoring model) or through an appropriate sequence of topics that leaders identified would have a broader impact on participating pupils' learning for catch up. In schools with weaker curriculums, the content of tuition sessions was more generic, poorly planned and often failed to target individual pupils' needs.

Evidence from the stronger schools identified that **tutors and classroom teachers working together was essential for effective provision**. Teachers considered tutors' views on, for example, when to remove pupils from the tutoring programme or which pupils needed further support. There were clear arrangements for leaders, teachers and tutors in these schools to provide feedback that focused on the pupils' progress through the curriculum.

Despite some of these issues, **the perceptions of leaders, staff and pupils were overwhelmingly positive** about the tutoring provided. This was seen across all 3 tuition routes. Pupils were enthusiastic about the tuition they were receiving. They spoke positively about the experience, saying that they found it valuable, that it was improving their confidence and that they would like it to continue. Leaders and staff also suggested that tuition had re-engaged pupils, increased their confidence and resilience, and changed their attitudes to learning. This was deriving positive benefits beyond tutoring and into routine classes as well.

Most schools, however, had not been assessing tuition effectively to evaluate its impact on pupils' progress, often because their tutoring approach had not been established for long enough. The schools with clearer assessment systems focused sharply on assuring themselves that the curriculum was being implemented effectively through tuition. This typically meant that they carried out formative assessment regularly and aligned it with the component knowledge that pupils were

learning.[\[footnote 6\]](#)

Generally, **the NTP has been well received by schools**, particularly the school-led tutoring route. There is little doubt of the value they attached to this intervention in terms of increased pupil confidence, resilience and attitudes. However, there remain some areas covered by this review where leaders' decisions have limited the impact of tutoring on pupils' outcomes. We will continue to investigate this in the second phase of the study to see how well tutoring strategies have developed over time.

Introduction

What is tutoring?

In its current policy guidance for schools, the DfE defines tutoring as:

“ ... a teacher, teaching assistant or other professional educator providing intensive and individualised academic support to pupils in either one-to-one or small group arrangements. We know tutoring can have a positive impact on pupils' academic progress.”

This is supported by the available research literature, which suggests that tutoring is an effective intervention for raising pupils' attainment, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.[\[footnote 7\]](#) Schools in England have previously used tutoring as an intervention through their pupil premium funding.[\[footnote 8\]](#) Additionally, there is a tradition of external tuition in England, paid for by parents, where parents believe it is effective. Parent-funded tutoring tends to be focused on a particular aim though. For instance, tuition may be used to get a child into a grammar school or to achieve a certain exam grade, rather than to make general educational progress in a subject.[\[footnote 9\]](#) It should be noted, however, that the research tends to cover the effectiveness of tutoring at the margins of the

system and is not specific to tutoring as a system-wide remedial measure.

Research evidence suggests that both one-to-one and small-group tuition are effective in providing pupils who have fallen behind with more instruction time.^[footnote 10] Pupils make strong progress with each approach (typically taking around 5 and 4 months, respectively), although there is significant cost associated with these programmes.

Tutoring is a form of adaptive teaching that should neither create artificial, distinct tasks for different groups of pupils nor set lower expectations for them.^[footnote 11] For instance, the EEF found that one-to-one tuition in schools has considerable impact if it is provided in addition to, and explicitly linked with, the curriculum of pupils' normal lessons.^[footnote 12] Small-group tuition is most likely to be effective if the group is as small as possible and the tuition focuses on pupils' specific needs, identified beforehand through strong diagnostic assessment.^[footnote 13]

The benefits of small-group tuition are the result of a customisation effect.^[footnote 14] That is, tutoring interventions are an extreme case of class size reduction that better enables adaptive teaching. Tutoring, therefore, benefits pupils by having teaching that better matches, and can be customised to, their needs. This is particularly the case when their current knowledge may mean that they are less able to follow along in classroom sessions. Tuition starts to become less effective when group sizes exceed 6 or 7 pupils.^[footnote 15]

Other aspects, including duration, time and frequency, influence the effectiveness of tutoring programmes.^[footnote 16] Evidence on intensity suggests that multiple sessions per week have more impact than one per week.^[footnote 17] Tutoring for adolescents has been shown to be more effective over extended periods.^[footnote 18] Consistency is also an important factor. The more time tutors spend with students, the stronger the bond they develop, which supports the learning process more broadly.^[footnote 19] As a result, regularly changing tutors might affect the pupil's progress and attitude to learning.

Research suggests that tutoring during the school day is most effective, and tutoring should be provided in school where

possible.^[footnote 20] However, the available research does not explain the impact on pupils of missing other subject lessons or recreational activities to attend tutoring sessions, which may be significant. There is a small amount of evidence that suggests attendance at tutoring sessions taking place before or after school might be difficult to achieve, particularly where disadvantaged pupils are concerned.^[footnote 21]

Most studies highlight that high-quality teaching is the most important factor in effective tuition.^[footnote 22] For instance, the effectiveness of one-to-one or small group tutoring depends on the personal and professional characteristics of individual tutors. This includes their subject knowledge, assessment and teaching technique.^[footnote 23] Furthermore, behaviours such as questioning and explaining can either create or undermine opportunities for learning.^[footnote 24]

Tuition provided by qualified teachers has been shown to be more effective than tutoring provided by non-qualified teachers.^[footnote 25] Where this is the case it draws on teachers' knowledge of the school context and pupils' needs, particularly what they already know.^[footnote 26] Teaching assistants have also been shown to have an impact in one-to-one and small-group settings. Crucially, however, positive effects of intensive instructional support are only observed when teaching assistants are provided with structured programmes and high-quality support and training.^[footnote 27]

What is the National Tutoring Programme?

The NTP was launched in November 2020 to provide additional, targeted support for children and young people whose education had been most affected by the disruption caused by the pandemic.^[footnote 28] A school-led tutoring option was added for the academic year 2021/22 meaning that schools could access tutoring through 3 routes during the period of our study:

- tuition partners
- academic mentors
- school-led tutoring

Schools are able to choose one or more of these routes.

Tuition partners

All schools are eligible to use external tutors supplied by quality assured tuition partners, with 70% of the total cost subsidised. The training offered to tutors was provided by individual tuition partners and therefore varies between each organisation.

Academic mentors

These are salaried members of staff working alongside teachers to teach specific subjects one-to-one or in small groups. Schools that had either an above average number of pupils eligible for pupil premium or a proportion of children living in income deprived families or in an area of persistent underperformance were eligible for this route.

Academic mentors were recruited through Randstad and were either graduates who were trained to mentor in their qualified subject or teachers with qualified teacher status (QTS). Online training was provided by Liverpool Hope University for all academic mentors. Training was completed over 2 weeks for non-QTS applicants and 1 week for QTS applicants. Ninety-five per cent of core salary costs for academic mentors were subsidised by the NTP.

School-led tutoring

All state schools in England with pupils eligible for pupil premium receive a ring-fenced grant to source their own tutoring provision, based on the number of pupils eligible for pupil premium. This money can be used to pay existing staff or commission external resources. The grant subsidises around 75% of the cost of tuition.

The Education Development Trust provided online training for tutors, both with or without QTS, at no extra cost to the school. The training included a series of core modules providing participants with knowledge and skills to deliver one-to-one or small-group tuition. On successful completion, candidates become certified tutors endorsed by the Chartered College of Teaching.

Tutors without QTS had to complete a compulsory 11-hour

training course before beginning tutoring. An optional 2-hour training course was available to staff members with QTS.

Methods

We agreed with the DfE that our review would focus on:

- how providers identified pupils to receive tutoring
- the suitability of tutors
- how providers set up tutoring
- how well tutoring aligned with the intended curriculum
- the impact of tutoring
- the wider effects of tutoring in the provider

The full set of research questions are in our published terms of reference. [\[footnote 29\]](#)

We gathered evidence from research visits to 63 schools during the 2021/22 academic year. This included:

- 36 primary schools
- 27 secondary schools

A single team of HMI carried out visits over the year, to provide consistency. The visits took place over 1 or 2 days, depending on how much tutoring the school was offering pupils.

During the research visits, we held discussions with leaders, teachers, tutors and pupils to get a sense of the provider's tuition strategy and how well integrated it was with the intended curriculum. These discussions consisted of semi-structured interviews or focus groups, depending on the size of the institution. The discussions with pupils were all carried out in a focus group. Importantly, inspectors also observed tuition sessions during each visit to see what was typically being taught and how well tutors were managing sessions. This was essential for us to triangulate the evidence and identify the coherence between the planned tuition strategy and practical implementation.

We selected schools in order to provide a balanced yet varied sample, based on:

- tuition route (sourced from the DfE)
- latest Ofsted overall effectiveness judgement (excluding inadequate schools)
- level of deprivation (using the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index)

We also selected schools to reflect the likely quantity of tutoring being carried out. This meant that we carried out more visits to schools receiving a greater amount of funding for the intervention.

We supplemented the evidence from the research visits with telephone interviews of 6 headteachers (from other schools not in the visit sample) and 9 leaders from tuition partners. All those who participated in the research did so on a voluntary basis and gave consent (in the case of pupils, this included their parents' or carers' consent).

Further details on the method, process of analysis and limitations of the study are in [Annex A](#).

Findings

Issues with tuition partners and academic mentors prompted most leaders to select the school-led tutoring approach

At the time of our visits, 53 of the 63 schools in the sample were providing at least some of their tuition programme through the school-led tutoring route. In total, 24 schools had allocated some tutors from tuition partners, and only 12 had employed academic mentors.

Typically, leaders had investigated using tuition partners and

academic mentors in the first instance because they thought it might be less burdensome for their existing staff. However, the experience revealed several barriers that led leaders to rethink their tuition strategy. As described elsewhere, many of the leaders we spoke to said that the administrative burden in sourcing tutors through tuition partners was challenging. [\[footnote 30\]](#) This was often related to the bureaucracy involved from the initial roll out which largely impacted on leaders' workloads. However, there were also concerns about all schools 'fishing from the same pool' in terms of sourcing tutors.

Leaders also told us that they felt distanced from the recruitment and selection process for appointing tutors through tuition partners and academic mentor routes. Concerns about the quality of tutoring that they subsequently received was an important reason why they changed their approach. In a few cases, tutors had started tuition sessions with pupils but their employment was terminated after only a couple of weeks. This was because leaders' internal quality assurance checks had highlighted that the tutor's work was not up to their required standard or expectations. For example, leaders in several primary schools said that the tutors they had sourced from tuition partners did not know how to communicate effectively with younger children.

In addition, leaders who appointed tuition partners (but did not continue with this route) said that collaboration and communication were their main points of concern. For example, in their view, tuition partners tended not to:

- communicate well with the school to understand individual pupils' contexts
- work with class teachers to ensure that the content of tutoring sessions aligned well with the school curriculum
- give good-quality feedback to class teachers on the progress pupils were making in tutoring sessions

Some leaders reported that tuition partners taught their own programme of work in the tutoring sessions. This was not connected to the schools' curriculum and did not always take account of the gaps in pupils' knowledge. Additionally, feedback along the lines of the 'pupil is engaging well' was common but lacked important information about the progress pupils were making through the curriculum.

These views were often associated with tuition that was provided remotely, rather than in person. Leaders in these cases were clear that remote learning was ineffective for the vast majority of pupils. This was in addition to the frustrations that some leaders expressed about the infrastructure and hardware that often impacted on the quality of online tutoring.

Leaders specified that when they were in control of recruitment it was easier to manage alignment between tutoring and their curriculum. They could also monitor the quality of tutoring more closely. Where leaders had chosen their own staff to lead tuition sessions, this was because they considered that the school could benefit from their experience, and from the relationships they had already established with pupils. Existing staff knew how to operate within the school's systems and structures. They were familiar with the school's curriculum, assessment methods, feedback systems and attendance/behaviour policy.

Just under two fifths of the schools we visited were using tuition partners at the time of the visit. In these schools, leaders and staff tended to be more positive about the tuition provided, and thought the arrangements were working well. Where school leaders considered tuition partners to be effective, they said that the quality of the tutors and strong collaboration with class teachers were necessary for the success of the tuition. For instance, one tuition partner was held in high regard by several school leaders for the bespoke one-to-one approach their tutors provided for pupils. A leader from another school noted that the tuition partner they were using was 'really good at getting in contact and praising the children'. Several others reported that their chosen tuition partner accommodated their requests to include content from the curriculum in the tutoring sessions.

Views of tuition partners

Alongside the research visits, we also carried out interviews with representatives from 9 of the quality assured tuition partners. Almost all the tuition partners we spoke to were positive about the NTP, with one provider saying:

“ There has been negative press about the programme, but it's about not forgetting all those hard-working tutors and the pupils who are benefitting from it.”

Tuition partners stated the importance of whole-school buy-in for a programme to be successful. However, the clashing of priorities and an unwillingness from schools to compromise on timeslots was often seen as a barrier. As one tuition provider mentioned:

“ We want schools to think more broadly. There is nothing more frustrating than engaging with us and putting on a session at 3pm to have tutoring clashing with detention and not have a policy on if they need to go to detention or tutoring. [There] needs to be a consistent approach from staff in the school of what takes priority.”

All 9 respondents made reference to the difficulties they had faced in a constantly changing environment during their first 2 years of providing NTP-funded tuition. As one tuition partner stated:

“ the chopping and changing... [created] a lot of bureaucracy that both schools and tutoring providers found got in the way of quality of delivery.”

They all stated their commitment to reducing the workload for school staff as much as possible, with one provider telling schools, ‘you get the kids there, we’ll do the rest’. However, this also illustrates the issue with curriculum coherence expressed by school leaders. Three tuition partners had set up specialised internal teams to help schools with the initial sign-up process.

Academic mentors

Some schools had originally opted for the academic mentor route but found that the recruitment process was burdensome and often inconclusive. One of the main criticisms of this route was the availability of academic mentors. Several schools mentioned that they had applied for an academic mentor but had not been able to recruit one as yet. In one example, a secondary school leader explained:

“ We applied for academic mentors. This route only became eligible to us in April (because of the proportion of disadvantaged pupils on roll). We are eligible for two individuals. We have advertised repeatedly through the NTP portal. In total, we have received two CVs but short-listed

neither. One was a fairly irrelevant CV.”

The main concern with the academic mentor route was with the quality of tutoring. Some leaders identified that the academic mentors they have employed (through the graduate route) can be knowledgeable about their subjects but too often do not have the pedagogical skills to support pupils fully.

In a few instances, it was mentioned that ‘there were definitely gaps with the training the academic mentor had received.’ For instance, in one school, leaders said that the tuition given by one academic mentor was of such poor quality that they had to instruct other staff to re-teach the pupils involved. In addition, 4 schools gave examples of how they had spent a significant amount of time training academic mentors how to teach effectively. Leaders in these cases commented along the lines of, ‘it would have been easier and quicker if I had just delivered the tutoring’.

Tutoring strategies did not always align with the DfE’s guidance

Overall, the schools we visited tended to follow the DfE’s guidance when planning their tutoring strategy. This was straightforward for several schools, as they had invested in tutoring as an intervention in the years before the pandemic, so already had expertise in this area. Furthermore, a few schools mentioned that, when preparing their tuition, they had read the Education Endowment Foundation’s evidence on effective tutoring and therefore understood the rationale for some of the conditions set out in the guidance.

However, in 10 of the schools we visited, inspectors noted that the approach to tutoring was haphazard and ad hoc. In these schools, there was no planned, systematic approach for their tutoring programme, which resulted in poor implementation. Sometimes this led to tutoring resembling other types of intervention or was simply seen as a bolt-on to routine class sessions. Workload was a barrier that affected planning for tutoring. However, there was also a fundamental misunderstanding of the elements that can make tutoring

successful. Unsurprisingly, there was some misalignment with the criteria in the DfE's guidance in these schools.

Tuition group size

A core finding in the tutoring research available is that, once the size of tuition groups exceeds a certain threshold (typically 6 or 7 individuals), there is a noticeable reduction in effectiveness. So, it is a concern that, in 17 schools we visited, it was common to have groups of more than 8 pupils in a tuition session. This was something identified across all 3 tuition routes.

The rationale for larger tuition groups was often unclear. A few leaders mentioned that they were trying to provide tutoring for as many pupils as possible who needed it. However, this decision was likely detrimental to these pupils. This is because the tuition provided to larger groups did not help pupils overcome misconceptions or learn the specific knowledge that they needed to progress. It tended to be more generic in content or focused on exam practice and mastering exam technique.

In the smaller, or one-to-one, tuition groups that we observed, there was a better understanding of how small groups can support pupils' learning for catch up. In these cases, schools suggested that feedback and sustained engagement from teachers, alongside focused teaching on components of the curriculum, were having a positive impact.

For example, we often heard that smaller groups helped pupils to feel less shy in explaining where they were 'stuck'. This is because, in a small group, there is the opportunity to engage in dialogue more easily with the tutor than in a typical class size. This allows tutors to spend more time identifying misconceptions, explaining and reiterating important concepts, and providing immediate feedback. One benefit of this is that pupils who received tuition were more confident when they returned to class sessions, especially in raising their hands to answer questions and asking for more help when necessary.

When to stop tuition

We saw some variation in the principles that school leaders applied when deciding when to end tuition for pupils. The DfE's

guidance states that a 15-hour block of tuition is suitable, and around half of the schools we visited were following this rigidly. [\[footnote 31\]](#) Other schools took a more flexible approach. For some, tuition continued for longer than the 15-hour period. In others, tuition was provided for a much shorter period.

In the schools we visited, we found that the success of tuition did not necessarily depend on the length of time given to it. Instead, the quality of assessment practice tended to make more difference. In schools that used effective formative approaches to assessment, tutors and class teachers could immediately see when pupils had made progress. This meant that they had the information to determine whether a pupil had sufficiently caught up and no longer required tuition, even if the pupil had not yet received 15 hours. This meant schools could allocate remaining time to other pupils who could benefit. Likewise, if tutored pupils were still struggling, they could stay in the sessions longer than the programmed 15 hours.

The schools where tutoring provision was weakest had poor assessment arrangements in place to help tutors and teachers make decisions about pupils' tuition. This meant that pupils were sometimes kept in sessions well beyond 15 hours, often with little idea of whether attending was helping them. For instance, when asked how much tutoring pupils might need on a programme, one tutor responded, 'how long is a piece of string?'

Several schools also made decisions on the length of the tutoring provided to make it equitable for all students that they had identified in need, although this often went against the grain of the research evidence. For instance, one secondary school was providing a course of 5 sessions per pupil to ensure that all disadvantaged pupils could benefit. However, the content of these sessions was ad hoc and the assessment process weak. This meant that few pupils were likely to have benefited as much as they could have from the small amount of tutoring received.

Flexibility is required for when tuition should take place

The schools we visited provided tutoring at different times of the day.

In around three quarters (47) of the schools, sessions were held during regular lesson times. This was more common in primary schools. By comparison, just over two fifths (26) of schools provided tuition after school. Of these, 11 provided it before school and 9 were providing tuition sessions at the weekend. Sessions before and after school, and at weekends, were more common in secondary schools. Some schools were using a mixture of both during and after the school day to provide tuition.

In most cases, the time when tutoring was carried out was dependent on the availability of tutors and pupils. Timetabling of tuition, therefore, needs to consider a range of factors.

During the school day – disrupting the wider curriculum in primary schools?

Some of the available research literature suggests that there are benefits to providing tuition during the school day instead of after school. [\[footnote 32\]](#) However, this does not consider the impact of tuition on the wider school curriculum. We were concerned that holding tutoring sessions during the school day could mean that pupils miss learning in other subjects and fall further behind.

Leaders from the primary schools we visited said that they had no other option but to provide tutoring during school hours. For example, it was often mentioned that staff's workload prevented them from offering after-school tuition. Furthermore, where schools were using tuition partners, the tutors' availability was often inflexible and rigidly stuck to the same time every week. Pressure from parents about school pick-up times also led to tutoring during the school day being the only viable option. A few leaders mentioned that pupils and parents could perceive after-school tuition as a punishment, particularly if it prevented pupils from taking part in extra-curricular activities or social time that they had missed during the pandemic.

In several primary schools where tuition was targeted at pupils in Years 2 and 3, the rationale for tutoring during the school day was that these pupils had missed so much during the pandemic

that helping them to catch up in maths and English should be a priority. The schools claimed that, if they did not focus on the core subjects through additional tuition, much of the wider curriculum would remain inaccessible to these pupils. There were other views from staff in a couple of primary schools that, as long as tuition sessions were held frequently, consistently, and in the short term, then missing 15 hours of other curriculum time would be more than compensated for by the gains made through tutoring.

Most primary schools, however, were aware of this potential disruption to pupils' wider learning from tutoring during the school day. They were putting arrangements in place to ensure that it caused minimal disruption to the curriculum. These included:

- flexible tutoring times so that pupils did not miss the same foundation subject every week
- shortening the length of tuition sessions
- rotating foundation subject timetables each week if it was not possible to provide flexible tutoring times
- including pupils for the input part of a class lesson before they left for tuition part-way through the lesson (ensuring that pupils receiving tuition were focused on the same curriculum objective as their peers)
- provision for siblings, so that tutoring did not become onerous for parents at school pick-up (in the case of after-school tutoring)

We were concerned, however, that in a minority of primary schools, leaders had not put in place any arrangements to minimise the learning that pupils missed across the wider curriculum.

Extending the school day – will secondary school pupils attend?

While extending the school day to provide tuition meant that pupils did not miss regular lessons, secondary schools highlighted that this strategy was not without issues.

As mentioned above, there remained concerns that after-school tuition ate into pupils' extra-curricular activities and social time

with friends. Leaders were resolving this by ensuring that, for example, sport clubs that pupils were particularly invested in did not clash with their tuition time. These flexible arrangements were essential to ensure that pupils could benefit from tuition without it affecting other activities.

A greater concern, however, was around pupils' willingness to attend sessions at times other than during the school day. Many leaders said that getting young people to attend morning or weekend sessions was not straightforward. Most stated they were keen to achieve this, though, as it avoided issues with pupils missing after-school clubs. However, several secondary schools in disadvantaged areas often stated that it was getting the parents of pupils to see the value of tuition that was important for securing buy-in to morning or after-school sessions:

“ The real battle is with parents. Tutoring only works if pupils turn up and that is dependent on parents.”

To ensure that before- or after-school arrangements were successful, the better secondary schools tended to brand tutoring as a real benefit to pupils and their parents, in order to encourage them to participate. This involved advertising the programme of content to parents so that they could see the benefits that tutoring would provide for their child. For example, one school that provided tutoring sessions before school shared a 12-week plan with parents that included the curriculum components their child would be focusing on.

In some schools, rewards were also offered to pupils to secure high attendance. This often ranged from pupils having their names read out in assembly to prizes being given to the pupils with the highest levels of attendance. A few leaders were more forthright in their communications. They stated that 'tutoring is the type of additional support that rich kids get' and were clear in highlighting to their pupils (and their parents) that they 'were getting it for free'.

Tutors were also effective at getting pupils through the door by making before- and after-school sessions less formal. This was important for making sessions stand out as something different from routine classes. As one tutor noted:

“ It has become quite clear that for this to be meaningful we could not just regurgitate what we have done before. Giving children a bit of special attention is what I think has made the geography sessions really significant. [Tutoring] feels very different to a normal lesson.”

From the same secondary school, teachers noted that:

“ Students are attending sessions before getting on the coach [for a school trip]. Clearly there is a draw that students appreciate – they’re making the effort to attend.”

Leaders reported that, while attendance at the first tutoring sessions was not always high, word of mouth from other pupils about the benefits and how they were enjoying their tutoring meant that it generally improved over the long term.

It was common for class teachers to highlight their surprise that pupils who they thought were very unlikely to attend had done so and had kept at it. This usually had a positive effect on the pupils’ resilience and attitude to learning.

The best schools providing tutoring used a range of information to prioritise pupils for tuition

The DfE’s guidance specifies that schools should prioritise their pupil premium cohort to receive tutoring. This is in line with the NTP’s objective of supporting disadvantaged pupils. Most of the schools we visited were using this as a starting point for allocating pupils to tutoring, although the better schools were using a range of additional information to prioritise selection. This was because they were aware that for tutoring to have impact, they had to maintain small group sizes – it could not just be opened up to a full cohort of pupils all at once.

Most schools were using diagnostic and formative assessments, supplemented by teachers’ knowledge, to identify pupils who had fallen behind considerably during the pandemic and would benefit most from tuition. This was more effective when assessments focused on the key component knowledge

of the schools' curriculum that pupils had missed or where they had developed misconceptions. These schools were keen to identify the pupils that were the furthest behind, which did not always directly correspond with the most disadvantaged pupils in the school.

Other priorities were also targeted. For instance, several primary schools had identified that pupils in Years 2 and 3 had experienced the most significant disruption to their learning during the pandemic. In these schools, assessments found that these pupils had not fully learned some essential foundational knowledge in English and maths, which was likely to hinder their access to the wider curriculum as they progressed through their schooling. As a result, leaders were prioritising tuition for these year groups over others. There was a similar picture in secondary schools. Approximately half of the schools we visited had focused tutoring on helping pupils in Years 7 and 8. Some had targeted these year groups for tutoring after identifying that these pupils had less knowledge on entry than would usually be the case.

In 9 schools where selection processes were particularly weak, there was a more ad-hoc approach to identifying pupils. This was sometimes as a response to workload pressures and fitting the tutoring programme in around other school priorities. In these cases, pupils were often selected for tutoring on the basis of specific contexts (such as disadvantage) or using summative assessments (that are designed to test composite knowledge and some of which did not align with the schools' curriculum) in isolation. This meant that these schools were not determining with precision the specific gaps in pupils' knowledge or feeding this into the tuition sessions that the pupils received. This, consequently, affected the quality of the tutoring sessions. These sessions also tended to feature larger group sizes.

Subject choices for tutoring differed between primary and secondary schools

In general, primary schools were concentrating their tutoring provision on English and maths. A few school leaders said that this was essential for Year 2 and Year 3 pupils so that they

could access the wider curriculum in the future. Many of these pupils had missed much of their early compulsory education because of lockdowns.

Similarly, some leaders had an eye on key stage 2 assessments which made these subjects a priority. There was also a sense that it was easier to develop tuition for these subject areas than for other foundation subjects. For instance, many teachers and tutors mentioned a number of external maths resources as the means to manage curriculum alignment with class sessions. Supporting materials were available to aid the core curriculum, which was not always the case for other subjects.

The picture in secondary schools was different. While English and maths were still of high priority, many schools were also providing tutoring across a wider pool of foundation subjects. In a couple of schools, more national curriculum subjects were being covered. Tutoring in these instances was far from a generic approach though. In the better schools, tutors with subject expertise and, on occasion, subject departments were involved in the design of the tuition sessions. This was in order to manage curriculum alignment and ensure that pupils obtained the subject-specific knowledge they needed to catch up.

A well-planned curriculum provides a strong foundation for tutoring

The disruption caused by the pandemic has meant that there are more substantial gaps in pupils' learning than would usually be the case. It is not possible for schools to cover everything that has been missed in tutoring sessions, and neither were they doing so on the visits. However, this has resulted in some variation in the curriculum content that schools were providing through their tutoring strategy.

The better schools providing tutoring were taking one of two specific approaches. In the first case, leaders were adhering to the traditional form that tuition takes. Teachers and tutors were taking the schools' curriculum and thinking about the

fundamental concepts that pupils had not learned that were blocking them from catching up in routine class sessions. Here, assessment processes targeted specific component knowledge that pupils were missing to make progress. This process was detailed and more personalised to individuals. Tuition groups tended to be made up of pupils that had the same specific knowledge gaps.

The other approach schools were using was re-orientating tutoring to meet the wider purposes of catch-up. In this model, teachers and tutors were using the schools' curriculum to identify the right place in the sequence to start to build pupils' knowledge, rather than looking to plug specific holes. This was particularly focused on the core overarching concepts that all pupils are likely to have missed or for the purposes of repetition and the consolidation of important facilitating knowledge. In these schools, leaders expressed that a more targeted approach to individual learners was unrealistic owing to workload pressures on staff.

We saw both of these approaches in primary and secondary schools, and they were usually associated with schools that already had a strong curriculum offer in place. This made it easier to align the curriculum – whether identifying the missing knowledge pupils needed to progress or covering core concepts that teachers and tutors determined were essential – and made sure pupils were getting quality content in addition to their routine class lessons. Effective assessment practices and collaboration between class teachers and tutors were also common interacting features. Inspectors highlighted that this design was critical to the success of tutoring.

A further approach highlighted that some schools were prioritising tutoring as a short-term fix to help improve pupils' immediate exam outcomes. For some schools, this was the current priority in their school development journey. Several secondary schools were clear that this had to be the priority to ensure that Year 11 pupils could do as well as possible in their exams. This was particularly the case for those pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds who had missed much learning time during the pandemic.

In this model, schools used examination questions rather than the curriculum as the main mechanism for identifying pupils

who were 'behind' and required tutoring. However, these sessions were often more generic in content as they focused on the composite knowledge required for passing tests, rather than focusing on the component knowledge that would provide pupils with greater understanding of concepts.

Again, the quality of tutors is important here. In several schools, inspectors noted that tutors with strong subject knowledge were adapting the planned sessions that were focused on exam questions to accommodate more detail when they picked up on specific misconceptions or missing knowledge that pupils had shown. However, there remained several examples where this was lacking, potentially leading to pupils maintaining misconceptions that may have longer term consequences. Inspectors also noted that in terms of additionality, they were not always seeing tutoring as being much different to other interventions (such as revision classes) that already exist. [\[footnote 33\]](#)

In the weakest schools providing tutoring, a thorough diagnosis of the knowledge that pupils required had not been carried out. What pupils needed to learn was often unclear or, in some cases, the sequence of learning was misaligned with pupils' prior knowledge. For instance, in one school, 'number' had been identified as an area of general weakness for pupils. However, in the tutoring session observed, which focused on learning to subtract 2-digit numbers, several pupils were struggling with this task as they did not know number bonds to 20 well enough.

This model is largely a consequence of schools either having a weaker curriculum in place (and therefore not having the necessary sequence of component knowledge already established) or not having time to plan tutoring sessions effectively.

Tutors with QTS enhanced tutoring sessions considerably

We found that the quality of tutoring was better when qualified teachers were involved. That is not to say that sessions taught

by non-qualified teachers were ineffective. Generally, pupils still benefited compared with not receiving any tuition at all, particularly in terms of increasing their confidence and attitudes to learning. But there was added value when qualified teachers were providing the tuition.

In the most effective sessions, tutors that had QTS made the most of the interactions that they could have with pupils in smaller groups. This included:

- precise and effective questioning by tutors
- responding immediately to pupils' questions about their learning
- frequently revisiting prior learning to check that pupils had a sound understanding of the content covered in previous sessions
- regular use of formative assessment strategies to check pupils' knowledge and understanding
- adapting content and teaching methods well when misconceptions or misunderstandings arose
- teaching in greater depth when pupils had secured the knowledge in basic foundational concepts

These tutors communicated well, in terms of both speaking and listening to build a professional rapport with pupils. They also had secure subject knowledge and strong pedagogical skill, which ensured that they could meet the curricular objectives of the sessions. If one technique was not working (such as direct explanation of a concept), they could often use an alternative method (for instance, modelling on a whiteboard) to aid pupils' understanding. These tutors also tended to add further value in their sessions, as they knew what came before and after the components that the pupils were learning.

In comparison, the tutoring sessions provided by non-qualified teaching staff were often structured to ensure that they could provide the essential knowledge that pupils needed effectively. In the case of teaching assistants, they also knew most of the pupils involved from routine classes. This ensured that they could build on already secure relationships during the tutoring sessions. However, the subject knowledge of non-qualified tutors was sometimes limited. As a result, their explanations around the content were sometimes laboured and not always

precise enough to help pupils learn concepts as fully.

The weakest sessions we saw tended to be where the training for non-qualified tutors had not been sufficient enough to prepare them for the demands of teaching small groups. In these cases, tutoring sessions tended to be poorly planned, owing to the tutors' lack of experience in breaking down component knowledge into manageable sequences of learning. This sometimes led to tutors with the required subject knowledge providing content that pupils were unable to grasp as it was aimed above their level of understanding.

Explanations from non-qualified tutors were also generally less coherent and unengaging. There was a tendency for sessions to focus on worksheets or activities where the objective of learning was unclear. This was likely to impede pupils' learning, compared with the tuition that qualified teachers were providing or where sessions were structured to aid non-qualified tutors.

Tutor recruitment – school-led tutoring route

Given the current challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers, it was not surprising to find that secondary schools opting for school-led tutoring tended to recruit tutors from qualified teaching staff already in post. [\[footnote 34\]](#) Often, these were also pupils' class teachers. This was the case in most of the secondary schools we visited, including one school where the tutoring resource was allocated from the wider multi-academy trust.

However, it was not always possible for secondary schools to secure tutoring time from their own qualified teaching staff, which led to alternative arrangements being pursued. For instance, some schools recruited tutors from external tutoring organisations, either locally or with a national presence but who were not on the quality assured list of tuition partners. There were also a couple of instances where teaching assistants were recruited alongside those with QTS. Interestingly, one school had appointed a tutor with primary school teaching experience, especially in early reading, to support Year 7 pupils who were struggling with reading. This was because leaders felt that they did not have the expertise to support these pupils to catch up.

Many of the teachers we spoke to in secondary schools said

that they had volunteered their time to provide tuition. In these schools, there was often a strong culture among staff that all pupils would catch up. Teachers recognised that they were, therefore, best placed to use their expertise to support the pupils who had fallen furthest behind by providing tuition, despite the additional workload. Occasionally, there was an abundance of teachers stepping forward to take on tutoring responsibilities. For leaders in the better schools, the guiding principle for selecting teachers was linked to quality, meaning that they tended to source their best teachers internally to deliver tutoring to struggling pupils.

In primary schools, it was often harder to recruit teachers from internal qualified staff, because more tutoring happened during school hours. Leaders therefore either searched further afield for available qualified teachers or recruited teaching assistants into tutoring roles. Around a third of the primary schools visited had recruited teaching assistants, although this was often alongside recruitment of qualified teachers in the same schools.

External tutoring organisations not associated with the NTP were also a route that a handful of primary schools had taken. In several examples, primary schools were successful in employing recently retired teachers and supply teachers that were already known to the school as tutors. Two schools had decided that senior leaders would take the tutoring sessions on offer. A few schools had also advertised externally and recruited early career teachers who had not yet secured a teaching post as tutors.

Collaboration and communication between tutors and class teachers was essential

The more effective tutors regularly collaborated with other staff, typically class teachers, outside the tuition sessions themselves. This made sure that sessions were purposefully planned and aligned with the school's curriculum to help pupils catch up. As one leader commented:

“ ... the beauty of [QTS] tutors is that they can inform the planning of the tutoring. They can really identify the clear

specific missing knowledge [that pupils need].”

Similarly, tutors and teachers who were in regular contact with each other said that they valued this time. They regarded it as a crucial part of helping pupils to catch up. As one tutor in a primary school explained of their relationship with a class teacher:

“ We catch up with each other at the end of the day. Talking regularly means we can really know when pupils have caught up and who needs more and what they need more of. We can show each other their books.”

Teachers and tutors mentioned that they did not always require a formal meeting to discuss the progress that pupils were making. Quick, informal catch-ups, often lasting no more than 15 minutes, were considered sufficient to share information on pupils that could benefit both class and tutoring sessions.

This was a 2-way process. In the better schools providing tuition, leaders made sure that the tutors they were employing were regarded on an equal footing to class teachers. Where this was the case, the flow of information between tutors and teachers was more refined and likely to lead to closer alignment between the curriculum and tuition:

“The tutor had identified that one of the pupils they were working with was occasionally putting capital letters in the middle of sentences. She shared this information with me as part of our weekly catch-up. This meant that I was able to address this misconception as part of my lessons.” (Year 2 teacher)

This was particularly powerful in schools that had taken the school-led tutoring route. Typically, tutors already had an established relationship with the school. They were known by other staff and were aware of the school’s curriculum, routines and expectations. Even when they did not know pupils directly, these tutors were able to gather information about them quickly and effectively by collaborating with teachers in the school. Tutors who were well known to the school often mentioned that they felt that school leaders were very supportive of the work they were providing.

In comparison, school leaders considered collaboration with some tutors from tuition partners to be much less efficient. They felt that poor communication contributed to misalignment between the curriculum and tuition. In some schools, leaders said that the tuition partners' curriculum was inflexible because the subject content was predetermined and not linked to the school's curriculum.

Furthermore, teachers did not always fully know what content was being covered in these tutoring sessions, as touch points with tutors were less frequent, particularly where online tutoring sessions were concerned. In these cases, the curriculum knowledge that tutors were providing did not always match the objective that class teachers were targeting in routine lessons.

Pupils are overwhelmingly positive about their tutoring sessions

Most pupils spoke positively about their experience of tutoring. Many said that they 'look forward to tutoring' and that tutoring had made them 'want to come to school a lot more and learn a lot more things'.

Pupils remained positive even when inspectors had identified weaknesses in curriculum alignment or the quality of the tutoring that some were receiving. Where this was the case, pupils tended to reflect that the tuition sessions had a positive effect on their confidence and resilience when they went back to their routine classes. However, when asked, these pupils were less clear about what they had learned during the tuition sessions. A typical response was:

"Sometimes I forget what I have been taught. Some of the topics are confusing." (Year 7 pupil)

This suggests that, while in some cases pupils are not making academic progress, that they may be benefiting in other ways through inclusion in a tuition programme.

On the other hand, where the tutoring drew on a strong curriculum and was taught by high-quality tutors, pupils could

often articulate what subject knowledge they had been less confident about and how, after taking part in tuition sessions, they have a much clearer understanding:

“Division – I didn’t know how to do it before. I have got better at it. The way that my tutor explains it. The slides she uses help because I am visualising seeing it.” (Year 6 pupil)

Many pupils said that they appreciated tutoring because of the small-group format. They valued the relationships that they formed with tutors. They particularly valued the time to ask questions and receive feedback. For instance, several mentioned that tutors took the time to listen to them when they asked about the things that they found difficult or had not previously understood:

“In a small group you can ask for help when you need it. The tutor doesn’t get frustrated, and you don’t worry about asking simpler questions.” (Year 11 pupil)

“I have realised that I can do maths. I just need things explaining differently sometimes. The tutoring is good because I can ask lots of questions and the tutor is not in a rush to move the lesson on.” (Year 11 pupil)

Some said that the tutoring sessions provided a safe environment where they could ask questions without feeling embarrassed, as might be the case in their larger routine classes. Many pupils preferred the tutoring environment to the classroom, as the weaknesses in their knowledge were not highlighted to their peers:

“In class I’m a bit scared to say I don’t get it – but can do that in tutoring.” (Year 9 pupil)

“You can ask for help, since it’s a one-on-one session no one will laugh at you. There is a mission at the end, it is a recap on everything we do, let’s us have a go at it so we understand the session that we learned better.” (Year 6 pupil)

Several pupils mentioned that they are often distracted in a classroom environment and find it easier to concentrate and focus on the content of their tutoring sessions away from their peers. One said that it was:

“better than sitting in a class with a load of people – [there are] fewer distractions.” (Year 9 pupil)

One potential consequence of tutoring, which several pupils mentioned, is that they are now much more willing to put their hand up and contribute to class sessions. This was because they could recall what they had learned in their tutoring sessions and understood the core content of a subject more substantially after tuition.

Where there were dissenting voices about tuition, these tended to come from secondary school pupils. Their main concerns focused on frustrations about not having a consistent tutor. This was either because the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was causing disruption (for example, staff illness or workload concerns) or because issues with tuition partners were leading to significant turnover in tutors. In these circumstances, pupils felt that they could not build a relationship with the tutor. Older pupils felt that securing a beneficial relationship with a tutor, coupled with an environment where they can take risks and make mistakes, was a key component in successful tutoring.

A few secondary pupils were also concerned about the lack of additionality that tutoring was providing them. The following type of comment, while rare, highlighted that some pupils found tutoring less useful:

“We have been doing topics that I can already do. I don’t feel that the topics we are learning are helping me.” (Year 7 pupil)

Leaders do not really know if tutoring is working

Across all the schools we visited, leaders and teachers, for the most part, reported that tutoring had a positive impact on pupils. This generally aligns with what pupils told us. For instance, the increased confidence and resilience of pupils were widely commented on.

Teachers noted that pupils were more engaged with their

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learning, were more confident in sharing their ideas in a whole-class environment and had a better attitude to learning following tuition:

“Their confidence, self-esteem and motivation is improving, they are now feeling more confident to ask questions to clarify and check [their learning].” (Subject leader)

Leaders and class teachers also suggested that pupils’ confidence had increased across the curriculum, and not just in the subjects that they were being tutored in.

Despite these positive views, we found that schools generally had not yet developed efficient means to assess pupils’ progress from the tutoring sessions. This aspect of provision was still in its infancy at the time of the fieldwork. In 13 of the schools we visited, leaders had not considered their methods of assessment at all. Instead, they relied on individuals’ perceptions to determine whether tutoring was having an impact. A typical comment by leaders was that this remains ‘an area for development’.

In some schools, leaders mentioned that their initial focus had been on planning and implementing their tutoring strategy. This had not always been straightforward though, particularly where initial issues with the set-up through tuition partners had led leaders to change tactics and provide tuition through the school-led tutoring route instead. This decision affected internal workloads, particularly for senior leaders. This meant that in some schools, tuition sessions were only just beginning in the summer term 2022. In these circumstances, assessment mechanisms for tutoring were not yet in place because the tuition had taken much longer than expected to set up.

In the schools with the weakest tuition provision, assessment was often an afterthought. This tended to be a symptom of the lack of contact time that leaders and teachers had with the tutor. In these schools, tutors said that leaders ‘took for granted what [they] were teaching’ and, once curriculum plans were handed over, the expectation was that they would ‘just get on with delivering the tutoring.’

In a few schools, some leaders were using their existing summative assessments to monitor pupils’ progress. However,

it was not always clear how they differentiated the impact that tutoring was having from these outcomes or whether the targeted knowledge had been learned to aid catch-up.

The schools with clearer assessment systems in place were often those that already had a strong curriculum offer. These schools already assessed pupils' progress through the curriculum, so it was straightforward to apply this to tuition. Additionally, leaders tended to focus sharply on assuring themselves that the curriculum was being implemented effectively through tuition. This typically meant that they carried out formative assessment regularly and aligned it with the component knowledge pupils were learning. Teachers and tutors used this information effectively to collaborate on planning subsequent tutoring sessions, understand how to improve routine class sessions and determine when tuition should stop because pupils had caught up.

Annex A: Further methods details

Sampling issues

During the autumn term 2022 and spring term 2023, it proved challenging to recruit schools to participate in this review. This was often related to COVID-19 but it was also the case that few schools had a tuition strategy in place at the time we contacted them.

In both instances, headteachers said they could not commit to the research because of the additional workload and burden on staff, although many were interested in doing so later in the year once these issues had alleviated. This has some implications on selection bias. For instance, we may have recruited more schools into the study that are particularly keen on tutoring. While we were able to secure replacement schools from a back-up sample, it was not always possible to secure a

like-for-like replacement.

Structure of the visits

Figure 1 shows how a typical tutoring research visit might look like:

- meeting with senior leadership team
- interview with the subject or programme lead
- interview with a tutor
- observation of 2 tutoring sessions
- focus group with teachers
- focus group with learners
- an informal meeting with senior leadership at the end of the visit

For 2-day visits, the process was replicated for a different subject on the second day. It was not possible for the activities of each visit to follow such a rigid structure. When and where tutoring sessions took place often needed to drive the order of activities.

We gave schools the flexibility to determine a schedule that would minimise the additional burden on their staff. However, we also needed to ensure that we could capture the necessary data to inform the sector of the wider strengths and weaknesses of current tutoring provision.

We ensured that all the activities were carried out on each visit. This meant that, through triangulation, we could establish a coherent overview on the intent and implementation of the tutoring provided, which gave some assurance on the effectiveness of the programme.

Figure 1: Flexible schedule for research visits



Data collection and research instruments

Most of the visits were carried out by a single HMI. On 11 visits, a researcher from our research and evaluation team joined the HMI to help with collecting data.

Alongside collecting the primary data from the visits, we also asked inspectors to evaluate the evidence they had collected to explain the effectiveness of the provision they had seen. Although much of the data collected during the study was based on participants' views, we have also included observations of tutoring sessions and a wider investigation into curriculum alignment.

The external literature available combined with our expectations on the quality of education from the education inspection framework (EIF) gave us valid criteria to determine the strengths and weaknesses of tutoring across the sample. This means that we have confidence our review can comment on the impact of some aspects of tutoring beyond individuals' perceptions.

Analysis methods

We used a thematic approach to coding the data collected from the research visits. We developed a coding framework using the available research literature and the quality of education concepts from the EIF. However, we also applied an inductive approach to identify new themes as they emerged from the data. We imported the data from the visits into MaxQDA, our qualitative data analysis tool, to carry out the analysis.

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