The Centre for Education & Youth

# Levelling Up Tutoring

## How can tutoring best contribute to closing England's attainment gap in schools by 2030?

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# Our partnership

The Centre for Education and Youth (CfEY) is a 'think and action tank'. We believe society should ensure all children and young people receive the support they need to make a fulfilling transition to adulthood. We work with a wide range of organisations, and people who share this belief, helping them make wise, bold decisions about how best to support young people. We use our timely and rigorous research to get under the skin of key issues in education and youth, aiming to shape debate, inform policy and change practice. Set up as a community interest company, we have a particular interest in issues affecting marginalised young people. We work with a wide range of partners across corporate, government and third sectors.

Our *Investigate-Ed* methodology combines rapid reviews with additional primary research and facilitated workshops, offering policymakers, practitioners and other partners structured spaces to diagnose problems and generate meaningful solutions. As well as informing debate and influencing policy, our investigations aim to use our convening power to inspire new partnerships and practical actions. Our research, analysis and development place young people, and the adults working with them, front and centre. Recent investigations have explored issues such as non-formal learning, oracy and the future of assessment.

CfEY was delighted to be supported throughout this work by three organisations that are passionate about tutoring in schools.

**White Rose Maths** is a group of teachers and mathematicians dedicated to developing and improving maths education and inspiring everyone to love maths as much as they do. They offer schools in-depth training programmes, a vast bank of clear, practical resources (many of them available free of charge) and the bespoke support needed to keep raising the bar. They aim to make teachers' jobs a lot simpler while helping them change the future for every child.

**Action Tutoring** is a national education charity that unlocks the potential of children and young people who are facing disadvantage, tackling the attainment gap head-on by forging partnerships with schools nationwide. Trained, high-quality volunteer tutors are empowered to enable pupils to make meaningful academic progress, opening doors to future opportunities.

**Third Space Learning** was founded in 2013 with the aim of making one-to-one tuition accessible to disadvantaged pupils in schools across England. It is now the largest provider of maths tuition to schools in England. The company pioneered a model that recruited and trained specialist online maths tutors in Asia, taking advantage of the large population of English-speaking STEM graduates, thus making one-to-one tuition an affordable tool for schools to use as a supplement to class teaching strategies.

# Acknowledgements

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# 1. Foreword

We are delighted to present the latest report from the *CfEY Investigate-Ed* series. This investigation, on the future of tutoring, is especially timely. Although all countries have launched a range of Covid-19 catch-up programmes, England is now in the midst of possibly the largest ever global experiment in state-funded tutoring. Like it or not, the rest of the world's education policymakers may be watching us. By necessity, our education system has done this rapidly; the pupils who missed out during the pandemic cannot wait for fully-functioning, fully-evidence-informed programmes. Although our research explores the immediate challenges of rapid implementation, we also look to the future. How can tutoring play a sustainable role in achieving longer-term educational goals? If the Department for Education (DfE) aims to embed tutoring beyond the National Tutoring Programme (NTP), then conversations need to start now that go beyond the current, inevitable delivery and procurement challenges. There is a risk that in future decades, the NTP is seen as a missed opportunity – not necessarily because of issues around rapid scale-up and delivery, but because it is seen as a separate add-on, rather than aligned to wider thinking about how our education system can best meet the needs of our most disadvantaged and lowest-achieving learners.

This report generally focuses on tutoring as an intervention for improving academic outcomes. However, tutoring also has pastoral promise. The one-to-one and small-group nature of tutoring, combined with its focus on being student-centred, makes it an intervention well situated to produce strong interpersonal relationships between adults and young people. Similarly, the composition of the tutoring workforce, which includes many individuals who are still students or who are relatively young, also sets the stage for empathetic relationship building between tutors and young people. Beyond this report, CfEY believes there is a need for longer-term, more holistic thinking about a single, coherent approach to academic and pastoral mentoring and tutoring for all pupils. But this is for our next investigation.

As with all our *CfEY Investigate-Ed* projects, this final report is a wholly independent piece of research. However, our three partners have been active participants in the process; their diverse expertise, perspectives and creativity have informed our insights. We also thank all the interviewees, survey respondents and roundtable participants involved in the research. Despite the difficulties with the first two years of the NTP, we have felt a remarkable, collective will for the programme to be successful, and an acknowledgement that all partners, from classroom to boardroom, have a role to play. We hope that our report will make a welcome contribution to debate, policy and practice on the future of tutoring, and look forward to hearing your feedback.

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# 2. Executive summary

## This report

- The National Tutoring Programme (NTP), launched in 2020, is an ambitious, large-scale government intervention that has already achieved some successes. But modifications to the programme could significantly improve the programme's impact. Moreover, new policies and practices could embed tutoring into schools long term, offering a uniquely powerful contribution to closing the attainment gap in England.
- The time to start planning and executing these changes is now. The NTP is missing uptake targets, with some geographical 'cold spots' a growing concern. Research is showing that learning loss for pupils – especially those who are disadvantaged – is larger and more stubborn than initially thought. Without rapid and bold changes, the NTP could both prove to be a poor return on investment, and put schools off tutoring for a generation.
- This report explores how the programme can be improved. It is informed by a survey of 185 school and trust leaders and teachers, as well as 27 interviews with school and trust leaders, senior figures at the Department for Education (DfE) and others with research and policy expertise.

## Key findings

1. **Almost all interviewees and survey respondents had some positive perceptions about the NTP**, especially its ambition, scale and grounding in evidence. Of the survey respondents, 70% told us that they believe the NTP should continue for at least a year longer than is currently planned. However, 50% also said they think the programme needs to be radically or significantly redesigned.
2. **Many school and trust leaders had negative perceptions of the NTP before enrolling, with some believing it was "more effort than it's worth to apply for"**, and "corporate". Others had heard that enrolment was a "bureaucratic nightmare".
3. **The range of funding pillars and division of labour between delivery partners and tuition partners created much confusion and a high decision load for schools and tutoring partners** participating in the NTP. This remains a barrier to participation.
4. **Buy-in from key stakeholders, such as parents and teachers, was reported to be low, especially in certain parts of England such as the North East**. The administrative burden associated with the NTP was large for both tuition partners and schools, especially in Year 2 of the programme. This made engagement with the programme highly capacity-draining.
5. **Tutor quality was reported to be highly variable, with many suggesting that a focus on quality was lost in Year 2 of the programme**. Just under a third of survey respondents believed that the quality of tutors on the NTP needs to be improved.
6. **Challenges with the tutoring workforce were reported by all parties**, with issues of guaranteeing tutor supply in cold-spot areas compounded by schools' specifications for tutors (for example, being available in-person and at 3:30pm only).
7. **Funding was the most common element of the NTP that survey respondents said should be redesigned**. Equally, there was a general

preference for the current changes to the model. Of the survey respondents, 30% reported not being able to fund tutoring from 'business as usual' budgets after the NTP finishes in 2024.

8. Some reported that the NTP is more effective when tutoring provision is organised at the multi-academy trust (MAT) level.
9. **Some education leaders reported a need to increase the professionalisation of tutoring**, creating accreditation pathways and other routes to building human capital in the tutoring sector.

## Recommendations

Drawing on our research findings we produced a set of recommendations, which were further shaped by two roundtables of thought leaders in education policy and practice. We thus make the following recommendations for improving the NTP and leveraging the full potential of in-school tutoring to close the attainment gap:

- The following five design principles should guide the development of tutoring in schools policy:
    - **Scaffolded autonomy.** Schools want (and need) autonomy to procure and deploy tutors as they see fit. But to do this effectively they need a constellation of support services around them, which can be gradually removed over time.
    - **Simple and accountable.** Many barriers to the uptake and impact of the NTP relate to overly complex funding and accountability models. Simplification of these elements would attract schools to in-school tutoring.
    - **Stable and adaptive.** Frequent changes to the NTP have undermined its delivery and impact. Consistency over time, while responding to evaluations of the programme for continuous improvement, would resolve this issue.
    - **Equitable and targeted.** The focus of tutoring in schools policy needs to be on reaching disadvantaged young people, without creating an unfair workload for teachers or resulting in exploitative labour market practices with tutors.
    - **Evidence building and applying.** To support the ongoing continuous improvement of the NTP and tutoring in schools policy, rigorous, wide-ranging evaluation must be woven into the fabric of the programme.

- In order to ***Improve*** the impact of the NTP through incremental changes, the DfE should:
    1. **Immediately commit to an additional year's funding for the programme up to 2025.** Another year of funding could be used to extend the NTP for another year so that it can meet its uptake targets and address the unexpectedly high levels of learning loss among disadvantaged pupils.
    2. **Maintain a simple approach to reporting and accountability that focuses on disadvantaged pupils.** The NTP's new accountability system must not backslide into a large administrative burden for schools, and the use of 'name and shame' tactics should be avoided. In the long term, tutoring spend should fold into existing systems for Pupil Premium accountability.
    3. **Develop a coherent approach to the use and creation of evidence.** The current use of multiple research bodies to evaluate the NTP stymies

the sharing of data between bodies. A single research body should be appointed to provide real-time insights into the programme that can be used to make gradual improvements to it.

4. **Support current peer learning networks for tuition partners and create new networks for school leaders with responsibilities for tutoring.** Networks should focus on sharing effective practice on delivery and capacity building to support disadvantaged pupils. Membership should be opened to providers who are not tuition partners, to support cross-system improvement.
5. **Make the NTP significantly more hospitable to remote tutoring.** Changing guidance on remote tutoring could significantly increase schools' access to tutors, especially those in cold-spot areas. In parallel, programme evaluations should seek to understand whether remote tutoring has different levels of impact, and the conditions in which remote tutoring can thrive.
6. **Restore and maintain Pupil Premium targets.** Pupil Premium targets for the NTP were removed in Year 2, risking the programme losing focus on disadvantaged pupils. Restoring these targets would keep the programme focused on this group.

- In order to ***Embed*** tutoring in schools in the long term through growing a targeted supply of tutors and improving the quality of in-school tutoring, the DfE should:

7. **Commit to central government funding to support tutoring in schools from 2025 to 2030.** This would support the creation of a sustainable and impactful ecosystem for in-school tutoring while extending the NTP's impact in closing the attainment gap.
8. **Create a set of 'Tutor Standards'.** Similar to and aligned with the professional standards for teachers and teaching assistants, this would build a shared language around effective tutoring, creating the parameters to guide the training, professional development and performance management of tutors.
9. **Create kitemarks for tuition providers.** These kitemarks would act as a legacy of the NTP, serving as a signal in the market to help schools identify quality providers. At the same time, the transparency of the kitemarks would provide a structured guide for how providers can improve the quality of their service.
10. **Improve teachers', leaders' and governors' understanding of effective approaches to deploying and working with tutors through weaving content into relevant aspects of the early career framework (ECF), national professional qualifications (NPQs) and other professional learning programmes.** This would diffuse knowledge of the effective recruitment, oversight and deployment of tutors in school to leadership.
11. **Create a system of capacity-building grants for tutoring organisations, MATs and similar organisations to strategically grow and improve tutoring services.** This more direct approach to growing supply in cold-spot areas may include funding large tuition providers to incubate smaller providers, MATs setting up their own tutoring organisations and universities starting to supply tutoring.

- In order to ***Transform*** tutoring in schools by creating a large self-sustaining supply of high-quality tutors, the DfE should:

    12. **Explore options for building tutoring as a 'National Tutoring Service' for all 16- to 25-year-olds.** This would produce a sustainable supply of tutors for schools in the long term while equipping young people with soft skills that can contribute to net economic productivity and growth.
    13. **Create a set of flexible but consistent pathways between the teaching, teaching assistant and tutoring professions.** Establishing these routes could help resolve recruitment and retention issues in teaching. It could also develop young tutors' soft skills, supporting growth in human capital and producitivty at the national level.
    14. **Support the development of tutoring 'next practice' through funding tutoring innovations (including through investment in joint venture partnerships)**. These partnerships could develop innovative methods for reaching particular groups of disadvantaged students – such as pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) – through school, tuition provider and research evaluator partnerships.

- While these recommendations can be viewed as discrete suggestions for advancing the tutoring in schools agenda, they also combine into a coherent whole. This vision shows how sustainable and impactful tutoring in the school ecosystem can be created.

# 3. Introduction

## Why tutoring?

Tutoring in England has long been the preserve of the few. Although private tutoring for children has increased significantly over the last two decades, this growth has been clustered among relatively wealthy families or those in the south of England (Jerrim & Sims, 2019).

Many educators and policymakers have long been concerned by this concentration of access to tutoring. For tutoring is supported by a uniquely strong evidence base, which shows its effectiveness at accelerating academic progress (EEF, 2021a). Typically this has enabled the children of more advantaged families to make greater academic advances than their peers, widening the attainment gap (Jerrim & Sims, 2019). But if we were to increase access to tutoring among those from disadvantaged families, we may be able to drive things in the opposite direction – closing the attainment gap.

There have been many calls over the years to improve access to tutoring for disadvantaged young people. These calls reached a crescendo in the midst of considerable concerns over Covid-induced learning loss in 2020. So was born the National Tutoring Programme (NTP)

The NTP is one of the most ambitious English educational policies of the last few decades. It aims to radically increase access to tutoring for disadvantaged young people. In this respect, the programme has had great success. The programme had reached 1.5 million young people at the time of writing, with nearly half of them considered economically disadvantaged.

The NTP also set out to change the perception of tutoring among school leaders, increasing their interest in procuring tutoring services in school and driving the growth of the tutoring market. In this respect, the NTP also looks to be succeeding. The Sutton Trust's 2022 survey of school leaders' spending behaviour indicates that tutoring now ranks as the highest priority for Pupil Premium expenditure among schools, having doubled in popularity since 2019 (The Sutton Trust, 2022).

Despite these achievements, we believe that a programme with as much ambition and promise as the NTP requires further scrutiny to support even greater success. This report sets out to develop strategies and recommendations that can support this continuous improvement to the programme. To do this, we have spoken to a wide range of key stakeholders and experts from across the education sector to understand what can be learned from the first two years of the NTP to improve its uptake and impact in its final two years.

But this report goes beyond the NTP. From the evidence we have gathered and analysed, we believe we are at a unique moment. The convergence of interest in tutoring means that we have an intervention with a strong evidence base supporting its effectiveness, a political consensus on its value and the base for strong institutions to support long-term delivery at scale from the strides the NTP has already made. We believe we are at a juncture where tutoring could be used as a key lever to support Covid recovery and close the attainment gap. The present report lays out the pathways we believe we should follow to achieve this vital goal.

## About this report

This report begins with a brief overview of the recent history of tutoring in England. This includes an overview of the first two years of the NTP as well as recent changes. We then explain our approach and summarise our findings. We conclude with a set of recommendations for improving, embedding and transforming tutoring in schools.

The timescale and resources for this research led to some important decisions about scope. Our work looks exclusively at tutoring as delivered in primary and secondary schools, excluding post-16 and further education delivery and private tutoring. We also do not critically engage with the Academic Mentors pillar of the NTP. None of this is to imply that these parts of tutoring are not important – they are just beyond the scope of a report that aims for focus and brevity when understanding such a complex and timely area of policy.

# 4. Tutoring in England – the context

## Defining 'tutoring'

This report uses the Education Endowment Foundation's (EEF) definition of 'tutoring' as intensive academic support delivered to an individual or small group by a teacher, teaching assistant or other adult. Tutoring is more generally distinguished from teaching by its more personalised, flexible approach where instructional methods and content are tailored to the needs of an individual or small group of students (EEF, 2021a).

Tutoring presently takes many forms, being delivered both within and outside of school, and in person or remotely. As stated in the Introduction (Section 3), this report focuses on tutoring funded by schools, excluding private tutoring funded by families from our analysis.

## Popularity of private tutoring before the NTP

Private tutoring has become considerably more popular in England over the last two decades. Analysis of survey data from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) shows that tutoring in maths for Year 8 pupils more than doubled between 1995 and 2003, going from 10% to 21%. Similarly, private tutoring in science more than doubled to 17% in the same period and for the same population of pupils (Ireson & Rushforth, 2009).

By 2005, 18% of pupils were receiving some form of private tutoring. Within 15 years, this figure had increased to 27%. The Sutton Trust's most recent survey of 3,000 secondary pupils from randomly selected schools reveals that pupils were most likely to be privately tutored in Year 11 (The Sutton Trust, 2019). Other data shows that primary pupils are most likely to be tutored in Year 6 (Ireson & Rushforth, 2009). Both groups are most likely to be tutored in maths, science and, to a lesser extent, English (Ireson & Rushforth, 2009; The Sutton Trust, 2019).

## The use of state-funded tutoring before the NTP

In response to private tutoring's growing popularity in the 2000s, in-school tutoring began to feature more in government education policy. The 2007 pilot for 'Making Good Progress', a package of interventions for improving the academic outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, included trialling one-to-one in-school tutoring for 10% of Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils in 500 schools across England. Tutors were typically existing school staff, but funding permitted some schools to hire new tutors.

The 2008 scale-up of 'Every Child a Reader', a common approach to improving literacy in early primary school, required an increase in the number of school staff available to deliver small-group and one-to-one tutoring. Funding was prepared for this tutoring to be provided to approximately 30,000 pupils, as appropriate, between 2010 and 2011.

Independent evaluations revealed that both 'Making Good Progress' (DCSF, 2010) and the scaled-up 'Every Child a Reader' (DfE, 2010) were impactful on pupil academic outcomes and popular with participating parents. Perhaps as a consequence, the 2009 Schools White Paper proposed that all primary pupils falling behind at Key Stage 2 be entitled to 10 hours of one-to-one tuition and under-target Year 7 pupils be offered small-group catch-up tutoring. The paper stated the aim for funding to be released to

allow 600,000 pupils to be reached with this tutoring programme by 2011 (DCSF, 2009).

However, the change of government in 2010 brought in a new set of ministerial priorities, which did not include tutoring. There was growth in the sector through the proliferation of organisations providing tutoring to disadvantaged young people through schools. These organisations mainly accessed funding through the Pupil Premium, introduced in 2011 as a cash uplift for schools to offer further support to disadvantaged pupils in their setting. However, tutoring was largely absent from direct consideration in central government policymaking until the NTP launched in 2020.

## The National Tutoring Programme

- **Founding**

Tutoring quite abruptly became a central part of English education policy again in 2020. Amid Covid-induced school closures, a group of prominent organisations in the education and youth space (The Sutton Trust, the Education Endowment Foundation, Impetus, Teach First and Nesta) began discussing how a central government tutoring programme could be deployed to support young people (NTP, 2021).

This was motivated by research indicating the amount of learning that disadvantaged young people missed out on due to remote schooling and the potential downstream impact of these losses on literacy and numeracy skills and consequent academic attainment. The Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching & Learning Toolkit also provided robust evidence that a 'high dose' of one-to-one or small-group (no more than three individuals) tutoring could improve progress in English and maths by up to five months (EEF, 2021b).

The group of organisations lobbied the government to create a National Tutoring Programme (NTP). The KPMG Foundation funded the development of the design of the possible national programme as well as investigation and trialling of the ability of remote tutoring to be accessed technologically by disadvantaged pupils (EEF, 2021c).

With a promising specification for the NTP and evidence of its ability to reach disadvantaged pupils remotely, the DfE appointed the EEF as the national delivery partner for the programme. At a high level, the programme would allow schools to access subsidised tutoring for their pupils through a range of approved tuition providers. Recruitment for these tuition providers began in September 2020, with providers being vetted on their safeguarding procedures, ability to serve at least 500 pupils, experience of working with schools and financial due diligence, among other criteria.

The NTP launched formally in November 2020, becoming accessible to schools in the same month. The short-term aim of the programme was to support the academic catch-up of disadvantaged pupils. At the same time, the programme was launched with three more ambitious goals for system change (EEF, 2021c):

- to stimulate greater demand for tutoring as an intervention among schools by making them aware of the evidence on its impact
- to impose greater regulation on the otherwise largely unregulated tutoring market
- to change the role that tutoring plays in schools, making it a common tool that schools deploy as part of their Pupil Premium spend.

- **Year 1: 2020–21**

The NTP launched in Year 1 with an initial budget of £215 million. It was guided by a target of delivering tutoring to 250,000 pupils with a minimum of 65% on Pupil Premium (DfE, 2022a).

The programme offered schools a choice of two routes to access tutors:

- A **Tuition Partners** route. Schools could apply to receive tutoring for their pupils through an approved tuition provider with a 70% subsidy. The NTP matched school applicants to tuition providers based on needs and location. Tutoring was issued to schools in 15-hour blocks, providing a level of 'dosage' that the EEF's evidence supports as impactful on academic outcomes. The remaining 30% of the tutors' costs came from the school's core budget.
- An **Academic Mentors** route. Schools in areas with a high proportion of disadvantaged pupils could apply for a trained graduate to be placed in their school to provide intensive academic catch-up support. This was subsidised at a rate of 95%.

Schools were also given the option of having tutoring delivered one to one or in small groups, with the maximum group size for funding being capped at three.

The second closure of schools in January 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic forced tuition partners to quickly pivot their tutoring offer to remote delivery. This caused some disruption to the initial rollout of the programme. Nonetheless, 207,000 tutoring courses were started by pupils over the course of the first year and 104,000 pupils were reached through the Academic Mentors programme. Of the tutoring uptake, 44% was among Pupil Premium students. Uptake around England was variable, with some regions, such as the North East, meeting 60% of their target for pupils reached.

- **Year 2: 2021–22**

The DfE re-tendered the role of primary delivery partner for the second year of the NTP. The contract for that year was awarded to Randstad, a tuition partner in Year 1. It took over operations in September 2021.

The DfE made several other changes. It scaled up targets for the programme considerably, aiming to reach two million pupils over the year, with the same proportion of Pupil Premium students as in Year 1. The number of accredited tuition partners was almost doubled, and a new digital interface – 'The Tuition Hub' – was introduced as a web-based point of entry for schools to enrol on and participate in the programme (Booth, 2022a).

Following feedback from schools, the programme introduced another way for schools to access the NTP:

- The **School-Led Tutoring** (SLT) route. Schools could apply for a ringfenced grant fund that would allow them to recruit their own tutors or pay current staff an uplift to tutor pupils. The amount received by schools was proportionate to the number of Pupil Premium students on roll. This grant covered 75% of the cost of 15 hours of tutoring for each eligible pupil.

Several further changes to the NTP were made in Year 2. Schools were given the agency to assign more than one 15-hour block of tutoring to a pupil. Small-group tutoring was extended from a maximum of three pupils to a maximum of six. In response to its popularity, £65 million was diverted from the overall NTP budget to the SLT route (Booth, 2022a).

The most recent available data (May 2022) at the time of writing indicates that, during Year 2, 913,388 pupils accessed tutoring through the SLT route. In contrast, 165,230 pupils started a course through the Tuition Partners route and 118,714 were engaged through the Academic Mentors strand (DfE, 2022b). Issues of regional variation in uptake as well as relatively low Pupil Premium engagement have persisted.

In total over both years, 1.5 million students embarked on a tutoring course through the NTP. This is quite some distance from the target of six million courses for the overall programme – with only two more confirmed years of the NTP. Section 4 explores many of the issues with the current programme in detail.

- **Years 3 and 4: 2022–24**

Since April 2022, the DfE has made significant changes to the programme for Years 3 and 4. It has rewritten and re-tendered the brief for national support, with the tender currently active at the time of writing this report. The tender suggests that the DfE is open to dividing central support between three delivery partners, with one organisation to lead on quality assurance, another to provide training to tutors and academic mentors and a third to lead on recruiting and deploying academic mentors.

The programme now has a single pillar, essentially a variation of the SLT route. This new funding model will give ringfenced funding directly to schools, proportionate to their proportion of Pupil Premium students. Schools will be able to spend this money on tutoring at their own discretion, including on tuition partners approved by the NTP, with schools being directly granted funding. The NTP will also require all tutors to participate in mandatory training, including those recruited directly by a school. The only exception will be for individuals with Qualified Teacher Status (Booth, 2022b). The remaining budget for the programme is set at £367 million.

The DfE has also announced that, from autumn 2022, data on whether a school is using the NTP will be made public. In principle, this means that a parent will be able to tell whether their child's school is using the NTP and lobby them to do so if not. Ofsted will also consider how schools use tutoring during inspections as part of its assessment of school leadership and learning (Booth, 2022c).

- **The future of tutoring beyond the NTP**

The NTP currently has a target of delivering six million courses by the end of the 2023–24 academic year. After this, the future of the NTP is unknown. The DfE's aim is for the NTP to create a mature market for tutoring. On the demand side, schools will be sufficiently persuaded of the value of in-school tutoring to pay for any continuation from within their own budgets. On the supply side, a network of tutoring providers with a diverse set of approaches, but consistent levels of quality, will be trusted to meet the demand for quantity and quality from schools.

The medium-term vision for tutoring was further clarified in the most recent Schools White Paper, which calls for tutoring to be made available to all pupils that schools deem to be in need of it. Tutoring is also set as a core option in the Pupil Premium menu

of interventions to improve academic outcomes. Overall, the DfE has expresses a commitment to 'building a vibrant tutoring market, serving right across England' (DfE, 2022c).

Further to this, the paper sets a new target: for the national average in GCSE grades to go from a 4.5 to a 5 (deemed a 'strong pass' for a GCSE) by 2030. This is in addition to a target for 90% of all Key Stage 2 pupils to be meeting expected standards in literacy and numeracy by 2030. Tutoring is suggested in the White Paper as one route towards achieving these ambitious targets.

## This project

Our study emerges from this fast-moving context. There is appetite for tutoring in schools to work as an intervention, as well as drive to ensure it does, distributed throughout the education system. There is also a uniquely well-developed policy platform, largely through the NTP and its possible legacy.

Nevertheless, the challenges in uptake of the NTP among disadvantaged pupils, and questions about the programme's impact and delivery, mean that there is still work to be done in ensuring tutoring in schools can deliver on its potential to close the attainment gap. The present report seeks to understand what more needs to be done from a policy perspective to deliver on this promise.

To develop this understanding, our work begins by acknowledging that many of the key insights for improvement are already available within the education system. These insights are held at the front line of delivery of the NTP, among school and trust leaders and tuition partners. They are also held by experts in research and policy who have been analysing and planning tutoring in schools. This report sets out to capture these insights and channel them into practical recommendations for growing and consolidating tutoring in schools.

# 5. Methods and approach

Our rapid mixed-methods approach to data collection took place over three months, in two phases.

Phase 1 aimed to identify the key research questions that would guide our overall study. We began with an understanding that there are many areas of tutoring in school that we might investigate – far more than could be covered within the scope of this research. There was a consequent need to focus on areas that were of immediate concern, and that might be malleable to change.

To do this, we interviewed five senior figures with an existing knowledge of the NTP. Three of these figures are presently senior in policymaking at the DfE, one formerly held such a role and the other has played a major role in steering and advising the NTP.

Interviewees participated anonymously through a semi-structured interview. We analysed their responses to produce the research questions, which guided the remainder of our investigation.

Phase 2 of the research involved recruiting, interviewing and surveying a larger number of participants to help us answer questions identified in the first phase. We adopted a structured and strategic approach towards recruiting for the interviews, setting out to sample school and trust leaders, tuition providers, researchers, representatives from professional bodies and unions and figures working in policy. We drew on sector knowledge as well as our broad network to recruit 22 interviewees.

Interviewees gave informed consent to participate and were led through a semi-structured interview schema. Interviews were recorded and notes taken. The interview data was then analysed thematically to extract common experiences and attitudes. This analysis was then used to inform our recommendations.

We also designed a survey to offer us more general insights that would complement our richer interview data. This survey was designed for and administered to trust and school leaders. This was motivated by the intention to capture as much front-line insight into the delivery of tutoring policy in schools as possible. Our survey consisted of 12 multiple-choice questions and was shared through our networks of schools and teachers. Responses were cleaned and analysed using Microsoft Excel.

After analysing our findings, we derived a set of recommendations for improving the NTP and advancing the tutoring in schools agenda (see Section 7). After producing these initial recommendations, we organised two roundtables with participants with expertise in tutoring, the NTP and educational policy more broadly. These roundtables were conducted to use relevant expertise to further shape our recommendations. Participants in the roundtables who gave their permission to be named in this report are listed in the ‘Our sample’ subsection below.

## Our sample

Table 1 below gives an overview of the roles and organisations of interview respondents from both the first and second phases of our research.

*Table 1 – Number of interview participants based on role or organisation type*

| Role/type of organisation | Number of interviewees |
|---|---|
| Tuition partner | 5 |
| NTP lead organisation[1] | 5 |
| School leader | 2 |
| Trust leader | 6 |
| Professional association or union | 2 |
| Senior DfE official | 3 |
| Policy expert | 2 |
| Researcher | 2 |
| **Total** | **27** |

Our interview sample included a range of tuition partners, including small, nascent organisations and large well-established market leaders. These tuition providers also mostly have national coverage, enriching their perspective on regional disparity. However, one provider primarily serves the East of England.

School and trust leaders were mainly based at schools in the south and East of England; however, we did also recruit two from the North East. This regional perspective was further enriched by one leader of a professional association representing schools from the North East. Both our policy experts had substantial experience within the DfE as well as analysing tutoring in schools from a policy perspective. Our two researcher respondents are leading on the delivery of programmes similar to the NTP in the United States and the Netherlands, respectively. They had committed significant time to understanding the English NTP model as part of mapping their national approach.

Some interviewees agreed to be named against quotes in this publication as part of our consent process. Others did not agree to be named and are instead identified by their role or the type of organisation they represent. We have also embedded some quotes into the text without any attribution to specific respondents.

In total, our survey received 185 responses from educational professionals working in England. The characteristics of these respondents are summarised in Table 2 as well as Figures 1 and 2 below.

*Table 2 – Percentage of survey respondents by role or type of organisation*

| Role/type of organisation | Percentage of respondents |
|---|---|
| Trust chief executive officer | 4% |
| Trust chief financial officer/chief operating officer | 5% |
| Human resources/information and communication technology director | 6% |

[1] 'NTP lead organisation' refers to agencies heavily involved in the establishment and delivery of the NTP at a structural level.

| | |
|---|---|
| Headteacher | 17% |
| Teacher | 23% |
| Deputy/assistant head | 16% |
| Middle/curriculum leader | 26% |
| Special educational needs coordinator/school business manager | 3% |
| **Total number of respondents** | **185** |

We received a larger number of teacher respondents than anticipated. However, from our screening questions, these were all teachers with a robust knowledge of how the NTP is delivered in their setting. We include their responses in our analysis of questions focused on ground-level insights. We also concluded that these teachers had a handle on the relevant logistical and impact considerations to include them in our analysis of questions trained on attitudes towards the NTP and its future.

*Figure 1 – Percentage of survey respondents by setting organisation*

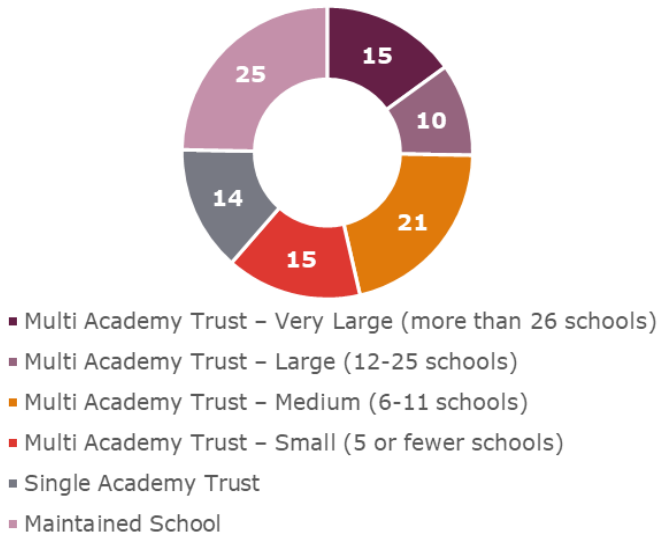
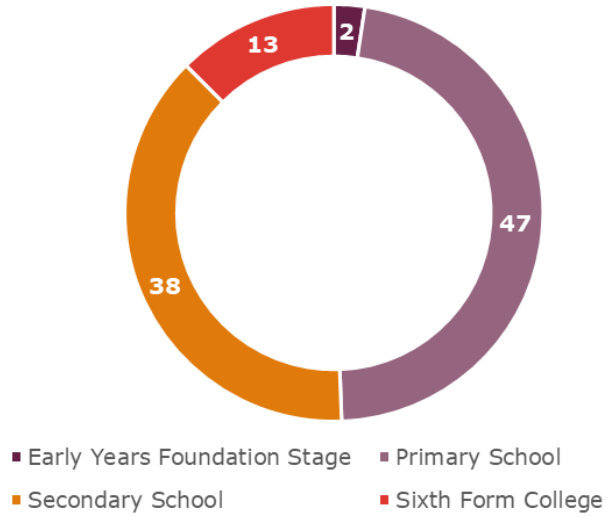



Figure 1 captures the spread in our sample in terms of how their setting is organised, with the majority of respondents situated in maintained schools or 'medium-sized' MATs of 6-11 schools. We factor these considerations into our analysis of responses. Similarly, we noticed a slight skew towards primary schools over secondary in our sample, which we also factor into the analysis.

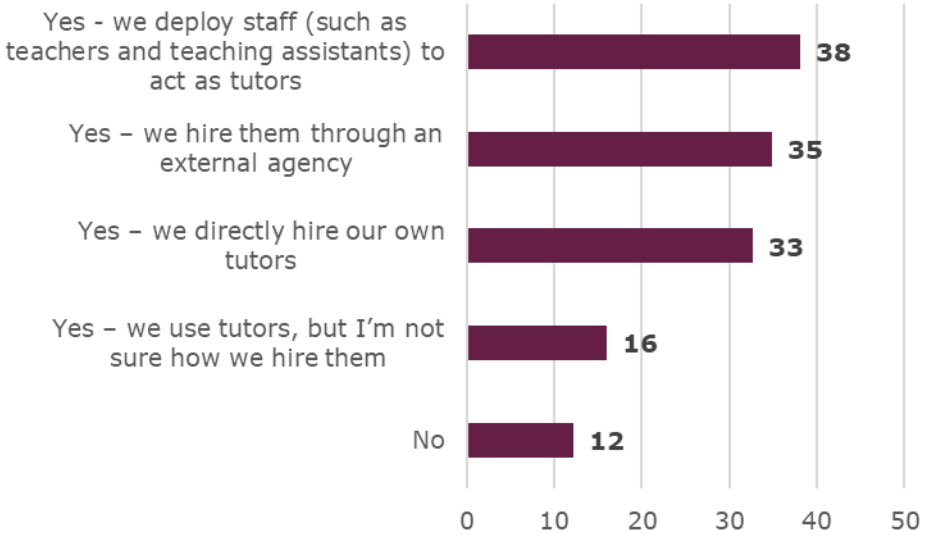
The regional distribution of respondents included greater representation for school from the south of England, who made up 42% of our sample, compared to the north. Of the respondents, 35% came from London and the South East with 7% from the South West, while the north (the North East, North West and Yorkshire) made up 31% of respondents. Further to this, 13% worked in settings based in the Midlands and 11% were from the East of England.

*Figure 2 – Percentage of survey respondents by setting phase*



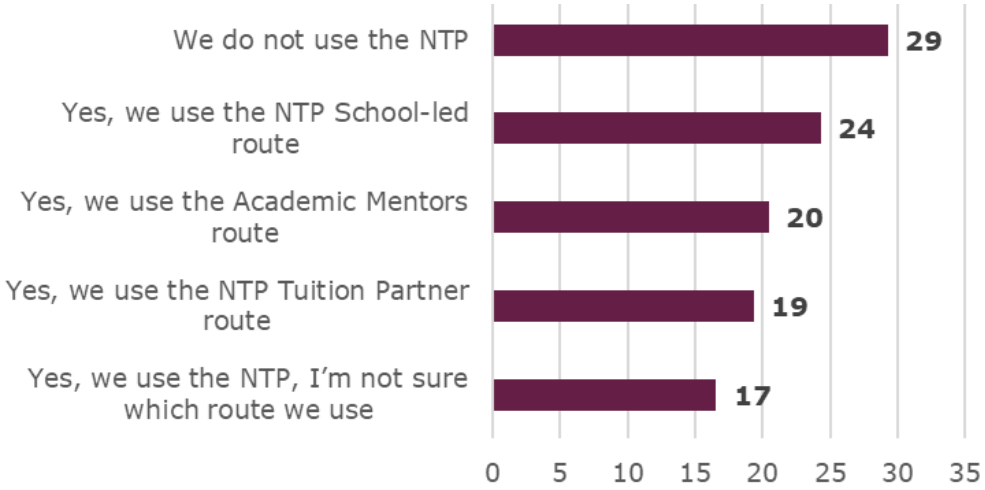

In terms of their engagement with tutoring, only 12% of respondents reported not using tutoring at all (see Figure 3 below). As shown in Figure 3, the most common way of engaging tutoring among respondents is through the deployment of internal staff or hiring them through an external agency.

*Figure 3 – Percentage of survey respondents by method of using in-school tutoring*




Despite the widespread use of tutoring among our sample, a third of respondents told us that they do not use the NTP (see Figure 4). Among those who do, a quarter use the SLT route, and around a fifth use the Tuition Partner route or the Academic Mentor route.

*Figure 4 – Percentage of survey respondents by NTP pillar in use*




In addition to our interview and survey respondents, our sample is also composed of those who took part in our roundtables for shaping our recommendations.

**Roundtable 1**

Our first roundtable was attended by three tuition providers, two of whom are partners on the NTP. A leader from a large national union for teachers and the leader of a campaigning organisation also contributed.

**Roundtable 2**

Our second roundtable was larger and involved leading figures from across the education sector, who informed and shaped our final set of recommendations. Most attendees gave their permission to be named, as follows:

- Ben Gadsby – Head of Policy and Research, Impetus
- Chris Zarraga – Director, Schools North East
- Ian Taylor – Head of School Performance, Academies Enterprise Trust
- Julie McCulloch – Director of Policy, Association of School and College Leaders
- Murray Morrison – Chief Executive Officer, Tassomai
- Natalie Perera – Chief Executive Officer, Education Policy Institute
- Nick Brook – Deputy General Secretary, National Association of Head Teachers
- Russell Hobby – Chief Executive Officer, Teach First
- Samuel Skerritt – Head of Policy, Confederation of School Trusts
- Tom Richmond – Director, EDSK
- Yalinie Vigneswaran – Programme Director, Education Development Trust.

## Limitations of this research

We made considerable efforts to ensure our sampling strategy for interviewees captured a broad range of views. However, it is beyond the scope of this report to provide an exhaustive review of all the different attitudes towards and experiences of tutoring in schools held by professionals working in the education space. Instead, this report aims to capture critical and high-quality insights that constructively inform the development of policy solutions.

Similarly, we would highlight that the sample recruited for our survey is not necessarily representative of the whole teaching workforce. We qualify this throughout our reporting of the survey findings and therefore use this data primarily as a complement to our interview findings. We encourage others to be similarly cautious in generalising from our survey results.

# 6. Findings

## Perceptions of the NTP

We divide our findings into two sections. First we report what respondents told us about their experiences of and reflections on the NTP so far. We then summarise respondents' beliefs about how the NTP can be improved and tutoring in schools can be grown and improved.

### 1. Overall attitudes to the NTP

Every interviewee had some positive perceptions about the NTP. Most experts commented on the admirable scale and ambition of the programme, especially its legacy aims to normalise access to tutoring for all disadvantaged young people. Nearly all tuition partners commented that the programme had supported their organisation to grow, in some cases increasing their numbers of support staff and tutors several times over. Researchers and policymakers were confident that the focus on tutoring as an intervention to scale up in schools is well motivated given the prior evidence base on the intervention's effectiveness and the ***"clear relationship between the intervention and the intended outcome of improved academic performance"***.

We found that many interviewees praised the rapid establishment and set-up of the first year of the NTP. Researchers admired the methodical and incremental approach that the DfE, EEF and associated partners took in designing the quality assurance processes for the first year and their messaging to schools. A member of the steering committee for Year 1 was impressed by how partners were able to put aside their different attitudes towards the programme's aims and operations to focus on making it as successful as possible. All tuition partners also commented on the similar collegial spirit among tutoring organisations, with a strong sense that they were doing something profound and important to support disadvantaged young people.

***"The NTP really galvanised all of us around something all the tutoring organisations were trying to do separately anyway in terms of helping schools with catch-up. There was very much this sense that 'We're the NTP and we're proud to be part of this and want it to be successful.' We felt that making this work would be a rising tide to lift other tutoring organisations as well."***

**- Large tuition partner on the NTP**

Affirming this positivity, 63% of respondents to our school and trust leader survey agreed with the statement "In the long term, tutoring is an especially effective way of closing the achievement gap". Perhaps as a consequence, 70% of respondents told us that they believe the NTP should continue for at least a year longer than is currently planned.

Inevitably, there were also some negative views about the NTP. Only 6% of our survey respondents told us that they do not believe the NTP needs to be changed at all. Conversely, 50% reported a belief that the NTP needs to be significantly or radically redesigned, with a quarter requesting at least some changes to the programme.

According to most interview respondents, a lot of the challenges prompting interest in redesign emerged in Year 2 (although there were also critical reflections on Year 1). Nonetheless, features of Year 2 were still picked out for praise and policy researchers

were quick to point out that the need to increase the NTP's delivery targets in Year 2 and introduce the SLT funding pillar in response to school feedback meant that Year 2 was always likely to encounter delivery challenges in terms of rapid scaling.

### 2. Perceptions of the NTP pre-enrolment

School and trust leaders, as well as tuition partners, identified several barriers to uptake of the NTP. They noted that there was a perception among many schools that the NTP is ***"just another government programme"***, with the funding being a small amount that would be quickly cut off when government priorities change. This made the NTP feel ***"more effort than it's worth to apply for"***. In areas where private tutoring and in-school tutoring are less common, such as in the north of England, there was also less confidence in tutoring as an intervention. Similarly, while respondents told us that the EEF's presence in Year 1 made the teaching profession more trusting of the programme, the replacement with Randstad in Year 2 changed this trusting attitude. The ***"corporate, outsourcer like Capita"*** image shifted some schools' understanding of the programme to 'just another' government programme that would come and go. According to respondents, the focus in the trade and national press on the NTP as a ***"bureaucratic nightmare"*** in Year 2 also put schools off engaging with the programme. All of this was further compounded by the fact that many schools in both years were still grappling with serious issues related to Covid-induced staff absences and other pandemic-related challenges and had limited capacity to apply for and manage a new programme.

### 3. Decision load

Many respondents described how schools experienced a great deal of confusion at enrolment. In both years, this created a large customer service and administrative burden for tuition partners who often found themselves tasked with explaining the programme to schools and walking them through the application and decisionmaking process. In addition, the process was split between the NTP delivery partner and tuition partners, creating confusion around the division of labour, adding another layer of uncertainty. The decision load also constituted a major cost to schools. This increased significantly in Year 2.

This was primarily focused around the NTP funding pillars and the Tuition Hub. The multiple routes created a large decision load for schools when trying to engage with the programme, with schools grappling to understand which route would work best for them financially and logistically. Respondents described the complexity of choice as sufficient to put many schools off pursuing the programme, especially those with limited experience in making grant applications.

This uncertainty increased in the second year of the programme with the introduction of a new funding pillar as well as changes to the delivery partner and the introduction of a new portal for schools to engage with the NTP. This confusion placed a large burden on tuition partners to support schools in navigating the changes but also created enough load among schools that, according to some tuition partners, it may have increased disengagement from the NTP among schools.

***"Schools were coming to us very confused and slightly lost. We'd built relationships with them and they had a lot of trust in us, but were unsure whether the new [SLT] funding route meant they could still work with us. The same for the new tech systems like the Tuition Hub. A lot of tutors were also confused and some of them stopped working for us due to the hub. And then***

***you find yourself with schools losing tutors they've been working with and now you've got to rebuild that trust with that school. You're almost starting all over with them."***

**- Lizzy Swan, SP Tutors**

Consensus among respondents was that the removal of some of this confusion – through the consolidation of the NTP into a single funding route – is a positive development.

### 4. Lack of buy-in from key stakeholders

Several respondents described how the NTP had been unsuccessful in winning the buy-in of key stakeholders who could drive greater engagement with and demand for the programme.

A few respondents described how the NTP had not engaged sufficiently with parents. This meant that this influencing bloc had not been engaging with their schools to encourage them to participate in the NTP. It also meant that in schools where the NTP was being offered, parents did not necessarily know about the programme to support the school with their child's attendance or engagement with the programme.

A representative of schools in the North East reported that parents in their region did not have automatic buy-in into the idea of tutoring compared to an area like London where use of private tutoring is more normal. There was more work to be done to persuade these parents of the value of the NTP in order to get them to provide the necessary support for in-school tutoring.

***"There's not a parental culture of tutoring here. Lots of our young people get small-group football tutoring. Those same kids' parents wouldn't think of them getting a maths tutor. It's not that they don't care about how they do in school, there's just no culture of it here. Most parents won't know what the NTP is."***

**- Chris Zarraga, Schools North East**

However, overall, there was little support among other respondents for greater engagement with parents. Other school and trust leaders expressed their gratitude that parents had not been subject to strong social messaging about the programme. They worried that greater awareness among parents would result in a large volume of enquiries from parents during a time of already limited capacity in schools. Schools, tuition providers and one policy expert also worried that a parent-facing messaging campaign may engage the ***"wrong sort of parents – the sharp-elbowed middle class"***, whose children may not be in need of tutoring.

Some trust leaders and researchers also speculated about sustained scepticism and tension between teachers and tutors, with suggestions that growing in-school tutoring may have been perceived as de-professionalising teachers or implying teachers' inability to provide high-quality academic catch-up to their students. Consequently, respondents felt that schools in turn may have seen the NTP as misguided in bringing lower-quality instructors into schools, serving as a distraction from higher-quality teaching. A trust leader noted that it was important for the DfE to communicate to teachers that in-school tutoring should be seen as a resource for them to draw on – ***"another tool in their toolkit for improving pupil attainment"***.

## 5. Administrative burden

All our school and trust leader respondents impressed upon us that participation in the NTP often entailed an unmanageably large administrative burden for schools. Changes to the programme in Year 2 had made this burden particularly acute for schools. This burden acts as a barrier to enrolment on the NTP, a barrier to impact when engaged with the programme and a motivation for participating schools to disengage from the programme entirely.

Although some interviewees flagged that the administrative burden had been a challenge throughout the programme, most of the burden was associated with the Tuition Hub introduced as a portal for engagement with the NTP in Year 2. Registering to use the hub, managing and approving timesheets and submitting data for schools participating in the Tuition Partners pillar were characterised as extremely capacity consuming. One trust leader told us that managing this administrative burden for a small number of tutors coming into a secondary school had resulted in an extra 15 hours of work for an already overworked administrator. Tuition partners believed that the heavy administration in the system introduced considerable inefficiencies, for example related to timesheet approval.

***"When we submit a timesheet to the NTP, the school needs to approve that timesheet before it can be signed off on. There's always a lot of delays here because school staff are busy and can take a while to find time to do these things. And if a school rejects a timesheet, for whatever reason – it could be a minor clerical error – then it takes a long time to resolve this. All of this means a major lag in payment for work."***

- **Medium-sized tuition partner**

The common experience of these burdens among schools was described by policy experts as creating a narrative that the ***"NTP is more work than it's worth"***, with word of mouth leading to lower enrolment in the programme. It also acted as a push factor for those already enrolled to disengage from the programme. Moreover, school leaders described these burdens as a major opportunity cost that prevented school staff from focusing on the other key logistical and curriculum considerations necessary for tutoring in schools to be impactful.

While all the tuition partners we interviewed were happy to do what they could to absorb these administrative burdens from schools, some noted that they were not able to formally do this until quite late in the second year of the programme. Two suggested that supporting schools with this administration reduced their capacity to provide other customer support to schools. One stated that navigating the new Tuition Hub with schools had cost them around £100,000 in extra administrative staffing.

A respondent leading on the evaluation of the Dutch equivalent to the NTP commented on the stark contrast between the programmes in terms of their administrative requirements:

***"There's definitely been capacity issues across the system that mean some schools haven't been able to engage with this. But it's not per se an issue with the application process itself, which we've kept very straightforward. It's a two-page form schools complete. And then they just need to account for the***

***money they've spent in an annual report that they have to write anyway for general school accountability."***

**- Professor Melanie Ehren, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam**

## 6. Tutor quality

Whichever NTP route they had used, school and trust leader interviewees reported positive experiences of tutor quality. Schools were especially impressed by the quality of some larger tuition partners who were able to offer qualified teachers and strong teaching materials. Nevertheless, just under a third of survey respondents told us that they believed that the quality of tutors on the NTP needed to be enhanced, with a quarter also reporting that the training of tutors through the programme needs to be improved.

There were also many general comments about the quality of instruction from tutors acquired through all routes, for example that their sessions were often poorly aligned with the school curriculum, meaning that sessions often had less impact than desired. Schools had several approaches to overcoming this problem, discussed in the next section.

School and trust leaders also reported some issues with tutors having limited experience of working with young people in a school, with some described as struggling with behaviour management and navigating school systems. One leader from a large MAT stated that poor quality from particular providers had prompted them to move to the SLT route and focus on hiring their own tutors.

Other school and trust leaders who used all routes commented that the Tuition Partner route had helped the sector by providing quality assurance, which helped with navigating an otherwise complex market of varying quality. Without it, many stated they could only rely on word of mouth and that, in areas where there are fewer tutoring organisations and there is less of a culture of using private tutoring, this guidance was difficult to come by.

Some tuition partners felt confident in the quality assurance process of the NTP, especially in Year 1. Those involved in the set-up of the NTP stated that quality assurance had been the key guiding principle of programme design, with an interest in realising the idea of ***"quality-led tutoring"***.

Some tuition partners felt that this focus on quality had been lost in Year 2, with the number of tuition partners doubling. Some felt that increasing the maximum small-group size for tutoring, from three to six, disadvantaged many of their tutors who are less experienced in working with groups of such a size and were consequently unable to deliver quality instruction to such groups. Moreover, this change was introduced abruptly part way through Year 2 and two providers worried that this strayed the programme away from the available evidence on effective practice.

Despite quality assurance, one policy analyst speculated that the centralisation of tutor quality control may have served as a barrier to schools accessing quality tutoring in their area.

***"There's a natural tension between top-down quality control and bottom-up ease of distribution in a programme like the NTP. Holding all the quality approval centrally can strangle programmes like this, meaning that lots of schools can't access a tutor or a provider in their area that they have good reason to believe is high quality. Schools aren't going to hand their money out to someone they don't think is worth it."***

- **Director of a think tank**

## 7. Workforce challenges

Respondents detailed an interesting range of overall workforce challenges brought on by the growth of in-school tutoring. School leaders and tuition providers noted that the most popular time for tutors to deliver sessions is around 3:30pm. With tutors mostly in demand to work at this time, this can create recruitment challenges as well as placing a strain on internet bandwidth in schools as a result of the remote delivery of tutoring. It was also described as ***"unsustainable if tutoring in schools is going to grow any further"***.

School and trust leaders also discussed how the growth of tutoring had led to supply teachers migrating into tutoring. This was especially pronounced in areas that already face greater issues in terms of teacher supply and recruitment, such as the north and east of England. This was reported as causing considerable problems when arranging cover in schools during high levels of staff absence as a result of Covid-19.

When hiring their own tutors, schools noted the potentially high cost to hire them unless they already knew individuals beyond their own workforce. Hiring these individuals still often involved a large cost though through arranging their payroll, taking them through the Safer Recruitment safeguarding checks and coordinating them once in school. Some school leaders, but also all tuition partners, noted that tuition providers often had slicker systems for doing this at scale and pace.

This issue was less of a concern for those schools and trusts that reported paying their existing teachers and teaching assistants through the SLT route to deliver extra tutoring sessions. But there were concerns among researchers, policy experts and tuition providers that much of this money was going towards backfilling budgets and uplifting pay for work that these employees were already engaged in. Similarly, there were concerns that teachers and teaching assistants may end up overworked if engaged in this extra tutoring.

***"The money shouldn't be going to teachers and TAs [teaching assistants] in school. What we're paying is a fair wage for a tutor, but not really for a teacher. And we have to consider whether we're going to end up overworking them when they're already not paid enough."***

- **School leader**

One large tuition provider explained how their tutoring workforce's preferences had changed over the course of the pandemic. This was framed as a concern for all organisations hoping to recruit for tutors in the current market:

***"We regularly survey our tutors and we're now at a point where only 20% want to take on face-to-face tutoring work. A lot of that is Covid concerns***

***about going into a school, but I'm sure a lot of it is just the understandable fact that tutoring remotely is much more convenient. We're currently charging the same for both in-person and remote but there's smaller margins on in-person and so there's questions about how sustainable this pricing is."***

**- Jonny Manning, CEO, Manning's Tutors**

Ultimately, several experts noted that an overall plan for growing the supply of tutors (as per the original aims of the NTP) would not be able to develop from a 'one size fits all' approach. Some areas struggle more with recruitment in general than others and some local authorities and regions are much larger than others, making the movement of the tutor workforce between schools more challenging. An intellectual architect of the American variant of the NTP noted that this awareness was critical to their development of the programme across the US states:

***"American states are really diverse and ultimately we just don't have a strong-enough labour market to ensure a strong supply of good social volunteers or a single source of tutors. So, we're looking at drawing on as diverse a group as possible – former teachers, graduate students, volunteers, professional tutors … the solution to this labour market issue is planning for diversity."***

**- Matthew Kraft, Professor of Economics and Education, Brown University**

## 8. Funding

Nearly all respondents had concerns about the way the NTP distributed funding to schools. In fact, funding was the most common element of the NTP that respondents told us they believe should be redesigned (40% of respondents). However, most interviewees agreed that the move to a simplified, better-managed direct grant to schools was a very positive development.

School and trust leaders as well as other experts found the choice of funding model for the NTP to be a peculiar one. They questioned why the established mechanisms for distributing the Pupil Premium were not used to give schools a 'tutoring premium'. People involved in the development of the funding model noted the concern that this may become overly bureaucratic for schools and would not solve more fundamental systemic issues of the supply and quality of tutors.

Some school leaders echoed these thoughts, noting that attaching the NTP funding purely to the Pupil Premium in Year 1 may have prevented them from getting tutoring to in-need pupils who are ineligible for the funding uplift. Tuition partners and some researchers also worried about schools using these direct grants for backfilling 'business as usual' budgets instead of directing them towards tutoring. Experts noted that a voucher-based programme previously explored by organisations such as The Sutton Trust would rely too heavily on parents' abilities to navigate the tutoring market, giving greater benefits to the already-advantaged.

Consultees from the North East noted that many schools in their area were already operating under financial deficits, making them unable to make up the school-level contribution on any pillars of the programme. Under these circumstances, the size of the

subsidy was insufficiently attractive, especially combined with the short duration of the programme and tapering of funding.

This issue of year-to-year funding came up elsewhere. Several school and trust leaders noted that the changes to funding between years made the programme feel unpredictable and difficult to plan around. Information on funding was also considered to be vital at certain junctures in the school year, especially during timetable planning in the summer term and at the start of new financial years. This acted as a repellent to schools that had yet to join the NTP. Equally, the overall duration of funding was deemed by many school leaders to be too short to warrant the start-up costs of establishing in-school tutoring in settings that had not used it before. Tuition partners also reported the same problem, finding that they would need a longer period of guaranteed volume of demand to justify some of the more ambitious growth the NTP aimed for in their supply of tutors.

Moving forward, there was interest among some experts and trust leaders outside of the south of England in a regional funding model that would allocate more resources to schools in areas that had suffered more learning loss over the pandemic, have higher levels of general deprivation or have less well-developed tutoring provision. There was also some interest in how tutor pay is regulated and whether tutors were always receiving a fair proportion of the money schools were paying to tuition providers.

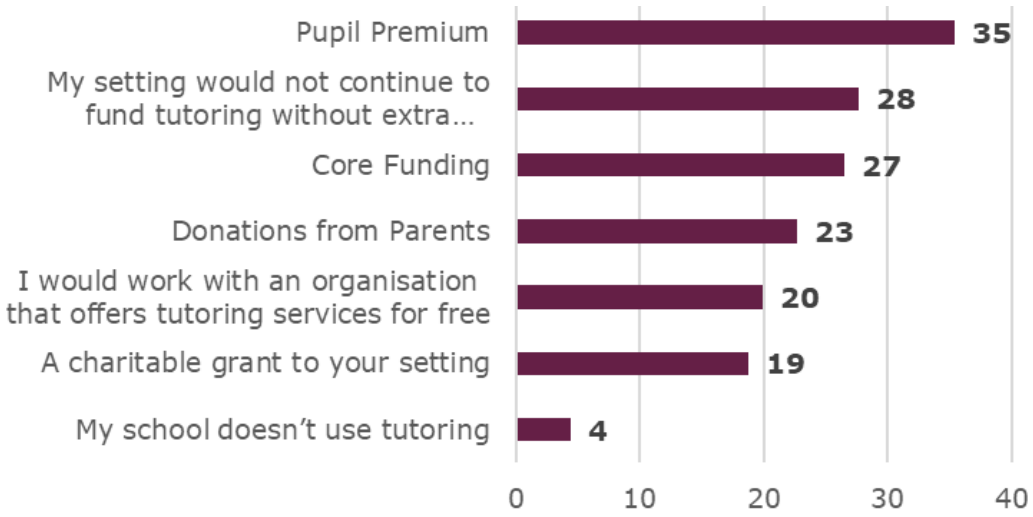
A key abiding concern throughout, among all kinds of respondents, was the idea that NTP funding should always be creating new opportunities for young people that they would not have otherwise.

***"It's vital that the NTP is additive, not substitutive. We don't want the NTP's funding to be going towards schools to rebadge what they're already doing. And we don't want the money going to schools so they can offer tutoring for free to parents who have the money to pay for it themselves and the will to probably do so anyway. We need to make sure the system is designed so funding is going to adding new tutoring opportunities for those who couldn't get them otherwise."***

- **James Turner, CEO, The Sutton Trust**

There was also much reflection in the interviews and the survey about how schools would continue to fund tutoring after the NTP's planned conclusion in 2024. As summarised in Figure 5 below, just over a third of survey respondents told us that they would continue funding tutoring through the Pupil Premium, but nearly 30% said they would not be able to continue funding tutoring. Our group analysis indicated that this response was more common among schools in the North East, Yorkshire and the East of England (although these comparison groups are small and should be generalised from carefully).

*Figure 5 – Percentage of survey respondents by plans for funding in-school tutoring after the NTP ends*




Related to these post-2024 funding plans, 70% of survey respondents told us they believed the NTP needed to continue after 2024 or that some form of ringfenced funding for schools needs to continue after this period for them to continue using tutors.

## Improving the NTP and tutoring in schools

As well as characterising their own experiences and attitudes, respondents also actively and constructively commented on good NTP practice within the system and made suggestions for how the programme could be improved. We share a summary of these comments here.

### 9. Organising at the MAT level

Two of our trust leader respondents detailed how they had leveraged their scale and central teams as MATs to offset many of the challenges with the NTP described by schools in the previous section.

One trust leader described how their MAT had set up their own tuition provider, registered on the NTP, who serviced both schools within their trust and those outside of it.

***"At the start of the pandemic I was online reviewing the tutors and tutoring organisations in our area. To be honest I was shocked … I started comparing it all to our trust and thinking that we could actually do a better job of providing a support package to develop tutors and support schools. As a trust we have the infrastructure to be able to support that delivery and that development."***

**- Dr Tim Coulson, CEO, Unity Schools Partnership**

The tutoring organisation spun out from the MAT was reported as benefiting from curriculum alignment with schools in the trust, a strong programme of professional development for tutoring in schools led by teachers, the infrastructure in place for tutors to become familiar with schools' culture and climate as well as a way of offering progression pathways for tutors to become teachers within the trust. The relationship to schools also allowed other non-NTP sources of funding to be accessed for activity within

the school, such as using the summer schools grant to run summer schools with tutors on school sites.

Another large MAT had appointed a tutoring lead in their central team, using them to develop a centralised tutoring strategy. Prior to this centralised approach, many schools in their trust were struggling to access and deliver the NTP effectively. The strategy included appointing tutoring leads within schools running the NTP, who meet regularly with each other to share common experiences and best practice for the delivery of tutoring in schools. Each in-school tutoring lead is also able to draw on the central team tutoring lead for guidance and support as required, especially with navigating decisionmaking around NTP routes and tutor procurement.

The trust also developed a 'tutor playbook', a key resource for all schools within the trust.

***"We're a big fan of the playbook generally and have made ones for attendance and tutoring this year. Our tutoring one is pretty simple – it's got a really simple summary for how the NTP works (emphasising that it's not about replacing quality teaching), eight key recommendations from our experience of tutoring in schools, a self-audit and quality assurance checklist and some case studies of effective practice. It's about placing that guidance where schools can access it easily."***

- **Claire Heald, Head of Education, AET**

With this central reserve of support and resources, the MAT leaves individual tutor recruitment decisions to schools, stating that they have the right ***"ground intelligence"*** to make informed decisions.

Some tuition providers also had successful accounts of building long-term partnerships with MATs. They noted that these relationships enabled them to build bespoke tutor talent pools for MATs, absorb associated administrative burdens and provide the curriculum and pedagogy alignment desired by many schools. One tutoring provider also noted that building these partnerships with MATs produced reliable business and worked out at being more cost effective for the business compared to being saddled with the high cost of sales to individual schools. Local authorities may also be offering this kind of centralised support, but we have as yet found no examples of this.

Some trust leaders not engaged in this use of MAT infrastructure reported believing that teaching school hubs could be well placed for this work, creating their own talent pool for schools in their area and providing training for tutors in the pool to meet the standards of the same schools. An evaluator of the Dutch equivalent of the NTP noted that there were similar moves in the Netherlands to have local school boards providing this offer to schools ***"within their portfolio"***.

### 10. Tutor workforce development

There was a collective sense among respondents that more could be done to prepare tutors for in-school service and therefore improve the consequent quality of in-school tutoring. Some school leaders in particular discussed the need to ensure tutors arrived in school with a strong awareness of evidence-based effective teaching and tutoring practice. One tuition partner also commented on the need for there to be a centrally developed picture of ***"what great tutoring looks like"***.

Relatedly, one trust leader saw developing this picture as part of creating a greater professional identity for tutors.

***"I see that professionalism as being more than 1:1 curriculum delivery, it's about how you integrate professional standards. And there needs to be some professional standards there for the tutor but also for the school in terms of how they work with those tutors."***

**- Liz Robinson, Co-Director, Big Education**

As part of this developing professionalism, some researchers discussed creating a system for accrediting individual tutors. This would follow the model for Initial Teacher Training in England, with multiple routes to accreditation but an agreed set of minimum standards that all tutors would need to meet. This accreditation would enable tutors to experience personal pride in their work while also supporting tuition providers and schools in making hiring decisions.

### 11. Tuition partner development

Nearly all respondents independently suggested the idea that the NTP should introduce a system of kitemarks that would continue as a legacy after the programme formally concludes. This was motivated by the value attributed to the quality assurance associated with the Tuition Partners strand of the NTP. School and trust leaders described how such kitemarks could help them navigate the tutoring market and provide a signal of certain minimum standards of service quality.

The larger tuition providers among our respondents also stated that these kitemarks could provide guidance for smaller tutoring organisations on how they could develop as organisations. Kitemarks could be awarded on the basis of meeting certain minimum standards in tutor training, tutor pay, safeguarding and the deployment of digital technologies for the remote delivery of tutoring.

As part of a further support system for tuition providers to develop and improve their service, all tuition partners and individuals involved in the set-up of the NTP spoke with high praise about the formal peer-to-peer networks run in the first year of the programme. These were described as well organised and gave organisations a strong sense of fellowship, alongside opportunities to learn from each other. Nesta was picked out as having organised these well, sorting tuition partners into groups that allowed them to learn from similar organisations as well as those who were further along their development path. Many remarked on their surprise at seeing ostensive competitors sharing sensitive intellectual property with each other and the general collegial spirit of wanting to make tutoring impactful and accessible to disadvantaged students. This was read by one researcher as suggesting that there is an intrinsic motivation for collaboration and making tutoring in schools a successful intervention.

# 7. Recommendations

The findings of the previous section mostly focus on the challenges the NTP has experienced in reaching its bold aims for uptake and impact. Indeed, a theme running through all interviews was a sentiment that the programme was at an important fork in the road. Even if recent changes lead to more successful implementation, the programme appears likely to fall far short of its transformative goals and promise. Worse, it may turn many of the most in-need schools off tutoring for a generation.

However, there is another path. As captured in the latter part of our findings, interviewees were brimming with suggestions for how the NTP could be improved. Equally, our analysis of responses provides many other examples of alterations and additions that could be made to the NTP to set it on the journey to greater success. The present section contains these recommendations on the best pathways forward for the NTP and, more broadly, for the use of tutoring in schools as an intervention to close the attainment gap.

## Developing our recommendations

We analysed the responses to our interviews and surveys to develop an understanding of the changes required to the NTP to improve its uptake and impact. In the same analysis, we also extracted guidance on how tutoring in schools could be 'levelled up' to meet the DfE's vision for the intervention laid out in the 2022 Schools White Paper (DfE, 2022c), as well as playing a major role in supporting schools to meet the 2030 attainment targets laid out in the same document.

This work produced an initial long list of recommendations. These recommendations were then scrutinised by two successive roundtables of experts. Feedback from each roundtable was used to prune off some recommendations and further shape those that were retained. A fuller overview of the roundtables can be found in Section 5.

## Design principles

From our research, we believe that there are five high-level principles that should guide the development of tutoring in schools policy and programming moving forward:

**1. Scaffolded autonomy**

From our consultation, we understand that schools want autonomy to procure and deploy tutors as they see fit. However, in order for this procurement and deployment to be effective and lead to impactful tutoring, a constellation of supporting services, frameworks and guidance is required by schools. Over time, the need for this support should reduce, as schools become sophisticated commissioners and leaders of tutoring. Our recommendations are built around this vision of 'scaffolded autonomy' for schools.

**2. Simple and accountable**

One of the major reported barriers to the uptake and impact of the NTP by schools is an overly complex model of funding, tutor procurement, quality assurance and accountability. Keeping these simple, transparent and easy to understand would support much greater engagement with tutoring in schools.

**3. Stable and adaptive**

There were substantial changes to the NTP between the first and second year and within each of those years. These changes have been highly disruptive to participating schools and tuition providers. They hindered long-term planning for schools' thinking, especially when they have been thinking strategically about their finances. Tuition partners struggled to plan their growth and development, making it more difficult for them to achieve the scale required to reach more pupils, especially in cold spots. The frequent changes have also led to the programme being characterised as unpredictable – a further disincentive for schools to engage with it. Future delivery of the NTP needs to lay out its development plan and stick to it in a way that is transparent to the relevant stakeholders.

**4. Equitable and targeted**

An abiding concern among respondents is that tutoring in schools should be used to support the most disadvantaged and in-need pupils. Therefore, further in-school tutoring policy development needs to begin with disadvantaged students and those who have had the least access to this intervention. There is also a desire that support systems for tutoring in schools do not place unjustifiable burdens on teachers and school leadership. Respondents also want tutors to benefit from professional standards that support sustainable and fair working conditions. By consequence, it is vital that policy on tutoring in schools prioritises fairness as a guiding principle.

**5. Evidence building and applying**

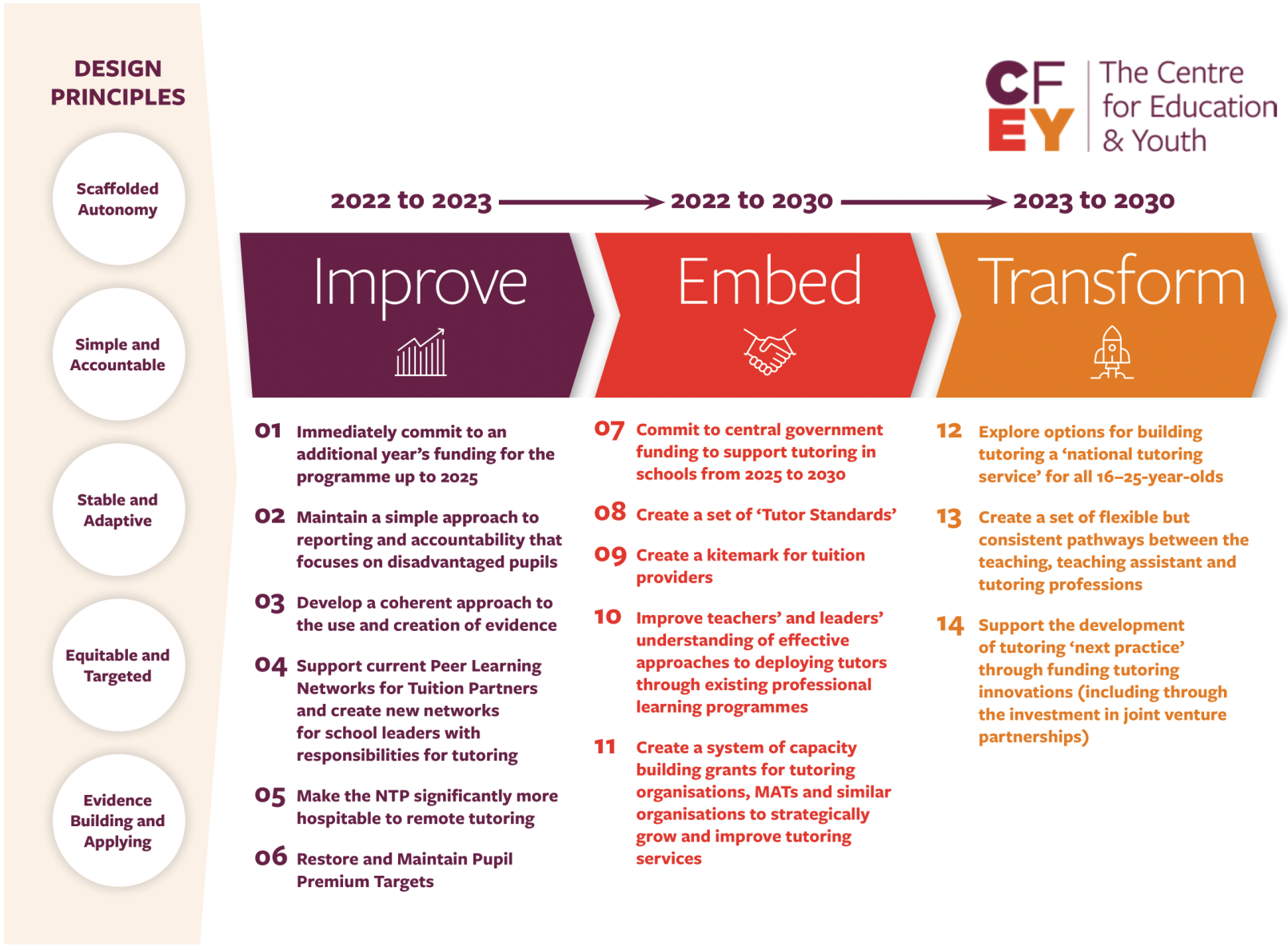
Tutoring's current role in the education zeitgeist largely derives from the robust evidence base supporting its effectiveness. This evidence base must be adhered to when appropriate. However, ongoing evaluation and evidence building aimed at continuous improvement must be woven into the fabric of any central government tutoring programme. This would ensure that key insights on effective practice are identified, circulated around the system and cause overall systemic improvements.

We recognise that these five design principles are not perfectly consistent with each other. Making a system simple can sometimes undermine its ability to target and serve those who are disadvantaged. Similarly, applying evidence to improve a programme can lead to that programme having to change regularly, undermining its stability. However, we view this tension between the principles as natural and manageable. Our recommendations, especially when taken together, aim to show how the principles can be balanced against each other to leverage their respective value.

## Recommendations

We set out in this study to understand how our school system can ensure that tutoring in schools plays as much of a role as possible in closing the attainment gap. We believe the following recommendations, structured by the immediacy of implementation and scale of ambition, are necessary to realise this vision. These recommendations are summarised in Figure 6 below then explored in detail in in the remainder of this section.

*Figure 6 – Summary of report design principles and recommendations*



## Improving

**Ambition:** Incremental changes to improve the uptake and impact of the NTP.
**Timescale:** By September 2023 if possible.

The DfE has already made laudable strides in addressing many of the issues raised by our respondents. For example, it has simplified funding models, scrapped the Tuition Hub and consolidated the way in which schools are held accountable for their NTP spend.

Nevertheless, we believe that there are other readily tractable modifications that could be made to the NTP that would quickly improve its uptake and impact.

**Our key recommendation** is that the government should immediately commit to an extension of the NTP until the end of July 2025 and as soon as possible commit to funding beyond 2025 to support the embedding and transformation of in-school tutoring.

**1. Immediately commit to an additional year's funding for the programme up to 2025.**

First, the NTP must persist for longer than initially planned if it is to meet its ambitious aims. The primary goal of the NTP was to reverse the learning loss experienced by pupils during pandemic school closures. While the NTP has succeeded in providing academic catch-up to a large number of pupils (including many who are disadvantaged), learning loss has been larger and more persistent than initial analysis suggested. This loss continues to be more concentrated among disadvantaged pupils, with the Education Policy Institute reporting that the attainment gap for primary and secondary literacy has widened since the summer of 2021 (Education Policy Institute, 2022). It is also notable that learning loss has been greater in regions, such as the North East, where uptake of the NTP has been relatively much lower. In light of this evidence, the NTP must continue for longer than planned in order to meet its goal of remediating learning loss for all pupils.

Second, as reported by the majority of our respondents, the NTP remains some way off its ambitious market-making goals. While there are two years of the programme remaining, several respondents raised the concern that this period of time would be insufficient to create the volume of demand for tutoring among schools that would support the DfE's long-term ambition for tutoring to be a normal offer in every school.

Extending the duration of the NTP's funding and delivery would therefore be a way of supporting the programme to meet its primary aims.

**2. Maintain a simple approach to reporting and accountability that focuses on disadvantaged pupils.**

As the NTP moves to a simplified funding model of ringfenced funding direct to schools, accountability measures for this spend must be put in place. While the emerging system involves one simple report that schools complete in July of each academic year, there needs to be ongoing vigilance to ensure this does not backslide into a large

administrative burden on schools. This is vital as both the actual and perceived administrative demands of the NTP were reported by many of our respondents as a barrier to schools' engagement with the programme.

While maintaining this simplicity in reporting, there is also a need for schools using the NTP to report their use of the intervention with Pupil Premium students. This should be combined with recommendation 6 below to keep the focus of the NTP trained on reaching disadvantaged pupils.

At a more abstract level, there should also be careful consideration of how this data on uptake is deployed publicly in keeping schools accountable. Using data to 'name and shame' schools or otherwise coerce them to engage with the NTP in particular ways is liable to further erode trust in a programme the profession is already sceptical of. The DfE should instead consider using its fortified communication capacity for the NTP to engage in 'learning conversations' with schools to better understand why they may have enrolled a smaller number of their Pupil Premium students than desirable.

The DfE should also consider that keeping checks for tutoring separate from other accountability measures is unsustainable in the long term. If funding is to continue until 2030, the DfE should consider how tutoring accountability can be bundled in with the Pupil Premium. This might involve appending details on tutoring spend to reporting to governing bodies, publication on websites and inspection by Ofsted as is currently done with Pupil Premium. This bundling would also ensure that tutoring funding benefits from the DfE's methods for preventing schools from directing their Pupil Premium budget towards their core 'business as usual' budgets.

**3. Develop a coherent approach to the use and creation of evidence.**

Effective ongoing evaluation of the NTP is necessary to support continuing improvement to its delivery. The current approach to evaluation uses too many organisations – such as both the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and EEF – operating on different research protocols. This is inefficient and stymies the synthesis of data from across the system to provide timely and practical guidance on improving the programme.

Therefore, a single research body should be appointed to oversee the continuous evaluation of the NTP and any successor package of policies to support in-school tutoring. This body may be composed of researchers and managers from different organisations. However, it should function as a single organisation, with accompanying simplification in data-sharing practices and research methodology. Evidence from the programme should be provided in as transparent and 'real time' a way as possible, to inform the continuous adaptations and improvements that schools and providers can make. This will also involve conducting evaluations to understand *why* particular approaches to tutoring instruction, tutor recruitment, tutor deployment and similar matters work, in order to produce insights that can be shared with other settings.

The research body should also seek to connect with its international equivalents to build the global evidence base on effective tutoring practice. The National Student Support Accelerator at Brown University is currently leading on research and innovation in scaling tutoring programmes in the United States. Similarly, the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is evaluating the Dutch variant of the NTP. Evaluation programmes will also

be gradually developed in Australia to monitor its national in-school tutoring programme.

**4. Support current peer learning networks for tuition partners and create new networks for school leaders with responsibilities for tutoring.**

The universal praise for the tuition partner peer-to-peer learning networks explains why many tuition partners set up their own when these forums were dissolved in Year 2 of the NTP. The NTP should seek to support these new, grassroots-led, peer-to-peer networks rather than centralising or reproducing what the sector is already doing. However, it should formally recognise the networks as a vital part of ensuring the tutoring sector is able to self-improve and meet the ambitious visions of the in-school tutoring agenda.

Furthermore, the DfE should directly support these networks to develop and maintain a focus on sharing effective practice for capacity building to reach disadvantaged students. This could be facilitated through the new NTP delivery partner, but also may draw on the expertise of Nesta, as the relevant respondents in our research claimed it had excelled in this role in Year 1. This general approach would help circulate effective practice between tuition providers, enabling them to develop their ability to reach cold spots for access to tutoring, in a focused and directed way.

Convenors of these learning networks should also consider opening them up to organisations that did not qualify as tuition partners or that did not apply. This would create the interfaces for less well-developed organisations to learn from more senior providers about the best pathways for them to improve their quality, grow their scale or refine their internal systems as appropriate, to advance in their journey towards being a high-level provider.

The NTP should also explore using existing networks – such as teaching school alliances and appointed hubs – as a way of developing and sharing best practice among tutor providers and school partnerships. These networks could expand the reported success of the school–tutor provider working groups of the second year of the NTP.

**5. Make the NTP significantly more hospitable to remote tutoring.**

Current guidance for schools on procuring their own tutors states that schools should, where possible, aim for tutoring to be delivered in person. This may be steering schools away from drawing on remote tuition capacity within the education system.

While there are logistical trade-offs associated with remote tutoring, there is currently little evidence to suggest that remote tutoring is less effective in supporting pupil progress (Kraft & Falken, 2021). Remote delivery can also be critical to increasing the supply of tutors to cold-spot areas. According to the Education Policy Institute, cold spots such as the North East of England also have the highest levels of learning loss in the country (Education Policy Institute, 2022). Many of these cold spots are also Education Investment Areas (EIAs), which should be ostensibly targeted for greater investment to improve academic outcomes for disadvantaged young people.

The DfE should thus revise guidance to remove this preference for in-person tutoring or to make clear the benefits of remote engagement. This may include messaging that

meets schools where they are, recognising that an in-person tutor is preferable, but that a remote tutor is better than nothing if no tutors are available to come to their site.

Beyond this, the ongoing evaluators of the NTP should seek to develop the evidence base on the effectiveness of remote tutoring through ongoing trials, combined with the incremental development of best-practice guidance for the delivery of remote tutoring. The DfE should also explore loosening NTP funding for schools such that they can invest some of their grants in the acquisition of laptops, headsets and other computer equipment. This should be permitted wherever a lack of technology is a major barrier to accessing remote tutoring for a school and cannot be otherwise remediated.

The government should also include considerations of access to remote tutoring in schools in its ongoing strategy on the optimisation of internet connectivity. For example, schools in areas that have struggled to access the NTP should be prioritised for the installation of new broadband fibre and the improvement of their in-school Wi-Fi networks.

**6. Restore and maintain Pupil Premium targets.**

The NTP was established with a focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils. While the Pupil Premium is not the most exhaustive measure available, it is relatively effective at tracking disadvantage and is widely used. The decision to use Pupil Premium targets as a means of keeping the NTP's focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils was well motivated.

Consequently, the removal of the Pupil Premium targets from the NTP risks diverting focus away from helping disadvantaged young people. Several interview respondents noted that this could lead to greater uptake of subsidised tutoring provision among non-disadvantaged pupils and this would actually threaten to widen the attainment gap.

As targets can be effective at focusing institutions and systems on improving outcomes for specific groups (Davies et al, 2021), restoring the Pupil Premium targets in the NTP could keep its focus on helping disadvantaged pupils. This would enable the NTP to meet its primary goals and increase its impact. This may also prevent the policy from introducing economic deadweight by subsidising an intervention that non-disadvantaged parents can readily pay for otherwise.

## Embedding

**Ambition:** Medium-term changes to grow the targeted supply of tutors, improve the quality of in-school tutoring at scale and leave a legacy that can support continuous improvement in the sector.
**Timescale:** 2022 to 2030.

Using our proposed extension of the NTP, we believe that there are several policies that could be developed and introduced over the course of the NTP. The aim would be for these policies to become gradually embedded into the in-school tutoring sector, setting the stage for long-term quality assurance and supply growth. Ongoing funding after 2025 could go towards maintaining the systems introduced by these policies and building on top of them.

**7. Commit to central government funding to support tutoring in schools from 2025 to 2030.**

While extending funding up to 2025 would allow the NTP a greater opportunity to meet its primary goals, we believe that funding to support tutoring in schools should continue until 2030. This would allow the programme to further support the government in meeting its long-term ambitions laid out in the 2022 Schools White Paper (DfE, 2022c) – to vastly expand in-school tutoring and improve literacy and numeracy achievement by 2030 – without creating a new funding stream in the short term. We also note that 70% of respondents to our survey stated a desire for ringfenced funding for tutoring to continue after 2024.

We believe that this ongoing spending would capitalise on a unique opportunity to use the legacy of the NTP to massively increase access to in-school tutoring for disadvantaged pupils and therefore close the attainment gap beyond Covid recovery. To do this, a constellation of systems would need to be created around schools to support them in effectively procuring and deploying tutors. These recommendations are detailed in the remainder of this section and will all require further funding for set-up and maintenance until 2030 at least.

**8. Create a set of 'Tutor Standards'.**

As part of optimising the quality of individual tutors, it is vital that a shared understanding and vocabulary of effective tutoring in schools' practice is developed. This should be modelled on the Teachers' Standards and be informed by the ECF, developed from the insights of the profession to set out the key competencies that all teachers in schools should have. Effective training, performance management and monitoring have been developed from these standards. Doing the same for tutoring would support similar system-wide changes to tutoring practice and how it can be improved.

The set of standards should be co-designed with representatives from schools and trusts, as well as tuition providers and experts in professional development. The standards should then be used to derive minimum thresholds for the quality of tutor training in tuition providers who want accreditation (see recommendation 9 below) or for the assessment and accreditation of individual tutors (see recommendation 13).

The standards could also be used for producing guidance for schools that opt to recruit or deploy their own tutors rather than working through a provider. Similarly, they could also be used to derive training on effective practice for schools looking to self-source their own tutors.

**9. Create kitemarks for tuition providers.**

Nearly all our interviewees suggested an ongoing system of accreditation for tuition providers that endures beyond the NTP. Most of those who suggested this system believed that a kitemark-based approach would be an effective and transparent way of doing this.

Building on the current system of provider approval to become an accredited tuition partner on the NTP, the new kitemark system would seek to cover the whole sector for tutoring in schools. This would involve a new central organising authority for tutoring in schools – such as the primary delivery partner for the NTP, or a successor arm's-length

body tasked with awarding kitemarks to tuition providers beyond the NTP. This kitemark system should be accessible to the whole in-school tutoring sector. Organisations applying to receive a kitemark would be inspected by the official body. Kitemarks would be awarded on the basis of a provider meeting certain minimum standards in safeguarding practice, tutor training and development, experience working with schools and evidence of impact.

The criteria to receive a kitemark should be co-produced by sector leaders and with key insights from the tuition partner accreditation process of the NTP. Crucially, the criteria that a provider requires to be awarded a kitemark should be thoroughly transparent. This would enable younger or smaller tutoring providers to have clear guidance on how they can grow and develop to provide a high-quality service to schools.

While these kitemarks could act as a policy approach to improving minimum quality standards in the market, they could also benefit tutoring providers. The kitemarks would serve as a signal in the market to indicate the quality of a provider to schools and trusts, helping them make more effective procurement decisions.

Kitemarks could be tiered (for example, as bronze, silver and gold) to offer a more granular sense of quality, while also providing a structured and standardised pathway for how tuition partners can improve their service to schools.

**10. Improve teachers', leaders' and governors' understanding of effective approaches to deploying and working with tutors through weaving content into relevant aspects of the early career framework (ECF), national professional qualifications (NPQs) and other professional learning programmes.**

Several trust leaders and other experts told us that the effective recruitment, oversight and deployment of tutors in school is vital to ensuring tutoring is an effective intervention. However, knowledge of how to manage tutors effectively is not instinctive and needs to be taught. Therefore, guidance on effective practice needs to be woven into relevant professional development routes and qualifications for school practice and leadership. Initial Teacher Training is already too crowded for this new domain of learning to be integrated into it and is perhaps unsuitable for those so early on in their professional development. However, including modules and specialisations on tutoring in current development and upskilling routes such as the NPQs and the ECF could be more suitable. Similarly, targeting continuing professional development on the topic towards middle leaders may find an especially suitable audience.

We also noted that large MATs were already in the process of running this upskilling centrally and commented positively on its impact so far. Capturing this effective practice and scaling it through formalised routes could support all schools to benefit from these insights into effective practice. This upskilling is also a part of the broader infrastructure changes necessary for tutoring to become a long-standing feature of the schools sector.

**11. Create a system of capacity-building grants for tutoring organisations, MATs and similar organisations to strategically grow and improve tutoring services.**

The NTP's approach to growing the tutoring market has been primarily to stimulate demand, predicting that this will lead to a commensurate growth and refinement in supply. However, it was clear from many of our interviews that this approach has not

led to sufficient growth of the tutoring market in cold spots around England and has not been sufficient to guarantee the quality of tuition provision.

A more direct route to generating growth in the tutoring market would be through ringfenced grants made to organisations with the specific intent of developing tutoring capacity in target areas. This would be a return of and extension to the capacity-building grants offered by the DfE in the first year of the NTP. These new grants could be distributed and managed through the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) or directly through the DfE. The target areas could be primarily derived from the Education Investment Areas (EIAs) as well as data on areas of low NTP uptake.

Grants could be offered to a wide range of organisations – from universities, to schools, to tutoring providers. A MAT in a cold-spot area may bid for seed capital to develop its own tuition provider for schools in its network, aiming to spin this service out into a limited company that serves schools in general in the local area. A large tuition provider may apply for a grant to start building a pool of tutors and infrastructure in an underserved area, alongside a messaging campaign to generate interest among schools. Larger tuition providers may also apply for these capacity grants to act as an incubator for smaller tutoring organisations in target areas, helping them to develop their operations (for example in terms of safeguarding, tutor recruitment and quality assurance) and improve their impact.

## Transforming

**Ambition:** Build on the policies and systems introduced through the NTP to introduce more radical solutions to creating a large self-sustaining, high-quality supply of tutors effectively deployed in schools.
**Timescale:** 2023 to 2030.

### 12. Explore options for building tutoring as a 'National Tutoring Service' for all 16- to 25-year-olds.

The growth of demand for in-school tutoring will require a commensurate growth in the tutoring workforce. This will require ingenuity in tapping into new sources of loose labour within the economy. This broadening of the tutor workforce could also be used as an opportunity to train and upskill large numbers of young people.

Although less well-studied, there is evidence that tutoring has benefits for tutors, improving their skills in communication, empathy and leadership (Kraft & Falken, 2021). These are precisely the 'life skills' employers frequently report that young people are lacking when they enter the workforce (CBI, 2021). Increasing the presence of these skills among new entrants into the labour market would improve overall economic productivity in England. All of this can be achieved while at the same time growing the tutoring workforce.

The idea of recruiting large numbers of young people, especially in higher education, to work with young people has been explored by many researchers (Elliott-Major, 2021; Kraft & Falken, 2021). The idea is currently being piloted at universities in the South West of England, with initially promising results. This development plan also aligns with the government's new targets and strategies for higher education. As stated by the DfE, 'Universities will be required to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children by driving up education standards in schools and colleges in [their] local community' (Department

for Education, 2021). Therefore, the DfE, higher education institutions and charities should look to support the development of a national tutoring service for higher education students. This would be a way of meeting the new DfE requirements while also supporting the agenda to grow in-school tutoring.

We also note that this strategy could be one route to building a tutor to teacher pipeline, by inducing interest in a career in teaching among many suitable undergraduates. Appropriately structured and channelled, this could also support recommendation 13 below.

**13. Create a set of flexible but consistent pathways between the teaching, teaching assistant and tutoring professions.**

Schools need some level of quality assurance in the tutoring market. Some of this assurance should be attached to tuition providers (as per recommendation 9). However, there is also scope to explore the application of some of this quality assurance to individual tutors.

One approach to this level of quality assurance is to use the Tutor Standards (see recommendation 8) to define a minimum set of demonstrable competencies that all tutors ought to have. This can then be used to establish an assessment and accreditation system that tutors need to pass in order to gain some form of formal accreditation as a tutor. This 'Qualified Tutor Status', much like the variant for teaching, could assure schools of having such necessary competences.

This new Qualified Tutor Status could be administered and monitored through the Teaching Regulation Agency. It could also be supported through multiple routes to accreditation. This could be through training programmes with certified providers – including larger tuition providers – as well as 'assessment only' routes for experienced tutors, administered through independent and approved assessors.

One trade-off that several respondents associated with the growth of the tutoring market is the diminishing of the labour supply for teaching. One long-term strategy for managing this is to further develop the 'tutor to teacher pipeline'. This could involve providing incentives, guidance and support for MATs, higher education providers, teacher training colleges and School-Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) to build a pre-Initial Teacher Training (ITT) period into their courses where prospective teachers work as tutors. Equally, it could involve creating other structured programmes where tutors are developed into a position to embark on Initial Teacher Training.

**14. Support the development of tutoring 'next practice' through funding tutoring innovations (including through investment in joint venture partnerships).**

While the main thrust of the NTP is rightly focused on at-scale delivery of evidence-based approaches, this may have reduced the capacity of partners to innovate their models. There are still many 'known unknowns' about tutoring, whether in terms of structure, organisation or pedagogy. In particular, there are enduring questions about the best approaches to the delivery of remote tutoring, models of effective teacher–tutor collaboration and strategies for making tutoring effective with specific subgroups of students, such as those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) or those who have been permanently excluded from school.

Education funders – including trusts, foundations and the EEF – should buttress government funding by investing in tutoring evaluations and innovation pertinent to the above areas of inquiry. These developments should be led through a disciplined approach to evaluation, building scalable 'next practices' in tutoring that can inform whatever might happen nationally after 2025. There may be options for doing this through investing in joint venture partnerships between schools or MATs, tuition partners and EdTech companies.

## The future of tutoring – a vision

The recommendations we have set out in this section can be viewed as distinct suggestions for improving the uptake and impact of in-school tutoring. However, we believe they also fit together to form a coherent whole. This whole represents the range and character of support that schools need in order for in-school tutoring to have the great impact it promises.

We envision a system in which ongoing government funding brings together a network of systems in place to allow schools to combine their local insights with support systems that enable them to procure and deploy high-quality tutors in their setting. Schools' accountability for this funding that they receive will be light and manageable, allowing them to focus on ensuring that tutor quality and tutor instruction are of the highest standard.

Schools will be supported in this endeavour by the wider tutoring in schools sector, who will in turn be supported by government funding and systems to become world class. The supply of high-quality tutors to current cold spots will be expanded through a system of capacity-building grants. Peer learning networks will allow tutoring organisations based in cold spots to learn from sector leaders, diffusing effective practice across the supply of tutors to build quality across the whole of England. A set of Tutor Standards will also guide tutoring providers in their training of tutors, supporting an enhanced, as well as more uniform, quality of tutoring across the country.

Where issues of supply and logistics persist, schools will also now have greater licence in the use of remote tutoring, massively expanding their access to quality provision. They will also be able to use the kitemark accreditation system for tutoring providers to make informed procurement decisions and they will need fewer resources for the vetting of tutoring providers. At the same time, kitemarks will provide a scaffold for tutoring providers in the sector to understand the benchmarks they need to meet to provide a quality service to schools. With their reclaimed capacity from this lighter procurement process, schools will be able to use the training they have received in the effective management and deployment of tutors to further increase the impact of tutoring in their setting.

As this development of the tutoring sector takes places, tutoring will also gradually become a more professionalised and sustainable occupation. Accreditation for individual tutors will create a stronger professional identity for individual tutors, consolidating the job into a long-term professional pathway for individuals. This will align with utilising tutoring as a route to bolstering the supply of teachers, using tutoring as a ground for recruiting into teacher training. This will also extend to the 'National Tutoring Service'.

Underpinning all of this work will be the rigorous, ongoing collection of evidence to support iterative changes to the policy and delivery of in-school tutoring. This will

involve developing best practice for effective tutoring practice for groups currently understudied to ensure that all can benefit from the intervention. Framing the whole endeavour will be a commitment to using tutoring to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils, enshrined in Pupil Premium targets but realised with more sophistication through targeted grant making and development.

With this system in play, more disadvantaged young people than ever will be able to benefit from tutoring. This will close the attainment gap through broadly improving academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. At the same time, these changes will increase England's economic productivity. This will come partly through improving the academic outcomes of young people in key skill areas such as literacy and numeracy. However, it will also come about through investment in the human capital of tutors, with initiatives such as the 'National Tutoring Service' upskilling swathes of young people poised to enter the labour market with qualities in empathy, communication and leadership. Thus, tutoring will be able to deliver on its substantial promise.

# 8. Conclusions

Tutoring in schools offers a great deal of promise as an intervention. It has a strong evidence base to support it as well as widespread public support. The NTP has introduced infrastructure that could provide a legacy for it to continue yielding impact for many years to come. This report lays out the views of stakeholders and key experts to understand how this impact can be increased. We believe that the recommendations we have set out could form part of a broader plan to support tutoring to create a more equitable education system in England and close the attainment gap.

# 9. Afterword

## From Third Space Learning, White Rose Maths and Action Tutoring

We are delighted to have supported this important and timely research from CfEY. We are strong advocates for the NTP, and want to play a leading role in helping the programme achieve the critical goal of closing the attainment gap.

While there have been frustration over and criticism of parts of the NTP, we should recognise that a fairer view needs to also commend the speed of action and scale of funding that the DfE put in place in late 2020 when the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on learning and, notably, the attainment gap became clear.

As the programme has evolved, feedback from schools and tuition providers has played an increasing role in shaping the development of the programme. This is to be welcomed. The scale, innovation and success that we are all aiming for with the NTP must be shaped by teachers in schools across the country, and the organisations supporting them, who know what real-world success looks like.

Third Space Learning, White Rose Maths and Action Tutoring have relationships with nearly every school in England, providing tutoring or other services that support hundreds of thousands of teachers in classrooms across country as they work hard to close the attainment gap. The goals of the NTP are well aligned to both the mission and actions of our three organisations. We have all been involved in Years 1 and 2 of the programme, and look forward to success in Year 3.

The depth and breadth of our relationships with schools across the country provide us with a clear view of what success for the NTP can look like, and the changes that are needed to get there at scale. We are strong supporters of the approach CfEY has taken in developing this report from a wide network of teachers, unions, trusts, tutor providers and policymakers who have a stake in, and experience of, what the NTP can achieve if feedback is acted on. Recent changes to the NTP are a promising indication that the DfE intends to listen and take action where it will lead to greater success. We firmly believe that the NTP has the long-term potential to be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to narrow the attainment gap. We are committed to working with schools and the DfE to ensure it can achieve this crucial goal.

Finally, thank you to the many individuals and organisations who participated in the research for this report. Your insights are greatly appreciated, and we hope the report provides ideas and direction as to the role of tutoring in closing the attainment gap.

Signed,

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