



THIRD SPACE
LEARNING

The Secondary School Guide to Pupil Premium

How best to use Pupil Premium funding to raise
maths attainment: proven strategies, checklists and
case study evidence

SLT Guides

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Introduction

Pupil Premium funding is a key part of a school's yearly budget – intended to be used (and increasingly monitored to make sure of this) to measurably and positively impact students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In recent years, Pupil Premium has become an even bigger part of the education conversation, as multiple studies have shown that COVID-19-related disruptions have worsened educational inequalities: the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their peers has grown since the onset of the pandemic.

Why we've made this resource

As the UK's largest (and most affordable) DfE-approved provider of one to one maths tutoring, we speak to hundreds of schools every week who are looking to make the best use of their Pupil Premium funding and provide the most impactful maths support to these students.

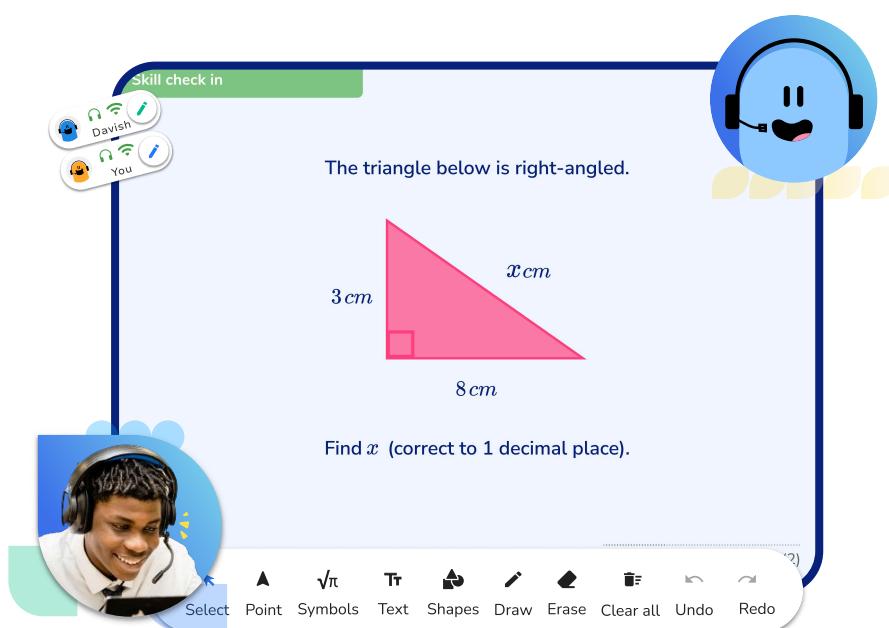
We've made this guide to collate everything you need to know to implement the most cost-effective and evidence-based strategy possible. Inside you'll find actionable advice, tips and strategies as well as the latest research and guidance from the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF).





Since 2013, we've worked closely with over 4,000 schools to help them support 160,000+ students through online one to one maths tutoring now delivered by Skye, the AI maths tutor. **The majority of our schools choose students who are eligible for Pupil Premium.**

The AI tutoring is built specifically for school budgets, offering unlimited one-to-one sessions for one low fixed yearly cost (starting from £3,500). This contrasts sharply with other providers, where the cost per session often forces schools to limit who receives support. This affordability means schools are able to give even more students additional, personalised opportunities to succeed in maths - opportunities that they may not have had access to otherwise. Full access to our comprehensive library of maths resources and CPD is also included at no additional cost.



We had identified a group of students who were all disadvantaged in some way, including those in receipt of Pupil Premium payments. The biggest impact of Third Space Learning's tutoring was showing them that revision works and it's worth spending their time on. Having that feeling of success is crucial. The group who attended the sessions improved 1.19 of a GCSE maths grade on average, 0.46 more than those who didn't have the sessions"



Andy Appleford
Maths Director, Chorus Education Trust



What is Pupil Premium?

The Pupil Premium Grant is designed to help schools support students from all socio-economic backgrounds, as the evidence shows that some students face challenges that their peers do not, and will not perform as well in school. Pupil Premium was introduced in 2011 to help schools to bridge this attainment gap.

Who is eligible for Pupil Premium?

Funding is allocated based on the number of students who fall into the following groups:

- 1 Students eligible for free school meals (FSM)** or have been recorded as eligible in the past 6 years (FSM Ever 6)
- 2 Previously looked-after children (PLAC):** students who were looked after by a local authority or other state care immediately before being adopted, or who left local authority or other state care on a special guardianship order or child arrangements order (previously known as a residence order)
- 3 Looked-after children (LAC):** those who are in the care of, or provided with accommodation by, an English local authority
- 4 Service Children:** students with one or more parent serving in the regular armed forces, who have been registered as a 'service child' on a school census since 2016, or who have a parent who has died whilst serving in the armed forces and the student receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme.



In January 2023, over 2 million students were eligible for free school meals, 23.8% of all students. This is an increase of 122,000 students since January 2022, when 1.9 million (22.5%) students were eligible for free school meals.

The percentage of students with free school meals had been increasing prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, with increases each year from 13.6% in January 2018, to 15.4% in January 2019, 17.3% in January 2020 and 20.8% in January 2021. The increase during the first period of the pandemic, from January 2020 to 20.8% in January 2021, was higher than each of these previous year on year increases.

Why is Pupil Premium needed?



From research conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF):

The EEF has been conducting research into educational outcomes and the difference in attainment between students of different backgrounds for many years. Before the pandemic, back in 2018, it released the Attainment Gap Report, which found:

- The gap in outcomes between those students from the least well-off backgrounds and their classmates is already evident by the time they begin school, aged 5.
- Over the next 11 years of full-time education, it worsens considerably.
- When students start school, the relative gap in outcomes between those from disadvantaged backgrounds and their more well off peers is approximately 4 months.
- By the time they finish primary school, this has more than doubled to 9 and a half months.
- By the end of secondary school it has more than doubled again, to 19 months' gap.

In June 2020 (updated May 2022), it published a new report looking at the impact of school closures on the attainment gap, which had the following key findings and implications:

- 1** Covid-19 related disruption has negatively impacted the attainment of all pupils, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 2** There is evidence that the attainment gap between disadvantaged students and their classmates has grown.
- 3** There is some evidence that in primary schools, younger year groups (Key Stage 1 pupils) have been the most significantly affected, with lower attainment than previous cohorts across all subject. Other recent research shows particularly negative impact for pupils in KS3 (DFE 2021, 2022)
- 4** Most evidence shows that despite making some recovery by summer 2021, on average pupils were not performing as well in both maths and reading as pre-pandemic cohorts.

From research conducted by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF)

Funding rates for 2025/2026

For the 2025/2026 academic year, core funding for schools has been prioritised and the rates for Pupil Premium will increase by 2.39%. Up from 1.7% in 2024/25.

For each pupil eligible for Pupil Premium as outlined on page 2, funding will be allocated as follows:

Eligibility criteria	Funding per secondary-aged pupil per year for 2025/26	Funding is paid to
FSM or FSM Ever 6	£1,075	School
PLAC	£2,630	School
LAC Known as Pupil Premium plus	£2,630	School
Service children	£350	Local authority

While schools will no longer receive additional ring-fenced tutoring funding such as National Tutoring Programme funding or Recovery Premium from September 2024, the DfE is still strongly encouraging schools to continue to offer one to one maths interventions such as tutoring next academic year:



Tutoring is an effective and well-evidenced targeted approach to increase the attainment of disadvantaged students. Tutoring should supplement and be linked explicitly to high-quality classroom teaching. We strongly encourage schools to continue to fund tutoring using Pupil Premium from September 2024, following the final year of the NTP.

Department for Education – Using Pupil Premium: Guidance for School Leaders – February 2024

Developing your Pupil Premium strategy

What is an effective use of the Pupil Premium can be difficult to gauge. What works in one school, or with one set of students, may not necessarily work with another.

It can be challenging for senior leaders and teachers to decide which strategies to use for the speediest results. Sometimes these initiatives take time to show results even if, in the long run, they prove to be successful.

This guide summarises the best of the information available and, we hope, provides headteachers and school leaders with some clear guidelines to use when mapping out your own Pupil Premium for the year.

The DfE in their guidance for school leaders suggests 5 key steps for developing and delivering an effective strategy:

- 1 Identifying the challenges faced by the school's disadvantaged students
- 2 Using evidence to support your strategy
- 3 Developing your strategy
- 4 Implementing your strategy
- 5 Evaluating and sustaining your strategy

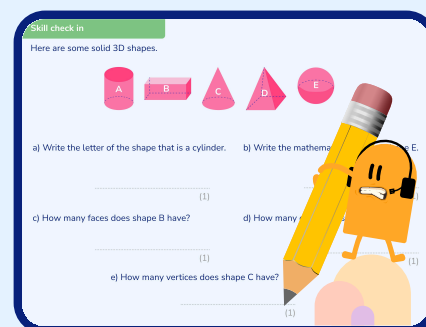
Identify student challenges

Pinpoint the specific topics and skills in a subject where a student might need support instead of just focusing on the subject as a whole. Diagnostic assessments and data from internal and external assessments are crucial to this.



Targeted intervention is something we believe strongly in at Third Space Learning. The thousands of schools we work with don't come to us raise maths attainment as a blanket goal, they come to us because they know their target students - many of them eligible for Pupil Premium - all have different knowledge gaps that need addressing to enable them to progress through the curriculum and succeed in maths.

It's why all students start the programme with an initial diagnostic assessment, called a Skills Check In. This pinpoints their individual gaps. Lessons can be ordered to address the gaps identified in the initial diagnostic assessment, or into any order teachers see fit e.g. to align with class teaching or to use as a pre-teaching tool.



As well as identifying individual academic needs, the DfE also recommends that you should also develop an understanding of any non-academic challenges that students are facing that may negatively affect their education and impact their access to teaching.

For example:

- ✓ Attendance and levels of persistent absence
- ✓ Behaviour incidences and exclusions data
- ✓ Wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding concerns

Use evidence to support your strategy

To support schools to make best use of their pupil premium, the DfE have introduced a 'menu of approaches', based on the evidence of how best to improve attainment:

- ✓ High-quality teaching
- ✓ Targeted academic support, such as one to one tutoring
- ✓ Wider strategies that support students' social, emotional and behavioural needs

We'll look a bit more closely at this 'menu of approaches' on page 10.

Schools should consider a range of external evidence, alongside your own knowledge of your students. External evidence can help you to better understand:

- ✓ Which specific activities have been found to be the most effective in addressing the types of challenge that your students face
- ✓ What implementation strategies may be important to ensure success
- ✓ The relative impact of different approaches

When considering an external provider, you should seek out case studies and their Impact Report or research evidence. And of course, talk to colleagues. Any schools who express interest in Third Space Learning's online one to one maths tuition are put in contact (where possible) with local schools who use the intervention already to enable them to get a really clear picture of the impact it will have in their school and to ask additional questions.



Read : [Third Space Learning's 22/23 Impact report¹](#)

3 min read

Develop your strategy

Once you've reviewed the needs of your students and the evidence-based behind the different strategies available to you, you'll need to document your Pupil Premium strategy.

The DfE has a [Pupil Premium strategy template](#) you can use to help.

Academy trusts can set a strategy that covers multiple academies.

What to know before you start:

- ✓ The DfE recommends schools develop a 3-year strategy
- ✓ The balance of spending between the categories in the 'menu' will vary depending on the specific needs of students
- ✓ Your strategy should focus on the challenges that are having the most significant impact, and are within your control

- ✓ Schools should set ambitious, but realistic, target outcomes
- ✓ Funding should be allocated to activities most likely to deliver those outcomes, based on evidence of what works
- ✓ Consider how your strategy aligns with other strategic school improvement documents, such as your school improvement plan
- ✓ Ensure you consult governors, academy trust leadership and trustees if appropriate, and relevant staff members when developing your strategy

Implement your strategy

When implementing your plan, there are 7 things the DfE recommends that you should consider:

- 1 How does it integrate with your curriculum
- 2 What changes are needed to existing ways of working
- 3 Logistics around scheduling, student selection and group size
- 4 How to collaborate with staff to promote the principles and ethos of your strategy
- 5 Are there any professional development requirements
- 6 What requirements in terms of timing or resources are there from external providers
- 7 What are the data and resources implications for monitoring impact

If you do choose an external provider, you may find that they incorporate much of this into the service they offer. It is in their interest to make everything runs as smoothly and effectively as possible to ensure you continue to use the service in future terms.



At Third Space Learning we aim for close to zero impact on staff workload.

We make sure that the intervention can be run with minimal changes to existing ways of working. We also provide full training for all staff in bitesize chunks. And when you need to monitor impact, just review the data in the on-demand progress reports. It's all in your control.

- ✓ Schools should set ambitious, but realistic, target outcomes
- ✓ Funding should be allocated to activities most likely to deliver those outcomes, based on evidence of what works
- ✓ Consider how your strategy aligns with other strategic school improvement documents, such as your school improvement plan
- ✓ Ensure you consult governors, academy trust leadership and trustees if appropriate, and relevant staff members when developing your strategy

Evaluating and sustaining your strategy

DO:

- ✓ Measure success based on outcomes for Pupil Premium pupils
- ✓ Implement a robust and transparent evaluation framework
- ✓ Ensure evaluation is an ongoing process

DON'T:

- ✗ Use data that does not focus on student outcomes
- ✗ Base evaluation on the reactions of those delivering the activity
- ✗ Use vague intended outcomes

When implementing your plan, there are 7 things the DfE recommends that you should consider:



No matter how much of a good teacher you are, you can never get to 30 students on a one to one level. It doesn't work like that. Third Space Learning has enabled us to give our students support at the level that's right for them and it's been really good for plugging gaps.



Angela Kershaw
Maths Leader, St Augustine's Academy, Dunstable



What can Pupil Premium be spent on?

Any activity funded by Pupil Premium must fall under an approach listed in the DfE's specific 'menu of approaches':

High-quality teaching

- ✓ Developing high-quality teaching, assessment and a broad and balanced, knowledge-based curriculum which responds to the needs of students
- ✓ Professional development to support the implementation of evidence based approaches, for example, training provided by a DfE validated systematic synthetic phonics programme, mastery based approaches to teaching or feedback
- ✓ Mentoring and coaching for teachers
- ✓ Supporting the recruitment and retention of teaching staff, for example, providing cover time to undertake professional development such as National Professional Qualifications (NPQs)
- ✓ Technology and other resources that support high quality teaching, for example software to support diagnostic assessment

Targeted academic support

- ✓ One to one, small group or peer academic tuition (e.g. one to one tutoring from Third Space Learning)
- ✓ Targeted interventions to support language development, literacy and numeracy
- ✓ Targeted interventions and resources to meet the specific needs of disadvantaged students with SEND
- ✓ Teaching assistant deployment and interventions, for example by supporting high-quality provision within the classroom or delivering structured interventions



“Third Space Learning’s one to one tuition is a great addition to our support for pupils receiving Pupil Premium, and the resources are high quality and up to date with recent research.”

Abi Hann
Deputy Headteacher, Wimbledon

Wider strategies

- ✓ Supporting students’ social, emotional and behavioural needs
- ✓ Supporting attendance, including approaches outlined in the working together to improve school attendance guidance
- ✓ Extra-curricular activities, including sport, outdoor activities, arts and culture, for example music lessons and school trips
- ✓ Extended school time, including for summer schools
- ✓ Breakfast clubs and meal provision
- ✓ Communicating with and supporting parents



What do the most successful strategies look like?

Sir John Dunford, the former National Pupil Premium Champion, spent two years examining what works best after speaking to schools, addressing conferences and acting as a channel of communication between the Department for Education and schools. He noted that the most successful schools used a range of strategies that were targeted to the needs of individual students rather than sticking with one or two.

The most successful schools:

- 1 Collected and analysed data on groups and individual students, and monitored this over time
- 2 Focused on teaching quality
- 3 Identified the main barriers to learning for disadvantaged children
- 4 Put interventions in place when progress has slowed
- 5 Engaged with parents and carers in the education of their child
- 6 Referred to existing evidence about the effectiveness of different strategies
- 7 Trained all classroom staff in the strategies being used in school
- 8 Secured staff commitment to the importance of the Pupil Premium agenda
- 9 Trained governors on Pupil Premium

In deciding which policies to use, heads and teachers needed to:

- 1 Decide what the school wants to achieve with Pupil Premium funding
- 2 Analyse the barriers to learning before deciding what strategies to use
- 3 Decide on desired outcomes and identify success criteria for each

- 4 Monitor and evaluate the success and impact of any current strategies on students; change them if they're not working
- 5 Decide on an optimum range of approaches to use
- 6 Keep up to date with research



“In future, it will be up to regional school commissioners, local authorities, multi-academy trusts and school alliances to keep the Pupil Premium cause at the top of their list of priorities. The social, moral and educational case for giving additional support to children born less fortunate than others remains as strong as ever. Every school needs a Pupil Premium Champion.”

Sir John Dunford, the former National Pupil Premium Champion

Maths-specific strategies

Again, it's worth turning to the EEF for guidance on this. In their 2017 report, 'Improving Mathematics in Key Stages 2 & 3', they list 8 key recommendations for schools to take in order to close the attainment gap. These are:

- 1 Use assessment to build on students' existing knowledge and understanding
- 2 Use manipulatives and representations
- 3 Teach strategies for solving problems
- 4 Enable students to develop a rich network of mathematical knowledge
- 5 Develop students' independence and motivation
- 6 Use tasks and resources to challenge and support students' mathematics
- 7 Use structured interventions to provide additional support
- 8 Support students to make a successful transition between Primary and Secondary school



For more details of how you can create a whole school approach to teaching maths based around these recommendations read: [8 ways to close the attainment gap: EEF maths report²](#)

7 min read

Pupil Premium and accountability

For many schools, because of the area they serve, Pupil Premium forms a sizeable chunk of the overall school budget.

Schools are held accountable for how they spend their funding, both to the DfE and through the Ofsted inspection process.

Accountability to the Department of Education

Local authority-maintained schools and academies must produce and publish a strategy statement every year using the DfE template. The DfE website states that 'The strategy statement is an accountability tool for the benefit of parents and governors and trustees. You should write it with them in mind'.

They stress that it is not meant to document exact attainment gaps and it will not be used to allocate any future funding. Rather, it is a template 'for you to provide an overview of your current strategy for improving the attainment of disadvantaged students, including how you intend to use your Pupil Premium funding and the outcomes achieved in the previous academic year'.

Accountability to Ofsted

The DfE states that 'Ofsted inspectors will only use your strategy statement to help them prepare for their visit', but there is still a requirement to demonstrate use of Pupil Premium funding to Ofsted.

Although inspectors won't judge your school on how it spends your funding, they will want to see that the money is being used effectively, and that the school's leadership is monitoring and managing this spending well.

Inspectors may ask for evidence on how groups of students are performing compared with their peers, but mostly this will be to assess how well you understand the progress they are making and what their next steps are.

Since the introduction of the 2019 Ofsted Education Inspection Framework, inspectors are no longer looking for data as evidence, preferring to look at books and observe lessons instead.

There are four key recommendations for the use of Pupil Premium funding in the Ofsted accountability process:

- 1 Schools will need to detail their strategy for narrowing the attainment gap on their website.
- 2 They will be able to give inspectors information about the level of additional funding received across each year.
- 3 They will be able to detail how it is spent and how these spending decisions were made.
- 4 Their outcomes data should clearly demonstrate any differences made to the learning and progress of eligible students.

Governors will be expected to show that they are aware of the importance of this spending and have robustly questioned how senior leadership are dealing with any variations in achievement between different groups. Ofsted will make judgments of how effectively the governing body is doing this and it may ultimately affect what grade inspectors give for leadership and management - and so the overall grade given.

Inspectors can call for an external review of the school's Pupil Premium spending if they identify specific issues relating to the provision and outcomes for disadvantaged students.



“Leaders use the additional funding the schools receives effectively to ensure that disadvantaged pupils make the best possible progress. For example, the school has organised mathematics teaching Years 5 and 6 so that work can be matched closely to pupils’ individual needs.”



From the Outstanding Ofsted Report for
Trent CE Primary



“During our second day of the Ofsted inspection, one of the inspectors observed a Third Space Learning session and was so impressed that she actually phoned Third Space Learning that day and introduced their one to one tutoring into her school!”



Headteacher, Trent Church
of England Primary School

Pupil Premium strategies: an evidence summary

In their 'Teaching and Learning Toolkit', the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) summarise the evidence of impact behind various different strategies for boosting educational outcomes in schools.

They also include some of the interventions that you should avoid as they make little to no difference (and in some cases are actively detrimental). These include:

- Learning styles
- Setting and streaming
- School uniform
- Outdoor adventure activities
- Repeating a year (sets children back 3 months)

Here, we explore the 20 most effective strategies schools can use to close the maths attainment gap through Pupil Premium funding.

- 1 Metacognition and self-regulation
- 2 Feedback
- 3 One to one tuition
- 4 Mastery learning
- 5 Collaborative learning approaches
- 6 Peer tutoring
- 7 Homework
- 8 Individualised instruction



Third Space was an attractive proposition because it was using one to one interventions and a great way to use our Pupil Premium allowance.



Angela Kershaw
Maths Leader, St Augustine's Academy, Dunstable



Metacognition and self-regulation

Based on **extensive evidence:** **Very high impact** **Very low cost** **7 months' progress**

This involves supporting students to think about their own learning more explicitly, often by teaching them specific strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning.

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Interventions are usually designed to give students a repertoire of strategies to choose from and the skills to select the most suitable strategy for a given learning task.
- ✓ Self-regulated learning can be broken into three essential components:
 - **Cognition** – the mental process involved in knowing, understanding, and learning.
 - **Metacognition** – often defined as ‘learning to learn’.
 - **Motivation** – willingness to engage our metacognitive and cognitive skills.
- ✓ Disadvantaged students may be less likely to use metacognitive and self-regulatory strategies without being explicitly taught these strategies.
- ✓ The costs associated with metacognition and self-regulation mostly arise from professional development training for staff.



Studies show that intelligent tutoring systems that scaffold learning - for example Third Space Learning's one to one interventions - show particularly high impacts on pupil outcomes. This is because Skye works closely with each pupil to explore the different strategies available to them to solve a given problem, and ask deliberate questions to help pupils think about which strategy is best and how it can be applied.



“Third Space Learning's tutoring combines building the student's ability to do the maths with building their metacognition. The tutor encourages them to think: ‘How do I learn? What helps me to learn? What state of mind am I in?’ It helps students understand that they are meant to learn and remember these strategies, which is such an important skill to develop.”

Simrat Mavi
Deputy Headteacher, West Midlands

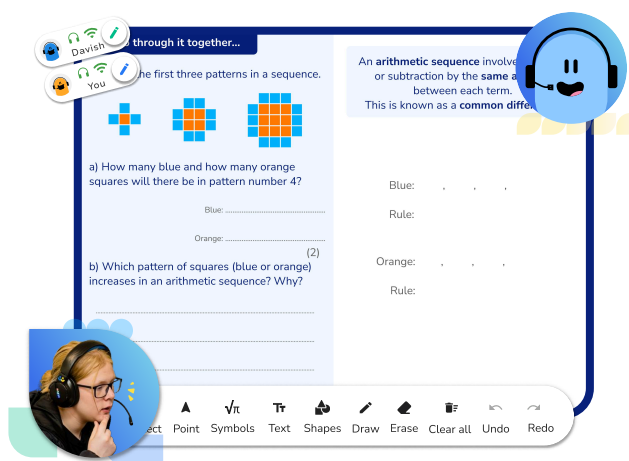
Feedback

Based on **extensive evidence:** **Very high impact** **Very low cost** **6 months' progress**

This involves giving information to the student about their performance relative to learning goals or outcomes with the aim of producing an improvement in learning.

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Effective feedback focuses on the task, subject and self regulation strategies, providing specific information on how to improve.
- ✓ Verbal feedback has a higher impact than written marking.
- ✓ It is important to give feedback when things are correct, not just when they are incorrect.
- ✓ Low attaining pupils tend to benefit more from explicit feedback than high attainers.
- ✓ This strategy is particularly effective in maths.
- ✓ The cost to schools is largely based on training, but implementation will require a moderate and sustained amount of staff time, compared with other approaches.



Example slide from a Third Space Learning online one to one maths tutoring session

Feedback is something that forms a big part of all maths support delivered by Skye. By very nature of the one to one environment, Skye is able to provide pupils with real-time verbal and on-screen feedback, and Skye is trained to encourage and support pupils to understand where they might have gone wrong or what they've done well.

Skye also give pupils 'effort points', which reward effort and attitude as well as finding the right answer.

One to one tuition

Based on **moderate evidence**: **High impact** **Moderate cost** **5 months' progress**

Providing students with one to one support for a particular subject is very effective at improving student outcomes, especially for students who are eligible for free school meals, students with low prior attainment and students who are struggling in particular areas.



Here at Third Space Learning, we believe one to one support is one of the most effective way to close the maths attainment gap.

We strive to give the students who need it most the opportunity to talk through key concepts and focus on the topics they struggle most with in a safe environment where they're not afraid to ask questions and make mistakes.

Students work with Skye each week, who's been specially trained to provide effective and empowering feedback and to tailor the lessons to suit each child. The result is confident, able mathematicians who look forward to their sessions and are equipped with the tools they need to succeed in maths.

Because all tutoring is delivered online leveraging AI, schools are able to access personalised one to one tuition for the price many other providers charge for small group sessions.

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Programmes involving teaching assistants or volunteers may be less effective than those using experienced and specifically trained teachers or tutors.
- ✓ Where tuition is delivered by TAs or volunteers, it is better to choose more experienced staff and schools must provide adequate training and structure.
- ✓ Online tuition is as effective as face to face tuition.



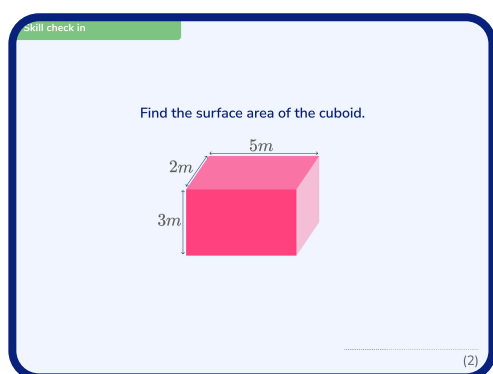
The students are really enjoying it and look forward to their sessions every week. We've had positive comments from every student! Thanks!



Head of Maths,
West Bromwich Collegiate Academy

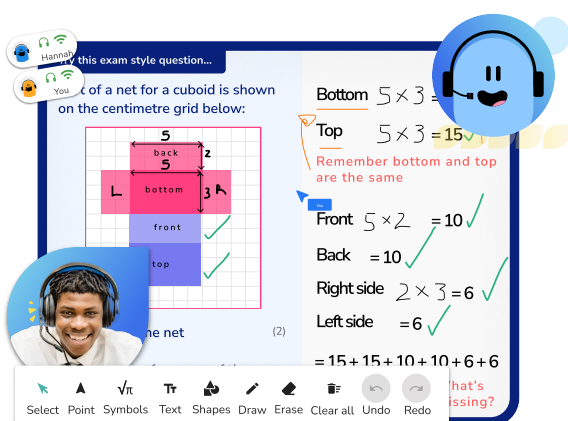


- ✓ Core components of successful one to one tuition include:
 - Accurately identifying the students that require additional support.
 - Understanding their learning gaps and selecting content appropriately.
 - Ensuring teachers are well-prepared for having high quality interactions with students, such 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 student progress and adjusting provision accordingly.
- ✓ The impact is particularly great in secondary school students.
- ✓ The costs to schools are largely based on additional salary costs and learning resources, and one to one tuition is particularly expensive through trained teachers.



Third Space Learning's online one to one tutoring programmes have been created by maths pedagogy experts for maximum impact on student confidence and attainment:

- ✓ Students begin with an initial 'Skills Check In' assessment and learning is personalised to their needs
- ✓ Skye asks explicit questions to help students think about their thinking
- ✓ Students are encouraged to verbalise their reasoning and engage in maths talk
- ✓ Skye gives real-time feedback and praise throughout the sessions
- ✓ The programme follows a mastery approach, with scaffolded teaching slides, effective questioning techniques and carefully sequenced questions
- ✓ Students take an active role in their learning



We're thrilled to be at the forefront of using Third Space Learning's AI tutoring. This innovative one-to-one maths tutoring solution offers an even more cost-effective alternative. The children have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and their engagement and focus are clearly evident.

Chris Harris, Deputy Principal
Admirals Academy, part of EMAT

Mastery learning

Based on **limited evidence**:

High impact

Moderate cost

5 months' progress

This involves breaking subject matter down into blocks or units with predetermined objectives. Learners must demonstrate 'mastery' of each block before moving on to new material, and students who do not achieve mastery receive extra support. It's important to note that this is different to 'teaching for mastery', which also aims to support all students to achieve deep understanding and competence in the relevant topic but is characterised by teacher-led, whole-class teaching, common lesson content for all students, and use of manipulatives and representations.

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Some approaches have a specified threshold to meet - usually 80-90% on the relevant test - before moving on. Other approaches involve the class moving on to new material when the teacher decides that the majority of students have mastered the unit.
- ✓ Core components of mastery learning are:
 - Effective diagnostic assessment to identify areas of strength and weakness.
 - Carefully sequencing topics so that they gradually build on foundational knowledge.
- ✓ Mastery learning is a cost-effective approach, on average, but is challenging to implement effectively.
- ✓ The costs associated with mastery learning approaches mostly arise from professional development training for teaching staff.



Mastery Learning is a guiding principle behind our one to one intervention programmes, ensuring each pupil gets the most out of their time. Pupils begin each programme with an initial diagnostic assessment called the "Skill Check In" to quickly identify individual knowledge gaps. All content, which is created by experienced teachers, is broken down into small units of learning, meaning each identified gap can be precisely matched with the relevant unit (or "Learning Objective").

Each Learning Objective is then structured in such a way that takes pupils from basic understanding through to application of knowledge to problem solving questions. Skye only moves on to the next section or the next Learning Objective when they deem the pupil has mastered the content.

Collaborative learning approaches

Based on **limited evidence**:

High impact

Very low cost

5 months' progress

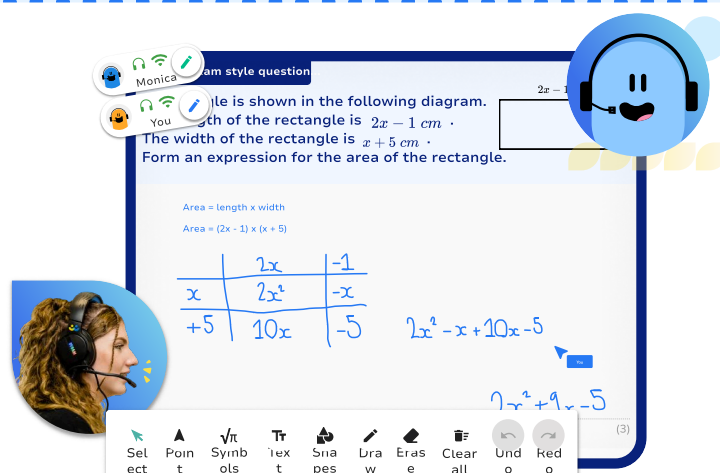
A collaborative (or cooperative) learning approach involves pupils working together in a group small enough to ensure that everyone participates. Students in the group may work on separate tasks contributing to a common overall outcome, or work together on a shared task

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Tasks and activities need to be designed carefully so that working together is effective and efficient, otherwise some students may struggle to participate or try to work on their own.
- ✓ It is important to ensure that all students talk and articulate their thinking in collaborative tasks to ensure they benefit fully.
- ✓ The most promising collaborative learning approaches tend to have group sizes between 3 and 5 students and have a shared outcome or goal.
- ✓ The effects are slightly higher in secondary schools than primary schools, and are twice as high in science than in maths, but still slightly higher in maths than in literacy.



Many of the positive effects of collaborative learning can be seen in one to one environments too. The conversational, voice-based dialogue of the AI tutoring encourages pupils to verbalize their reasoning and articulate the steps they're taking to solve a problem. This key feature helps build both fluency and active participation.



Example slide from a Third Space Learning online tutoring session.

Peer tutoring

Based on **extensive evidence**:

High impact

Very low cost

5 months' progress

This includes a range of approaches in which learners work in pairs or small groups to provide each other with explicit teaching support. Learners take on responsibility for aspects of teaching and for evaluating their success.

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Peer tutoring has a positive impact on both tutors and tutees, but lower attaining students tend to benefit more than higher attaining pupils.
- ✓ Peer tutoring seems most effective when used to review or consolidate learning, rather than introducing new material.
- ✓ It is crucial to allocate sufficient time to train both staff and tutors, to ensure training provides structure to the tutoring, and to identify and implement improvements as the programme progresses.
- ✓ Four to ten week intensive blocks with regular sessions (4–5 times a week) appear to provide maximum impact for both tutors and tutees.
- ✓ Peer tutoring is just as effective at primary and secondary, and in literacy and maths.
- ✓ Digital peer tutoring has a similar overall impact to face to face.
- ✓ The cost to schools is largely based on teacher training and learning resources, and a moderate amount of staff time is required.



Homework

Based on **very limited evidence**: **High impact** **Very low cost** **5 months' progress**

Teachers' attitudes to homework and how effective it is vary a great deal, and have changed over time. The EEF state that homework is in fact an effective strategy, particularly for students in receipt of Pupil Premium. However, the evidence base is very limited.

According to the EEF:

- ✓ Homework has a particularly positive impact for students eligible for Free School Meals and students in secondary schools, and similar positive effects are found for reading, maths and science.
- ✓ Disadvantaged students may however be less likely to have access to the space, technology and conditions required for effective learning at home, so it may be better to consider homework clubs which take place in school.
- ✓ Homework is most effective when it is linked to classroom learning, where feedback on homework is provided and when students understand the purpose of the homework (e.g. to increase a specific area of knowledge, or to develop fluency in a particular area).
- ✓ Setting homework twice a week in a particular subject appears to be the most impactful frequency, and there is some evidence that the impact of homework diminishes as the amount of time students spend on it increases.
- ✓ The cost of homework is expected to be largely based on teacher training and resources, and implementing homework will also require a small amount of staff time for planning and feedback.



Third Space Learning's AI maths tutoring with Skye aims to increase access to additional learning opportunities in school for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The one-to-one lessons are delivered in school during pre-booked time slots, meaning students do not need to learn at home. Schools choose their target students, often prioritizing those eligible for Pupil Premium. These students receive weekly online one-to-one maths lessons from the AI tutor, Skye. Lessons are chosen to plug individual gaps identified by diagnostic assessment and are fully aligned with the UK National Curriculum.

For schools without students signed up to the tutoring - or indeed for schools who'd like to support a wider cohort of pupils - we provide a whole range of free homework resources in our online resource library,



Individualised instruction

Based on **limited evidence:** **Moderate impact** **Very low cost** **4 months' progress**

This involves providing different tasks for each learner and support at the individual level. It is based on the idea that all learners have different needs, and that therefore an approach that is personally tailored will be more effective.

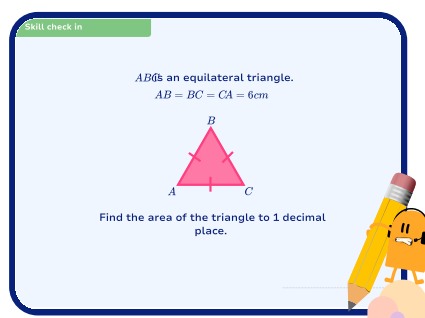
According to the EEF:

- ✓ Individualised instruction can be a challenging approach to implement given the increased requirements on the teacher to organise and monitor individual activities.
- ✓ Studies using digital technology with diagnostic assessment and feedback to individualise instruction have shown positive impacts.
- ✓ Individualised instruction may be better used as a supplement to usual class teaching, rather than a replacement.
- ✓ Studies in secondary schools show higher effects than primary schools, which may indicate that a level of independence and established self-regulation strategies are beneficial for individualised instruction to be effective.
- ✓ The costs to schools are largely based on teacher professional development, training and the cost associated with digital resources and software for individualised approaches.

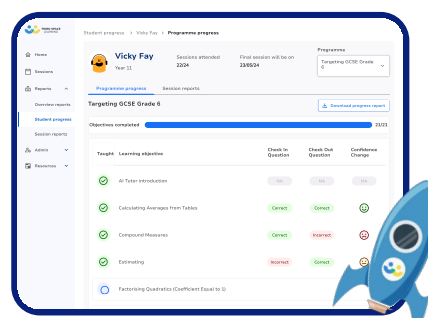


Any intervention or strategy that aims to tailor learning to the unique needs of the pupil requires a thorough and robust diagnostic assessment. It's something we've spent years perfecting at Third Space Learning, and is one of the reasons our intervention is so popular with schools.

The initial assessment, called a "Skills Check In", can diagnose gaps as far back as Year 6 and post-session questions help to continuously update the picture of each student's gaps, allowing for a hyper-tailored learning experience.



Students start Third Space Learning interventions with an initial Skills Check In



Teachers can log on and view the results to understand each student's gaps

"I was hesitant to put our Year 11s on at first as I wasn't sure the tutors would know the GCSE exam specifications as well as our staff - I'm so glad we did!"



Scarlett O'Sullivan
Deputy Headteacher, Barclay Academy

**Pupil Premium
success story**

Deputy Headteacher Scarlett was asked to look into tutoring for Barclay School by the central team at the school's trust. At first, they put a group of Year 10 students forward for the tutoring as they weren't sure how well-equipped the tutors would be to guide their Year 11s through GCSE revision. Now, impressed by the impact they've seen in Year 10, they have an additional 60 Year 11s receiving weekly personalised one to one maths tuition before their exams.

Location: Stevenage, Hertfordshire

Intervention student type:

- Year 10 & 11 Pupil Premium students
- GCSE Revision Programme



I sat in on the sessions and it immediately gave me the confidence that the students were working on the right things in the right way.



The work that was being done with Year 10 was really excellent. Feedback from the students was very positive. We thought - 'let's go for it'. We have 60 Year 11s enrolled now.

I wasn't particularly keen on doing any tutoring at first as I expected it might increase staff workload, but the central team had identified a need to spend the ring-fenced National Tutoring Funding. I was signed up to the Third Space Learning email list so decided to give it a go with our Year 10s.

I didn't go with Year 11 at first as it was so close to GCSEs and I wasn't sure if the tutors would know the exam spec inside out. It's one thing to be good at maths, but I needed them to be confident in their GCSE knowledge too.

I've sat in the sessions and I like the way the children are having to explain their answers.

Once we decided to go for it with Year 11 too, I sat in on the sessions. That gave me the confidence that the students were working on the right things in the right way as I could hear them explaining their methodology to their tutors. That interaction between the student and the tutor is really positive for our students.

The diagnostic assessment is excellent as it's enabled the tutors to focus on what the kids actually need rather than just whatever they feel like - the children don't always know what they need. Their teachers have noted that their confidence has increased. They see it in the classroom when a question comes up and they'll say 'I know how to do that! I did it with my Third Space Learning tutor'.

The feedback from the students is really positive. They enjoy it; they want to attend their sessions. That's obviously the goal.

We had one girl who was having panic attacks in maths lessons and she has settled right down. I was actually a bit nervous about our anxious students doing one to one tuition as that could potentially be quite a lot of pressure, but the tutors have really put them at ease and made it a pleasant experience for them.

I asked one of the Year 10 students how it was going and that we were thinking of putting some Year 11s on it and he told me how great it was and how much he was enjoying it. Then he said 'hang on... does that mean I have to stop if the Year 11s are starting?'. He was very relieved when I said no.

It's practical for the staff who are setting it up - this takes so much less time than other tutoring providers.

We've worked with another provider for English and science but it does not compare. They've not been as responsive and I can't do as much of the setup quickly myself. There was a time I wanted two Year 10 boys to have some tuition with both Third Space Learning and another provider. It took me 5 minutes with Third Space Learning but took me nearer an hour with the other. The fact that the teacher can choose objectives but doesn't have to has been great. There isn't actually a requirement to be involved or put in that time, but they do have the option if they want to.

I cannot fault the responsiveness or the helpfulness of the team, nor the design of the website. It's been great. I wouldn't change anything.

The team has been so responsive. They get back to me quickly and sort any changes I need. They've been very patient. The live chat function is great. I had one student who was struggling to connect and I just went on the chat and they said straight away that they were getting in touch with the tutor right now. I know these things will happen and everything got sorted quickly, but they still said they would credit the session as the student had lost a bit of learning at the beginning.

Overall, it's been a really positive experience.

I'd say the main benefits for our students are the diagnostic element and the fact that the teacher can be as involved as they want; because our students' gaps have been identified and the objectives are grouped by their impact on GCSEs you know they're going to work through the topics in exactly the right order for them.

Being able to provide one to one support from friendly tutors, through a system that's easy to use and with a support team that's been so helpful and responsive - that's the number one thing for us.

References

- ¹ <https://tsl-static.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets/documents/Third+Space+Learning+22-23+Impact+Report.pdf> 6
- ² <https://thirdspacelearning.com/blog/2017-eef-mathematics-report-close-the-attainment-gap-primary/> 12
- ³ <https://thirdspacelearning.com/secondary-resources/> 23

Further reading

- EEF Putting Evidence To Work - <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/guidance-reports/implementation>
- DfE Using Pupil Premium - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6425a1002fa848000cec105f/Using_pupil_premium_guidance_for_school_leaders.pdf
- EEF Teaching and Learning Toolkit - <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>
- EEF Guide to the Pupil Premium - <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/guidance-for-teachers/using-pupil-premium>



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Looking to improve your school's maths results without stretching your budget?


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93% of teachers feel Third Space Learning lessons helped their pupils achieve higher assessment scores.

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 thirdspacelearning.com

 0203 771 0095

 hello@thirdspacelearning.com