

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Action Tutoring Programme

Submission date 30/07/2025	Recruitment status Not yet recruiting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protocol
Registration date 06/08/2025	Overall study status Ongoing	<input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan <input type="checkbox"/> Results
Last Edited 01/08/2025	Condition category Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

The Action Tutoring programme is a targeted secondary maths small-group tutoring programme that deploys volunteer tutors to work with pupils from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who are at risk of achieving below grade 4 in GCSE maths. This study aims to evaluate the impact of receiving tuition through the Action Tutoring programme on GCSE maths score (primary question) and also the likelihood of achieving grade 4 in GCSE maths, maths attainment measure through an alternative test (Access Maths), mathematical self perception, enjoyment of mathematics and absence from school (secondary questions).

Who can participate?

Schools will enrol in the study and nominate between 26 and 40 pupils in each of Year 7, 10 and 11 who meet the following criteria:

- Year 11 pupils must start the year working at GCSE grades 3–5 in maths
- Year 10 pupils must start the year working at GCSE grades 2–5 in maths
- Year 7 pupils must have narrowly achieved or narrowly missed the expected standard in their maths SATs.

At least 65% of pupils selected by the school to take part in the trial must be eligible for the Pupil Premium grant. All pupils must meet the attainment criteria above, but schools can offer up to 35% of places to pupils who are not eligible for the Pupil Premium. To the best of the school's knowledge, no more than 15% of the pupils overall should be accessing professional, private, paid tuition. Half of the nominate pupils will be randomly assigned to receive tutoring and half will be assigned to the control group receiving usual practice.

What does the study involve?

There is an initial set-up meeting between Action Tutoring and an identified link teacher at the school, to set expectations around pupil selection, parental engagement and session scheduling. All selected Year 10 and 11 pupils will complete a baseline assessment and all selected pupils will complete baseline surveys, prior to being randomly assigned to receive the tutoring intervention or to the control group. At the first tutoring session, all intervention pupils receive a short induction from Action Tutoring before meeting their tutor. All intervention pupils are tutored weekly in sessions that are scheduled to last one hour, at the same place and time and via the same delivery mode (either connecting with the tutor face-to-face or online in a virtual

classroom). After the tutoring programme is complete, all selected pupils will either complete their GCSE maths exam (Year 11) or an Access Maths test (Year 10 and Year 7), and will complete endpoint surveys.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Possible benefit: improvement in outcome measures i.e. maths attainment, mathematical self perception, enjoyment of mathematics, attendance

Possible risks: no identified risks associated with participation

Where is the study run from?

The National Foundation for Educational Research (<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/>)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

Recruitment is taking place in the summer term of 2024/25. The study will run during the academic year 2025/26 with outcome measured during the summer term of 2025/26.

Who is funding the study?

The study is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/>)

Who is the main contact?

The project lead for this evaluation is Sarah Lynch (s.lynch@nfer.ac.uk)

Study website

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/projects-and-evaluation/projects/action-tutoring-trial>

Contact information

Type(s)

Public

Contact name

Mrs Sarah Lynch

Contact details

National Foundation for Educational Research

The Mere

Upton Park

Slough

United Kingdom

SL1 2DQ

+44 (0)1753 574123

s.lynch@nfer.ac.uk

Type(s)

Scientific

Contact name

Miss Ruth Staunton

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-7079-4844>

Contact details

National Foundation for Educational Research
The Mere
Upton Park
Slough
United Kingdom
SL1 2DQ
+44 (0)1753 574123
r.staunton@nfer.ac.uk

Type(s)

Principal Investigator

Contact name

Dr Stephen Welbourne

ORCID ID

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6827-6132>

Contact details

National Foundation for Educational Research
The Mere
Upton Park
Slough
United Kingdom
SL1 2DQ
+44(0)1753 574123
s.welbourne@nfer.ac.uk

Additional identifiers**EudraCT/CTIS number**

Nil known

IRAS number**ClinicalTrials.gov number**

Nil known

Secondary identifying numbers

Nil known

Study information**Scientific Title**

A randomised controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness of the Action Tutoring Programme on maths attainment in disadvantaged pupils

Study objectives

How effective is Action Tutoring at promoting maths attainment among Y11 pupils?

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval not required

Ethics approval(s)**Study design**

Two-arm randomized controlled trial

Primary study design

Interventional

Secondary study design

Randomised controlled trial

Study setting(s)

School

Study type(s)

Treatment

Participant information sheet

See study outputs table

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Low maths attainment (not achieving grade 4 at GCSE)

Interventions

Pupils randomised to the control arm will experience usual practice at their school. Pupils randomised to the intervention arm will be organised into small groups (no more than three) and will experience weekly maths tutoring with a trained tutor in sessions lasting one hour. The length of the programme will be 20 weeks for Year 11 pupils (primary research question), 15 or 20 weeks for Year 10 pupils and 10 or 15 weeks for Year 7 pupils. All outcome will be measured after the end of the tutoring programme but there will be no follow up with participants after the study is complete. The randomisation will be block randomisation with equal allocation to arms within each 'year group within school' block. Randomisation will be performed by the trial statistician at a single time point (no rolling recruitment) and meaningless pupil IDs will be used for the process. The statistician will not be unblinded to the allocation until after the results of randomisation have been communicated to schools and pupils.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome measure

GCSE maths fractional grade, measured through controlled examinations in May/June 2026

Secondary outcome measures

1. A binary variable indicating whether the pupil achieved grade 4 or above in GCSE maths, converted from the primary outcome measure
2. Access Mathematics Test scores, measured through test papers administered in June 2026
3. Percentage weekly absences during the period of tutoring, recorded by schools in the 2025/26 academic year
4. Mathematical self perceptions measured using the Maths and Me survey (online) in June 2026
5. Enjoyment of mathematics measured using the Maths and Me survey (online) in June 2026

Overall study start date

25/03/2025

Completion date

31/08/2025

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

Each school will select between 26 and 40 pupils (half of whom will be randomly assigned to receive tutoring and half to a control group receiving usual practice) in each of Year 7, 10 and 11 who meet the following criteria:

1. Year 11 pupils must start the year working at GCSE grades 3–5 in maths
2. Year 10 pupils must start the year working at GCSE grades 2–5 in maths
3. Year 7 pupils must have narrowly achieved or narrowly missed the expected standard in their maths SATs.

At least 65% of pupils selected by the school to take part in the trial must be eligible for the Pupil Premium grant and all pupils must meet the maths attainment criteria listed above (linked to being at risk of not achieving a grade 4 in their maths GCSE without additional support). All pupils must meet the attainment criteria, but schools can offer up to 35% of places to pupils who are not eligible for the Pupil Premium. To the best of the school's knowledge, no more than 15% of the pupils overall should be accessing professional, paid, private tuition.

Participant type(s)

Learner/student

Age group

Child

Lower age limit

11 Years

Upper age limit

16 Years

Sex

Both

Target number of participants

5208

Key exclusion criteria

Pupils who do not meet the inclusion criteria

Date of first enrolment

01/09/2025

Date of final enrolment

28/11/2025

Locations

Countries of recruitment

England

United Kingdom

Study participating centre

National Foundation for Educational Research

The Mere, Upton Park

Slough

United Kingdom

SL1 2DQ

Sponsor information

Organisation

National Foundation for Educational Research

Sponsor details

The Mere

Upton Park

Slough

England

United Kingdom

SL1 2DQ

+44 (0)1753 574123

enquiries@nfer.ac.uk

Sponsor type

Research organisation

Website

<https://www.nfer.ac.uk/>

ROR

<https://ror.org/044sxgs38>

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
EducEndowFoundn, Education Endowment Foundation | London, EEF

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Publication and dissemination plan
The final report will be publicly available on the EEF website. This report will have been written by the independent evaluator (NFER) and reviewed by EEF evaluation managers and by independent peer reviewers.

Intention to publish date
31/08/2027

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The data generated and/or analysed during the current study will be available upon request from the EEF archive. The EEF archive is managed by FFT on behalf of EEF and hosted by the Office of National Statistics (ONS). <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-the-eef-data-archive>

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Participant information sheet			30/07/2025	No	Yes
Protocol file	version 1.0	30/07/2025	01/08/2025	No	No