
Synthesis

One to one tuitionⁱ

Moderate impact for high cost, based on extensive evidence



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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.

How effective is it?

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

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Short, regular sessions (about 30 minutes, three to five times a week) over a set period of time (six to twelve 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 tend to be less effective than those using experienced and specifically trained teachers, which have nearly twice the effect on average. Where tuition is delivered by volunteers or teaching assistants there is evidence that training and the use of a structured programme is advisable.

How secure is the evidence?

Overall, the evidence is consistent and strong, particularly for younger learners who are behind their peers in primary schools, and for subjects like reading and mathematics (there are fewer studies at secondary level or for other subjects). Effects on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds also tend to be particularly positive.

What are the costs?

A typical effective programme might involve 30 minutes tuition, five times a week, for 12 weeks. This would require about four full days of a teacher's time. These costs would be reduced by using a teaching assistant to deliver the programme, but the evidence suggests that impacts are generally higher when delivered by teachers. Overall the cost is rated as high.

There is some evidence that Small group tuition can deliver similar benefits at a lower cost.

What should I consider?

Before you implement this strategy in your learning environment, consider the following:

1. One to one tuition is very effective in helping learners catch up, but is relatively expensive. Have you considered using Small group tuition instead and evaluating the impact?
2. Tuition is more likely to make an impact if it is additional to and explicitly linked with normal lessons.
3. Have you considered how you will support pupils and regular class teachers to ensure the impact is sustained once they return to normal classes?
4. For one to one tuition led by teaching assistants, interventions are likely to be particularly beneficial when the teaching assistants are experienced and well-trained. What training and support have you provided?
5. A number of one to one programmes delivered by teaching assistants have been rigorously evaluated and shown to be effective. If you are buying a programme, have you considered one of these?