



Cost

£££££

Evidence strength



Impact (months)

+5

Effect size

0.40

What is it?

One to one tuition involves a teacher, teaching assistant or other adult giving a pupil intensive individual support. It may happen outside of normal lessons as additional teaching – for example as part of [extending school time](#) or a [summer school](#) – or as a replacement for other lessons.

Key Findings

1. On average, one to one tuition is very effective at improving pupil outcomes. One to one tuition might be an effective strategy for providing targeted support for pupils that are identified as having low prior attainment or are struggling in particular areas.
2. Tuition is more likely to make an impact if it is additional to and explicitly linked with normal lessons.
3. One to one tuition can be expensive to deliver, particularly when delivered by teachers. Approaches that either deliver instruction through teaching assistants or in small groups rather than one to one have smaller positive effects, on average, but may be a cost-effective solution to providing targeted support.
4. For one to one tuition led by teaching assistants, interventions are likely to be particularly beneficial when the teaching assistants are experienced, well-trained and supported – for example, delivering a structured intervention.

How effective is the approach?

Evidence indicates that one to one tuition can be effective, providing approximately five additional months' progress on average.

Short, regular sessions (about 30 minutes, three to five times a week) over a set period of time (up to ten weeks) appear to result in optimum impact. Evidence also suggests tuition should be additional to, but explicitly linked with, normal teaching, and that teachers should monitor progress to ensure the tutoring is beneficial. Studies comparing one to one with [small group tuition](#) show mixed results. In some cases one to one tuition has led to greater improvement, while in others tuition in groups of two or three has been equally or even more effective. The variability in findings may suggest it is the particular type or quality of teaching enabled by very small groups that is important, rather than the precise size of the group.

Programmes involving teaching assistants or volunteers can have a valuable impact, but may be less effective than those using experienced and specifically trained teachers. Where tuition is delivered by volunteers or teaching assistants there is evidence that training and the use of a structured programme is advisable.

Evidence of one to one tuition in the Arab world is very limited. Studies that looked at private tutoring explored the reasons why students use this intervention rather than the impacts on academic attainment. In Morocco, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt students strongly believed that one to one tutoring is an intervention to improve their knowledge about a topic and improve their academic grades.

While the global evidence includes interventions in which public schools deliver intensive support to struggling pupils at no extra cost, evidence in the Arab World focuses much more on private tutoring. In one study in Egypt, researchers have raised concerns that the monetary reward for providing private one to one or small group tutoring creates a perverse incentive for teachers to encourage students to turn to private tutoring; and that this could lead to the deterioration of the public education quality. They highlighted a need for educational reform that would reconsider teachers' wages, the curriculum, assessment tools and increase the transparency between schools/teachers and parents.

To date, research on one to one tuition is scarce in this region despite the reported benefits on students understanding of key subjects. More research is needed in this area to examine the impact of this intervention on students' academic grades. More quantitative or mixed-method studies are also needed to have an overall understanding about this phenomenon from parents,, students, and teachers side.

Behind the average

Studies undertaken in primary schools tend to show greater impact (+6 months) compared with secondary schools (+4 months).

Effects in mathematics appear to be substantially lower (+2 months) than in literacy (+6 months).

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Studies involving digital technology show broadly similar effects.

Studies have been undertaken in seven countries around the world with broadly similar effects.

Closing the disadvantage gap

Studies in England have shown that pupils eligible for free school meals typically receive additional benefits from one to one tuition. Low attaining pupils are particularly likely to benefit.

One to one tuition approaches can enable pupils to make effective progress by providing intensive, targeted academic support to those identified as having low prior attainment or at risk of falling behind. The approach allows the teacher or tutor to focus exclusively on the needs of the learner and provide teaching that is closely matched to each pupil's understanding. One to one tuition offers greater levels of interaction and feedback compared to whole class teaching which can support pupils to spend more time on new or unfamiliar, overcome barriers to learning and increase their progress through the curriculum.

How could you implement in your setting?

One to one has an impact by providing additional support that is targeted at a pupil's needs. Reducing the ratio of pupils to teacher allows for closer interaction between educators and pupils. When adopting one to one tuition, schools should consider how to ensure that these active ingredients have a positive impact through:

- Accurately identifying the pupils that require additional support.
- Understanding the learning gaps of the pupils that receive tuition and using this knowledge to select curriculum content appropriately.

- Ensuring teachers are well-prepared for having high quality interactions with pupils, such as providing well-planned feedback.
- Ensuring that tuition is well-linked to classroom content and allowing time for the teacher and tutor to discuss the tuition.
- Monitoring the impact of tuition on pupil progress and adjusting provision accordingly.

One to one tuition may be delivered by teachers, trained teaching assistants, academic mentors or tutors. Interventions are typically delivered over an extended period, often over the course of several weeks or a term.

When introducing new approaches, schools should consider implementation. For more information see [Putting Evidence to Work - A School's Guide to Implementation](#).

What does it cost?

The global evidence indicates that the average cost of one to one tuition is moderate. The costs to schools are largely based on additional salary costs and learning resources, the majority of which are recurring costs. Through the National Tutoring Programme Year 1 (2020-21), schools could purchase subsidised in person or online 1:1 tuition in 15hr blocks, for an average cost of £167 - £180 per pupil. Costs are lower for online delivery compared to in person tuition and are higher when provided by qualified or specialist teachers.

When delivering teacher or TA-led Small group tuition, implementation is likely to require a large amount of staff time compared with whole class approaches. Given the lower costs, small group tuition may be a sensible approach to trial before considering one to one tuition. See [small group tuition](#).

Alongside time and cost, school leaders should consider using providers with a track record of effectiveness. To increase the impact of school-led one to one tuition, school leaders might consider professional development for teachers, TAs, and tutors to support high-quality teaching in areas such as formative assessment, curriculum knowledge, instruction and feedback, which will build capacity in school.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

How secure is the evidence?

The security of the evidence around one to one tuition is rated as moderate. 123 studies were identified that meet the inclusion criteria for the Toolkit. The topic lost two additional padlocks because:

- A large percentage of the studies were not independently evaluated. Evaluations conducted by organisations connected with the approach – for example, commercial providers – typically have larger impacts, which may influence the overall impact of the strand.
- There is a large amount of unexplained variation between the results included in the topic. All reviews contain some variation in results, which is why it is important to look behind the average. Unexplained variation (or heterogeneity) reduces our certainty in the results in ways that we have been unable to test by looking at how context, methodology or approach is influencing impact.

As with any evidence review, the Toolkit summarises the average impact of approaches when researched in academic studies. It is important to consider your context and apply your professional judgement when implementing an approach in your setting.

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