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What messaging is effective in recruiting schools to take up tutoring? A randomised controlled trial of email messages to schools.

Submission date
23/03/2021

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
24/03/2021

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
21/03/2022

Condition category
Other

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

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The trial will explore the impact of two distinctive types of recruitment emails - testimonial from other headteachers on the benefits of tutoring, and empirical evidence of the benefits of tutoring - on schools' sign-up to the Tuition Partners (TP) programme to receive tutoring support for their pupils. The existing evidence base indicates that both approaches may be effective in engaging schools. This study aims to build on this evidence to explore which approach is more effective in the specific context of engaging schools in catch-up tutoring provision for their pupils. The study aims to provide evidence about if and how schools sign up for tutoring, their motivations, and the best ways to engage schools in catch-up programmes, to ultimately contribute to improving the lives of learners. Tuition is a highly effective way to improve pupils' learning outcomes when used alongside classroom teaching (e.g. Nickow et al., 2020), and one-to-one and small group tuition are associated with between three and six months of additional academic progress (EEF, 2018).

Who can participate?
Headteachers/key contacts in primary and secondary schools in geographic areas Hertfordshire, Essex and North London, East of England and Suffolk. Schools will be identified from: i) a list of schools which have expressed an interest in the programme via the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) website; and ii) a top-up sample of schools within EM Tuition's (the tutoring provider's) geographical remit, identified via publically available information (e.g. the Government's Get Information About Schools website).

What does the study involve?
The study involves one recruitment email being sent to a key contact in each school. The recruitment email will contain either a testimonial from a headteacher(s) already involved in the programme receiving tutoring support from EM Tuition for their pupils or a summary of the empirical evidence relating to the benefits of tutoring. Both emails will be exactly the same in other regards (such as providing an outline of EM Tuition's tutoring provision, and how to get in touch).

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The study will inform the best ways to engage schools in tuition support, which can benefit students' learning. There are no risks of participating.

Where is the study run from?
The trial is run by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) in collaboration with the tuition provider, EM Tuition (UK)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2021 to June 2021

Who is funding the study?
The study is funded by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) (UK)

Who is the main contact?
Pippa Lord, p.lord@nfer.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

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Study information

Scientific Title
Randomised controlled trial (RCT) to examine the impact of recruitment emails containing testimonials versus empirical evidence of the benefits of tutoring on schools signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) or providing an expression of interest (EOI) to receive tutoring support for their pupils.

Acronym
TP R+E RCT

Study objectives
School senior leaders are influenced both by endorsements/testimonials from those in the profession and by research evidence about what works. This study will test which messaging is more influential when signing up to the NTP.

Research Question 1: What is the difference in the proportion of schools signing an MoU to participate in the TP programme in response to an email with a testimonial about the benefits of tutoring from another headteacher, compared to a summary of the empirical evidence on the benefits of tutoring?

Research Question 2: What is the difference in the proportion of schools' expressions of interest (EOIs) in participating in the TP programme in response to an email with a testimonial about the benefits of tutoring from another headteacher, compared to a summary of the empirical evidence on the benefits of tutoring?

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
The study does not require ethics approval. The study will be conducted in accordance with NFER's Code of Practice, available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/1166/codeofpractice.pdf. School key contacts/headteachers will be informed of the study in the recruitment emails and will be able to view full details about the study in a link to the Privacy Notice the embedded in the recruitment emails. The Privacy Notice sets out what data is being gathered as part of the trial and gives school contacts the opportunity to withdraw from data processing if they have objections. Key school contacts who reply to the recruitment emails (without withdrawing from data processing) will therefore provide the ethical agreement for participation in the trial.

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
To explore what works in engaging schools/senior leaders to sign up to catch-up tutoring support for their students, which provides subsidised tuition to supplement high-quality classroom teaching as a way of supporting children's learning in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Interventions
Intervention arm: Recruitment email with headteacher testimonial of the benefits of tutoring.
Comparison arm: Recruitment email highlighting the empirical evidence of the benefits of tutoring.

School-level randomisation into the two arms using the statistical package R, stratified by variables anticipated to be influential in schools' rates of sign-up to the TP programme, applied in this order:
source for identifying the school (whether a school expressed interest via the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) webpage or not)
proportion of pupils in the school eligible for free school meals (FSM)
phase of school

Each school will be sent one recruitment email (arm 1 or 2). The trial will measure the proportion of schools that sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) (primary outcome) and provide an Expression of Interest (EoI) (secondary outcome) within three weeks of being sent the recruitment email.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by school within 3 full term-time weeks of being sent email (yes/no) measured using schools records from a trial data template

Key secondary outcome(s)
Expression of Interest (EoI) from school within 3 full term-time weeks of being sent email (yes /no) measured using schools records from a trial data template

Completion date
28/06/2021

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Primary and secondary state-funded schools (including special schools and alternative provision institutions) in Hertfordshire, Essex and North London, East of England and Suffolk

Participant type(s)
Other

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Other

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
1949

Key exclusion criteria
Nursery schools and post-16 only schools will be excluded from the sample as they are not eligible to access subsidised tuition within the TP programme, which targets Year 1 to Year 11 pupils

Date of first enrolment
03/02/2021

Date of final enrolment
23/03/2021

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

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

Sponsor information

Organisation
Education Endowment Foundation

ROR
https://ror.org/03bhd6288

Funder(s)

Funder type
Charity

Funder Name
Education Endowment Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
EducEndowFoundn, The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 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 datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be stored in a publically available repository.
One month after the publication of the evaluation report, de-identified data (no individual's names, contact details or job roles) and analysis code will be submitted to the UK Data Archive for storage, as part of transparent analysis and reporting of RCTs. The data will include the school name. No individuals will be identifiable in the dataset.

IPD sharing plan summary
Stored in repository

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Funder report results		06/09/2021	21/03/2022	No	No
Protocol file	version v1.0	19/03/2021	06/04/2021	No	No
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes