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Evaluating the effectiveness of the Action Tutoring Programme

Submission date
30/07/2025

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
06/08/2025

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
19/11/2025

Condition category
Other

[X] Prospectively registered
[X] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[_] Results
[_] Individual participant data
[X] 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)

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

Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS)
Nil known

ClinicalTrials.gov (NCT)
Nil known

Protocol serial number
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

Study type(s)
Treatment

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

Key secondary outcome(s))
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

Completion date
31/08/2026

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

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Child

Lower age limit
11 years

Upper age limit
16 years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

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
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
National Foundation for Educational Research
The Mere, Upton Park
Slough
England
SL1 2DQ

Sponsor information

Organisation
National Foundation for Educational Research

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

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
Participant information sheet	Participant information sheet version 1.0	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes
Protocol file		30/07/2025	01/08/2025	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes