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Research and analysis

# Independent review of tutoring in 16 to 19 providers: phase 2 findings

Updated 31 October 2023

**Applies to England**

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## Executive summary

The Department for Education (DfE) commissioned Ofsted to carry out a 2-year independent review of tutoring. This review sets out the findings from the second phase of our study, which took place in the academic year 2022/23.

In [phase 1](#), we found tutoring was most effective when aligned with the subject curriculum and gaps in learners' knowledge were identified and addressed. This continued to be the case in phase 2. Tutoring was most effective when sessions reinforced content from lessons more widely. In these providers, teachers and tutors assessed specific gaps in learners' knowledge and skills before and during tutoring. They could then adapt their teaching to ensure that learners developed their knowledge and skills securely and quickly. This meant that learners who were most in need of extra support attended the tutoring sessions.

In providers with strong tutoring provision, leaders integrated the core principles of effective tutoring from the research literature, such as small group sizes and frequent sessions. In these providers, leaders had a strong preference for qualified teachers and/or experienced tutors. For this reason, nearly all chose to use their own staff for tutoring sessions rather than external agency staff. In some cases, providers used teaching assistants to work as mentors or to lead pastoral activities for learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders felt that, for tutoring to be successful, it was important that staff had the necessary expertise and relationship with learners.

There was a notable difference between the quality of sessions taught by qualified teachers and non-qualified teachers. Qualified teachers often scaffolded their sessions to the needs of the learner and addressed learners' misconceptions in real time. Tutors from external agencies, however, were rarely given the in-depth training needed to deliver high-quality sessions. They also had limited collaboration and communication with the provider to monitor identified gaps. As a result, the quality of tutoring tended to be weaker and the content of the sessions more generic.

Generally, the views of leaders, tutors and learners on the perceived impact of tutoring remained positive. Learners found the tutoring environment to be supportive and praised the safety they had to make mistakes and learn without judgement. The positive effects of tutoring went beyond catching up on lost learning. Staff and learners reported the benefits of increased self-confidence and exam readiness because of the sessions.

Many providers, however, were not using tutoring for its intended catch-up purposes. We continued to see a wide variation in how providers were using the funding. In most cases, leaders chose to use it for exam preparation and study skills, rather than using the research literature to set up effective tutoring provision that focused unerringly on specific gaps in learners' knowledge. When exam preparation was the focus, most providers chose to select, as a priority, all learners who were

re-sitting mathematics and/or English GCSEs.

All leaders valued the funding. No matter how they used it, leaders spoke clearly about the benefits they felt tutoring was having on learners' progress and development. The pandemic had significantly disrupted most learners' education. Providers had seen an increase in social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs in learners as they struggled to adjust to a new, more independent learning environment. Therefore, it is understandable that providers have chosen to use a variety of interventions to support learners. For leaders, the impact of the pandemic has not yet been resolved and they are keen for the funding to continue. Without it, leaders suggested that they would not be able to offer the same level of support, both academic and non-academic, needed for learners to be successful in future education and employment.

## Introduction

The 2022/23 academic year marked the third year of the 16 to 19 tuition fund. The fund was created to help learners who had experienced difficulties with their learning due to disruption to education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding targets those most in need by engaging them in tutoring activities that go beyond regular lessons.

In 2021, the DfE asked Ofsted to carry out an independent review of the overall quality of tuition in providers and determine how they have integrated tutoring into curriculum planning and delivery.

Our phase 1 review found that providers interpreted and used the funding in different ways. This meant that they offered a wide range of subject areas and activities through tutoring. Many providers identified learners and their knowledge gaps well. However, in some providers, large group sizes meant that learners did not benefit from the personalised attention of tutors. High-quality tutoring was well aligned with the curriculum to target specific gaps according to each individual learner. Most learners and staff were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences with tutoring. However, the long-term impact on learners' attainment was unclear. Many providers had not been delivering tuition for long enough to measure impact or to develop monitoring systems to do so.

Our phase 2 review aimed to continue and expand on the focus of phase 1.

## Changes to tuition fund 2022/23

In the first 2 years of the tuition fund, funding was allocated based on the following conditions:

- the number of learners with low prior attainment, defined as those who do not have a grade 4 or above in maths or English GCSE at age 16
- those aged 19 to 24 with an education, health and care (EHC) plan
- the number of learners from the 27% most economically deprived areas of the country, based on the indices of multiple deprivation (IMD)

Additional changes were made for 2022/23 to give providers more flexibility and choice, to include in addition:

- those who had not achieved a grade 6 in GCSE English or maths at the age of 16 and would need catch-up support to do so
- those eligible for the 16 to 19 bursary fund, who needed extra help to realise their potential but are not in scope for the 27% most disadvantage areas

## Aims for 2022/23

We agreed with the DfE that our phase 2 review would focus on:

- how providers were implementing tutoring
- how they were identifying learners for tutoring
- how they aligned tutoring with their intended curriculum
- how they ensured that tutors were suitable
- the emerging impact of tutoring
- how tutoring affects providers

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

## Methods

We gathered evidence from research visits to 34 further education (FE) and skills providers during the 2022/23 academic year. This included:

**Table 1: The distribution of provider type in phase 2**

	Number of visits
<b>General FE colleges</b>	18
<b>Sixth-form colleges</b>	13
<b>Independent learning providers</b>	2
<b>Specialist college</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	34

As well as visiting providers new to the project in the spring term of 2023, we invited providers who had participated in phase 1 to take part in our research. This was a longitudinal approach to see how tutoring has developed from phase 1 to phase 2 and the impact it has had on learning. In our sample, we revisited 3 providers. Note that some caution is required when generalising the findings due to the small sample size.

To achieve a balanced and varied sample, we selected providers based on provider type, regional location and most recent overall effectiveness judgement (excluding inadequate providers).

## Structure of visits

Our research team consisted of 13 FE and skills HMI trained to carry out the research activities to make sure that collected data was consistent. Each visit was carried out over one day by one inspector.

On each research visit, inspectors explored tuition in one or two subjects. We continued to use the same research activities as in phase 1, for continuity. These consisted of:

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

We gave providers the flexibility to determine a schedule that would minimise the burden on their staff. However, to capture the necessary data, we tried to ensure that inspectors carried out all activities on each visit. Through triangulating all evidence, we achieved a coherent overview of the intent and implementation of the tutoring.

## Findings

### Tutoring was most effective when embedded in academic learning

Providers with more successful tutoring had embedded it into their everyday structures and day-to-day processes. In these providers, the tutoring curriculum was closely aligned to the subject curriculum. Tutoring sessions were logically sequenced to support classroom learning. As a result, learners were not only catching up on specific deficits in their knowledge and skills but reinforcing

their grasp of new content being covered in classroom lessons.

Tutors would often use curriculum plans, pedagogical skills and information about learners' starting points to teach sessions that directly met learners' individual needs. In these sessions, they made secure and consistent links between the content of the curriculum and the content of tutoring programmes. For example, tutors might link the content of an English GCSE session directly to a learner's vocational subject. They would use specialist vocabulary and concepts that the learner might encounter in their vocational course or work placement. They frequently checked that learners securely understood content before moving on. This helped learners to retain that knowledge.

Providers with weaker tutoring did not put gaps in learners' knowledge and skills at the heart of their planning and delivery. They did not make activities individualised according to those specific curriculum gaps. In most cases, weaker tuition focused on generic exam preparation that was not tailored to the different needs of learners. For example, in several providers, teachers or course instructors gave tutors past exam papers for learners to complete and mark together. This was not carefully linked to knowledge gaps and did not have clear curricular goals. In a few cases, tuition content was a continuation of class work or coursework for learners to complete during lessons with extra support. This did not address any missed learning to help them catch up.

Some tutors used assessment effectively to track learners' progress. They ensured that they told teachers and managers the results of assessments. This helped providers monitor learners' progress across tutoring programmes. In these providers, classroom teachers and tutors met frequently to discuss learners' progress, concerns and the content of future tutoring sessions. For example, tutors were invited to join weekly department meetings where they could contribute to discussions about learners' progress. Tutors also had regular conversations with learners to reflect on what support they needed and how tutors could help them to improve. Over time, tutors got to know learners and teachers well. This further enabled them to teach highly directed and individualised sessions.

However, in over a third of providers, there were limited assessment processes in place to identify learners' start or end points. Without a clear understanding of learners' starting points, it was difficult for these providers to consistently assess learners' progress over the course of the tuition programme. Tutors and department staff also did not communicate well enough about learners' progress. This was more pronounced in providers working with external agencies. For example, external agency tutors often had to carry out baseline assessments of learners' specific needs and starting points, as providers rarely gave them this information.

## **A wide variety of activities were being funded as providers interpreted guidance to best suit their priorities**

The [DfE's guidance](#) gave information about, and examples of, quality tutoring provision. The guidance suggested that providers should use their funding for one-to-one or small-group tuition, focusing on learners with significant knowledge gaps.<sup>[\[footnote 1\]](#)</sup> The DfE then made changes to the guidance to make the eligibility criteria more flexible and accessible. These changes allow leaders to target funds towards academic and vocational courses as well as other areas, such as exam

preparation and study skills. This gave providers the freedom to use the funding in the way that they thought was most beneficial to learners. However, providers did not always know the best way to target tutoring. Many opted to use the funding for exam preparation and study skills rather than taking a 'research-informed' approach, whereby they integrated research on most effective tutoring practices to their provision.

Ten providers specifically used academic tutoring for generic exam skills and revision. In some of these sessions, learners would often complete practice exam questions or go through the answers with the tutor, rather than the tutor address their knowledge gaps or misconceptions. Most tutors were qualified teachers but not all were subject specialists. However, learners need to have, and use, sufficient specialist knowledge to do well in exams. Sometimes, gaps in knowledge can be masked by focusing prematurely on generic exam skills. In the more effective sessions seen across these providers, tutoring focused on the specialist component knowledge that would better prepare learners both for the exam and for further learning and professional practice in the future.

Six providers used academic mentors or coaches<sup>[footnote 2]</sup>, mostly recent graduates, to work with learners to develop their study skills or other life skills, such as organisation or time management. Learners could self-refer to these, or be referred by subject teachers or their parents. They could also be referred after the provider had identified underperformance or support needs. These sessions were mainly learner-led, with a focus on wider academic skills. For example, coaches taught learners about essay planning, time management, coping with the transition to higher-level courses and study skills. Most providers using this strategy aimed to improve learners' confidence. Providers that did this well had developed a plan in partnership with learners. This addressed concerns and helped them to reach their academic or well-being targets. However, in most cases, the approach was not aligned with the subject curriculum and did not allow learners to develop knowledge in the relevant discipline.

Two colleges used the funding to provide pastoral support and promote well-being for learners with SEND (in line with the DfE's guidance). Staff developed sessions aligned with learners' EHC plans, using a comprehensive SEND tutoring curriculum. This helped learners to build skills over time. The aim of these sessions was for learners to gain social skills, become more independent, make friends and develop useful knowledge, skills and behaviours. These learners were hugely positive about what they were learning during their tutoring sessions. Many said that tutoring gave them the confidence to engage in conversation, make friends and work more independently. Tutors spoke positively about learners' improved resilience and perseverance, both in the classroom and the wider community.

Two providers used the funding to target attendance and behaviour, despite this not being in line with the published guidance. They employed attendance and progress mentors for this. One leader explained: 'The ones coming in, we can help. The ones not attending... what is the issue and how do we get them to come in?'. Another provider told us that, as a result of attendance and progress mentors, attendance rates were some of the highest that they had been since before the pandemic. However, using attendance and progress mentors only worked well when providers made links between them and the subject departments. This allowed mentors to collaborate with staff and learners. One attendance and progress mentor described themselves as 'a bridge between faculty and learners'. Providers using them had clear targets for improving learners' attendance and progress overall. Target-setting was most successful when there was clear communication between the learner, mentor, class teacher and parent. Despite the positive results this work produced, leaders were not using the funding for its primary purpose. There was little evidence to suggest that



once learners were attending, providers were giving them extra lessons or catch-up opportunities. This meant that any learning gaps were not being filled.

Some providers had opted to use tutoring to reduce class sizes. They either split the class to make 2 small classes or removed learners from lessons to take part in tutoring activities. In these cases, staff grouped learners according to specific gaps in their knowledge. They planned lessons to address these gaps and help learners to access the curriculum in their regular classroom teaching. In this way, sessions were different from the practice of removing low-attaining learners or those with high needs from classes to work through a reduced curriculum. Learners valued the smaller class sizes. Many said that being in a small group improved their focus because there were fewer distractions. However, tutoring groups with more than 5 learners veered away from quality tutoring. Sessions became less individualised. For example, learners in bigger groups said that sessions were not adapted to their individual needs.

The tuition funding allows small-group tutoring for up to 5 learners, which could be extended to 7 in exceptional circumstances. In our sample, over a quarter of settings had groups of 6 or more learners. Of these, 2 providers had tuition groups with as many as 10 learners and 1 was a large cohort. Research suggests that this limits the impact of tutoring. Sessions become less adaptive to the needs of each learner and tutors' attention is divided between too many. [\[footnote 3\]](#)

## **Leaders did not always target learners most in need of tutoring**

Most providers used a broad approach when selecting learners for tutoring. For many, the approach supported learners' need for exam preparation. Leaders selected all learners who were re-sitting mathematics and/or English GCSEs. This often meant that individuals' gaps in knowledge were not the focus of the tutoring sessions, which became generic exam revision. Learners continued to have misconceptions and missing knowledge. Providers rarely used formative in-class assessment to check learners' progress. They mainly assessed this in mock exams.

Providers with strong tuition had effective systems in place to identify learners most in need of it. Curriculum leaders and classroom teachers used assessment and prior attainment well to identify those learners who would benefit most from tutoring. Teachers or course instructors could then directly refer them for tutoring. Assessments could be: initial assessments at the start of the year; diagnostic assessments; formative in-class assessments; or mock-exam results. Some providers used specific data points such as a low attendance rate or below-expected exam results to identify learners. They also carefully considered the requirements of learners with SEND as part of this process. Where appropriate, staff used EHC plan targets well to inform their planning. As a result, tutors had the information they needed to design tailored sessions that addressed specific gaps in all learners' knowledge, skills and behaviours.

A few providers used a self-referral system for learners to volunteer themselves to take part in tutoring programmes. Learners viewed this positively. They appreciated the opportunity to receive extra help if they wished. Self-referral worked best when used alongside other systems. Staff could then identify and target those who were most in need of catching up or who were disengaged with their learning.



Providers with less effective tuition did not appropriately identify learners. Many of these providers did not check the eligibility of selected learners for the tuition funding. The rationale for this was that a high proportion of their learners were from disadvantaged postcodes, and therefore had large numbers of learners eligible for tutoring, often making it more time consuming to check and be certain that they were reaching those most in need.

## **The length of time learners received for tuition was variable and not always sufficient for the purposes of catch-up**

Research shows that frequent tutoring sessions, often multiple times a week for approximately 10 weeks, has the greatest impact on learners.<sup>[\[footnote 4\]](#)</sup> However, in many providers, the number of sessions learners attended varied according to the type of tutoring activity, the course or the learner. Twenty providers used a fixed number of sessions for tutoring. This ranged from 6 sessions, as the most often prescribed amount, up to 30 sessions. This variation was mostly due to the type of tutoring offered. Providers that focused on subject-specific activities (for example, essay support) usually timetabled fewer sessions. In providers that focused on mathematics and English GCSE re-sits, the number of sessions learners attended usually depended on when they retook their exam. For those retaking in the summer term, providers usually gave tutoring continuously throughout the academic year. In general, support continued until the learner had passed their exam.

It was more common in providers focusing on non-academic tutoring that sessions were not regularly timetabled for learners. In 6 providers, sessions were on a rolling basis, responsive to the needs and progress of learners. Two providers ran tuition on a drop-in basis. Learners came to sessions only when they felt that they needed help.

Only a few providers monitored attendance in sessions and followed up when learners were not attending. Where sessions were voluntary, or attendance was not monitored, it was not clear whether leaders were targeting those most in need of tuition.

## **Providers preferred qualified or experienced teachers as tutors, but tutors received inconsistent amounts of training**

Almost all providers used their own staff for tutoring. These were either existing teachers, support assistants or tutors recruited specifically for catch-up tuition. There were also a few cases where learning support assistants gave tutoring sessions. Some providers recruited in-house academic mentors to deliver sessions. These were nearly all recent graduates with a relevant subject specialism. Only 4 providers used tutors from external agencies. Two of these used external tutors in addition to in-house teaching staff.

In the vast majority of cases, providers used in-house tutors with teaching qualifications to teach mathematics and English GCSE and functional skills sessions. These tutors were either existing teachers with adjusted timetables or qualified teachers recruited into newly created tutor posts.

Tutors without teaching qualifications were often hired to work as mentors/learning coaches or to deliver sessions on study skills or careers. However, a few providers used unqualified teachers (mostly with degrees in relevant subjects) to tutor in vocational subjects or mathematics and English. There was a notable difference between the quality of these sessions and those taught by qualified teachers. For example, some sessions were taught by recent graduates with no specialism in maths or English, and no previous teaching or tutoring experience. These sessions were less effective. They were often poorly planned and did not consider learners' starting points. The teaching itself lacked sufficient focus on specific, individual gaps in learning. Tutors were over-reliant on using past exam papers. In some cases, they selected content for sessions from a generic learning programme irrespective of individual needs. Many also lacked the subject-specific knowledge and pedagogical skills needed to give relevant feedback or correct learners' misconceptions in real time.

A preference for qualified or experienced teachers/tutors made recruiting more difficult for some providers. They told us that they had received many applications for tutoring posts from unsuitable or unqualified candidates. A few also had too few applications for tutoring posts in shortage areas, particularly maths and computer science. This reflects sector-wide recruitment challenges. As a result of these issues, a small number of providers relied on agencies for both qualified and unqualified teachers to deliver tutoring.

### **Tutors with no teaching qualifications received limited training**

All providers gave tutors (both internal and agency) training on safeguarding, health and safety, and the Prevent duty. In most providers, tutors received an induction to set out their roles and responsibilities as a tutor. However, in over half of the providers, leaders did not support tutors with training in pedagogical techniques needed for tutoring sessions. This was particularly the case in those institutions that had recruited tutors with no teaching qualifications.

In the best cases, experienced, qualified teaching staff provided further support for unqualified tutors and academic mentors. This included, for example:

- weekly sessions on how to support different learners, including learners with SEND
- how to structure tutoring sessions
- how to manage behaviour

Some leaders also provided access to relevant curriculum resources and systems, and trained tutors in how to use them. As a result, tutors without teaching qualifications could develop their teaching practice even though there was no specific training provided. A small number of the providers with the highest-quality tutoring gave tutors ongoing specific training to support their small-group or one-to-one tutoring practice. This was the case whether tutors were qualified teachers moving into tutoring or unqualified graduate learning mentors.

In the least effective provision, tutors with subject knowledge but no prior experience in teaching had only a brief induction into tutoring. They received little further training. Inspectors saw sessions where tutors were not able to support learners with high needs or those who spoke English as an additional language. They did not know how to plan lessons that considered learners' starting points, EHC plans or the curriculum. Also, they did not receive training in basic behaviour-management techniques. As a result, learners with specific needs struggled to make progress

towards filling gaps in their knowledge and skills.

## **Some of the weakest tutoring was provided by external agencies**

Only 4 providers opted to use external agencies to give tutoring sessions. They chose this either because of the high number of learners accessing tutoring or the difficulties they had with recruiting tutors.

Tutors from external agencies were less suitable than in-house staff. Many did not have sufficient subject expertise or skills training to deliver quality tuition that was responsive to learners' needs. Most agency tutors were not qualified teachers. They also had limited tutoring experience. Some were recent school leavers, current undergraduates or recent graduates. Tutors had access to training through their agency. This included mandatory safeguarding and Prevent duty training. However, only a small minority of agency tutors received initial training about how to teach. In these cases, the training was rudimentary. It was not appropriate for the importance of the role.

Tutors' lack of training reduced the quality of the tutoring. They did not have the skills necessary to deliver tutoring that was well aligned to the curriculum. Some did have the requisite subject knowledge to teach sessions; however, they did not have the skills to be able to plan an individualised approach tailored to learners' specific needs. This meant that weaknesses lay in the planning, design and management of the tutoring curriculum and not in the actual teaching of the sessions. For example, although the tutors checked the learners' understanding in the sessions, they did not monitor progress against any specific targets.

Agency tutors were used for maths and English catch-up sessions in most cases. However, tutors were not always specialists in these subjects. The curriculum of these sessions was not targeted towards learners who needed the support and intervention the most. The sessions were often unfocused. They did not provide well-planned and personalised learning. Tutors did not have the skill set or subject expertise to be able to adapt sessions to meet the needs of the learner. This often led to misunderstandings not being corrected.

In a small number of providers, leaders had moved away from using external agencies. This was due to the lack of quality assurance of external tutors and the length of time it took for tutors to familiarise themselves with learners and the provider:

“ Last year, it didn't work very well in terms of the tutor coming in knowing the students and understanding what's going on in the classroom to consolidate learning.”

(Focus area lead)

“ From our perspective, we know the students and we know what we are trying to achieve with them... because it's so individual, bringing someone in from outside won't know how we work.”

(Focus area lead)

## **Some leaders had a clear strategy that ensured effective tutoring**

In providers with effective tutoring programmes, leaders ensured that a coherent strategy was in place. For example, they had considered how tutoring would be timed to best fit the learner's context and without disrupting wider learning. Tutoring sessions often took place during learners' study periods, during extended hours and over holiday periods. This minimised disruption to teaching and enrichment activities. It also ensured curriculum equity for all learners, regardless of whether they received tutoring.

Leaders and managers in these providers closely monitored attendance. They had effective strategies to make sure that learners joined every tutoring session. They also closely monitored the progress that learners made with the benefit of the additional support. This helped leaders refine and plan the tutoring provision effectively. Leaders also appointed well-qualified tutors, in most cases from their existing staff. They made sure that tutors had the same high-quality professional development as other teaching staff.

All leaders clearly intended to support learners to develop confidence and achieve their exam grade targets. However, some did not have an effective strategy for planning, designing and managing their tutoring programme. In these providers, their strategy was ineffective at identifying gaps in learners' knowledge and skills and their sessions did not respond to those gaps.

## **Few providers had developed systems to oversee the quality of tutoring**

In some providers, leaders gauged the success of tutoring using learners' outcomes. However, very few leaders had clear oversight of the quality of the teaching in tutoring sessions. In 10 providers, leaders did not have suitable processes in place to assure themselves that the quality of tutoring was of a high standard.

Few providers had formal systems in place to check the quality of the tutoring provision. In providers that did scrutinise this well, leaders had devolved the management of tutoring to faculties. Curriculum managers were accountable for quality assurance. Leaders ensured that both tutors and tutoring sessions were quality assured in the same ways as teachers and classroom lessons. Leaders often randomly observed tutoring sessions. They also used a combination of formative and summative assessments to assess learners' progress.

## **Tutoring improved learners' personal and emotional development beyond academic and exam success**

Many providers told us that they had seen a significant increase in social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs among learners since the pandemic. Some colleges used tutors in a pastoral role so that learners felt well supported. Leaders said that tutoring was seen as an 'additional part

of their wrap-around care'. They told us that the pastoral 'additional part' benefited learners beyond academic or vocational attainment. This is an important condition for effective learning. However, it should work in tandem with tuition that is well aligned to the curriculum:

“ [Tuition] can be something skills-based, can be something needs-based, can be something wider around confidence – that additional part is what makes a difference.”

(Principal)

Many leaders and teaching staff said that tutoring sessions gave learners a safe place to learn and make mistakes without the embarrassment commonly found in larger-group settings.

“ [Learners] are just comfortable and more relaxed. The small context affords them the opportunity to engage.”

(Focus area lead)

Many tutors were able to build positive relationships with learners and encourage them in their studies. Many learners said that they appreciated the friendly guidance and support from tutors who had helped them to believe that they could achieve when they might otherwise have failed or withdrawn from their course. Learners in one provider described their relationship with the tutor as like having 'an extra friend at college' to support them:

“ My behaviour was bad before. I would behave bad to get their attention. I feel like someone is actually listening.”

(Learner)

Learners also praised the tutoring environment. One learner explained that 'one-to-one helps to focus on what I'm doing wrong' with 'no pressure' of holding the whole class back. Most learners viewed tutoring activities overwhelmingly positively. They said that these had helped them to gain confidence and progress in their studies. Most learners expressed a deep appreciation for tutoring and found it enriching to their overall learning experience:

“ I care more, I learn more, I understand I need an education.”

(Learner)

“ [In] my first year, I was really shy, didn't know how to open up – [tutoring sessions] build up my confidence in class.”

(Learner)

This increased confidence was not only seen in academic tutoring but also in vocational courses. Some learners said that they had increased confidence both in their career path and in interacting with clients. One learner told us that she was now excited to start a career as a hairdresser due to tutoring sessions that helped to develop her technique.

All providers noted an improvement in learner confidence. This was reported as both self-confidence and confidence in applying subject knowledge and skills in class. One provider told us

that 80% of learners said that they feel more confident as a result of tutoring. This increase had a wider impact. Teachers also reported a positive change in classroom behaviour. Learners were more confident to participate in class discussions and to answer questions. Staff in several providers told us about learners' increased resilience as a result of tutoring:

“ It is not just helping them in their academic studies but also their communication and mental health.”

(Focus area lead)

Increased confidence also translated to increased exam readiness. Due to the pandemic, many learners had not experienced external exams. Many said they felt more confident sitting these exams because of tutoring sessions. A few even said their exam anxiety during their GCSE resits had reduced.

## **Without dedicated funding, tutoring is untenable**

Leaders valued the funding and believed that it had a significant positive effect on their provision. One principal said that it was 'like a lifeline since the pandemic'. They explained that 'we would not have thought of that idea [small group tutoring] had the tuition fund not come out'.

Many senior leaders told us that they would like to continue to offer tuition for the many learners in future year groups who will have knowledge gaps as a result of pandemic disruption. However, financial limitations mean that if there are significant reductions in funding, providing ongoing tuition will be unrealistic:

“ We can see the benefit. As long as we can, we will continue... as long as there are funds.”

(Principal)

“ We've seen some positive impact as a result of tutoring. Would be great to see funding continue... without funding, [it would be] difficult to maintain it at the level we've got.”

(Subject lead)

Only one provider planned to continue tutoring irrespective of the tuition fund. This was because of the impact tutoring had on improved attendance and engagement. However, even in this case, leaders stressed that reduced funding would make the posts more difficult to keep.

## **Annex**

## Analysis

Alongside collecting the primary data from the visits, we also asked HM Inspectors (HMIs) and OIs to evaluate the evidence collected to explain the effectiveness of the provision they had seen. Much of the data collected derived from participants' views, but 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 criteria to determine the strengths and weaknesses of tutoring across the sample. This means that we have confidence that our review can comment on the influence of some aspects of tutoring beyond individuals' perceptions.

We used an inductive thematic approach to analyse the qualitative data collected from interviews and focus groups. [\[footnote 5\]](#) This involved identifying emerging patterns or ideas to help shape analysis. We then grouped these into themes and sub-themes.

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1. ['Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) 16 to 19 tuition fund guidance 2022 to 2023'](#), Education and Skills Funding Agency, May 2023. [↩](#)
  2. Academic mentors and coaches are the terminology used by leaders to describe tutors who are not qualified teachers and providing support to learners through tutoring sessions. [↩](#)
  3. ['Small group tuition'](#), Education Endowment Fund, July 2021. [↩](#)
  4. ['Small group tuition'](#), Education Endowment Fund, July 2021. [↩](#)
  5. An inductive thematic approach means developing a theory or drawing conclusions from the collected evidence by identifying themes in the data rather than building hypotheses before data collection. [↩](#)

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