



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. It is intended to be used, and increasingly monitored to make sure of this, to measurably and positively improve outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

From September 2026, Free school meals eligibility expands, changing who is counted and when. And the disadvantage gap has just been measured at its widest for over a decade, so the funding is doing more work than it has for years.

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).

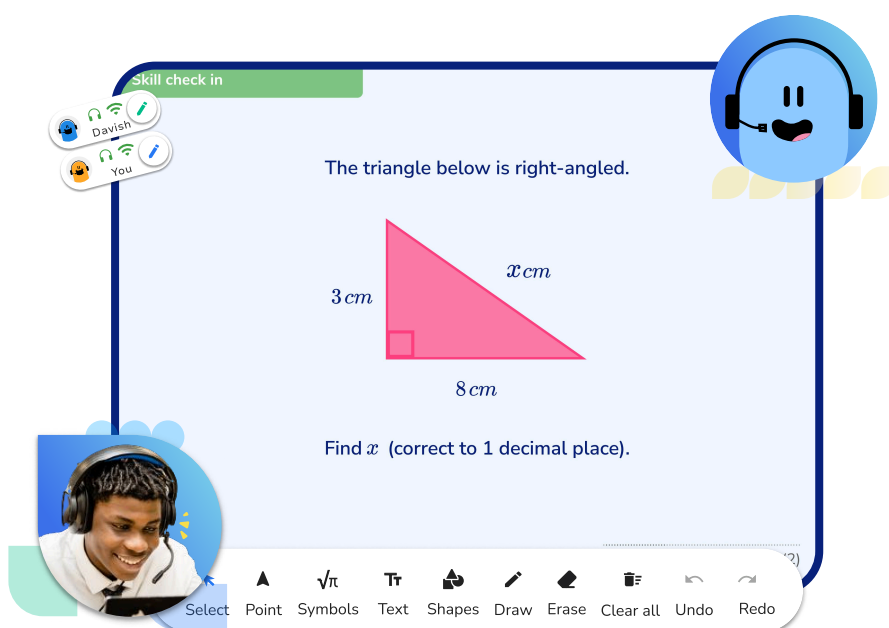




Since 2013, we have delivered 2,295,000 one-to-one tutoring sessions to 196,000 pupils across 4,200 schools. Most of the schools we work with choose students who are eligible for pupil premium.

That teaching experience is what Skye, our AI maths tutor, is built on. Skye is designed for school budgets: unlimited one-to-one sessions for one fixed yearly price, from £5,000 a year for secondary schools. Other providers charge per session, which forces schools to limit who receives support. Increasing the number of students or sessions does not add to the cost, so the budget stops deciding who gets tutored.

Full staff training and support are included from each school's dedicated Programme Manager.



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.



Around 2.3 million pupils attracted the grant in 2025 to 2026, and pupil premium funding was worth £3 billion in total. Of those, roughly 1.99 million were aged 5 to 16, which is 27% of all pupils.

Free school meals eligibility rests on a household income threshold of £7,400 a year for families receiving Universal Credit. Once a student is recorded as eligible, they stay in the Ever 6 cohort for six years, even if circumstances improve. Your allocation therefore reflects a census taken months earlier, not who is on roll today.

Why is Pupil Premium needed?

The disadvantage gap the grant was created to close is still widening.

The Education Policy Institute's 2026 annual report puts the gap at 4.9 months by the end of Reception, 10.0 months by the end of Year 6 and 19.0 months by the end of Year 11. The early years gap is the widest recorded for over a decade, back to the level last seen in 2014.

Most of the gap is set before Year 7

GCSE disadvantage gap already exists by age 11. Low prior attainment at 11 accounts for 6.8 months of the GCSE gap on its own.

For a primary school, that is the case for spending the money where you are standing. Almost half the gap that shows up at GCSE is built before a child leaves you.

Maths compounds faster than most subjects. A child who has not secured place value will struggle with fractions, and then with every topic that rests on fractions. Each year the distance grows, which is why gaps found early cost less to close than gaps found late.

The gap widens at every stage

Disadvantage gap in months of learning



Education Policy Institute, 2026

Funding rates for 2025/2026

Rates are set per financial year, running April to March, and paid in four instalments. Your allocation depends on how many eligible students appeared on the October census. 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	£1,100	School
PLAC	£2,690	School
LAC Known as Pupil Premium plus	£2,690	Local authority
Service children	£360	School

Ring-fenced tutoring funding has now ended. The National Tutoring Programme closed after 2023 to 2024, and recovery premium ended alongside it, with the guidance withdrawn in September 2024. Tutoring did not stop being recommended, it stopped being separately funded. It now comes out of pupil premium, under targeted academic support.

Free school meals eligibility expands in September 2026. Every child in a household on Universal Credit becomes entitled to a free meal, which the government estimates will reach over half a million more children.

Free school meals then splits in two. Targeted free school meals keeps the £7,400 threshold. Expanded free school meals covers every family above it and applies to meals only. Only targeted free school meals counts towards Ever 6.

More children will eat a free meal, and no extra pupil premium funding follows them. Pupils already in the Ever 6 cohort keep their place for six years, so nothing changes immediately. From 2027 to 2028, as the current cohort ages out, your pupil premium numbers will start to narrow.

The eligibility trigger itself may change. In December 2025 the government said it intends to design a new model for targeting disadvantage funding, using household income data to allocate pupil premium directly rather than free school meals eligibility. No implementation date has been published.

For your three-year strategy, bear in mind that the cohort you plan for in 2027 will not be the cohort you are funded for today.

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

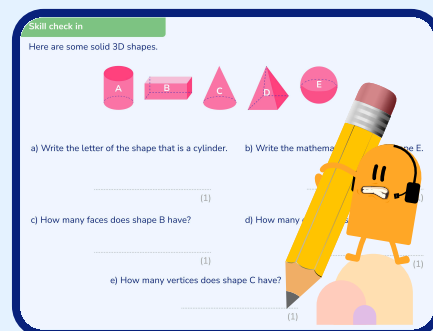
Identify student challenges

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.

Lessons begin with a diagnostic Skill Check In. Students who show secure understanding move straight to independent practice. Students who are not secure work through guided practice first, with scaffolding adapted to their misconception. Lessons can be ordered to address gaps, or into any order teachers see fit, for example 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 25/26 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.



With Skye, providing one-to-one support to whole cohorts and year groups is easy and efficient, with no impact on staff workload. We make sure the intervention runs with minimal changes to existing ways of working, and we provide full training for all staff in bitesize chunks. When you need to monitor impact, review the data in the on-demand progress reports.

- ✓ 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:



Some students were initially reluctant; a few said they didn't want to 'talk to a robot'. Over time, many of those students have become more comfortable with the format and are more willing to take part. That shift has been one of the highlights for me. Once students get past that initial hesitation, they tend to just get on with the learning.



Gareth Barratt
Key Stage 4 Director, Richard Rose Central Academy



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, for example one-to-one tutoring with Skye 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

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

Ofsted has inspected under a new framework since 10 November 2025. There is no longer an overall effectiveness grade. Instead, inspectors grade separate evaluation areas on a five-point scale, from Exceptional through Strong Standard, Expected Standard and Needs Attention to Urgent Improvement, with safeguarding judged separately as met or not met. Findings are published as a report card.

Inclusion runs through the framework, and disadvantaged students sit inside it alongside students with SEND and children known to social care. From September 2026, inspectors work to updated guidance on gathering evidence about disadvantaged students' attainment and progress, and a statistical model groups similar schools so that achievement can be compared fairly.

What that means in practice is that evidence about your disadvantaged students matters more than it did, not less.

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

- 1 Publish your strategy for narrowing the attainment gap on your website
- 2 Be able to tell inspectors what additional funding you received in each year
- 3 Be able to explain how it was spent, and how those spending decisions were made
- 4 Be able to show what difference it made to the learning and progress of eligible students

Governors are expected to show that they understand the importance of this spending, and that they have questioned senior leaders robustly about any variation in achievement between groups. Inspectors can call for an external review of a school's pupil premium spending if they identify concerns about provision and outcomes for disadvantaged students.

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 eight of the 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 show particularly high impacts on outcomes. Skye works through the strategies available for a given problem with each student, and asks deliberate questions to help them think about which strategy fits and how to apply it.



“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

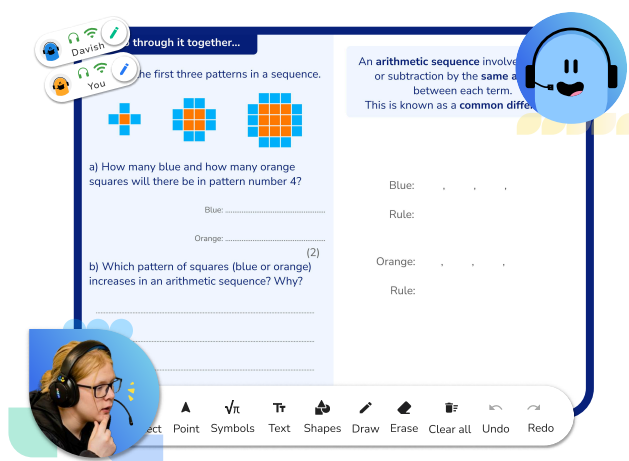
Feedback

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 students praise for 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 ways to close the maths attainment gap. We want the students who need it most to talk through key concepts and focus on the topics they struggle with, somewhere they are not afraid to ask questions or make mistakes.

Students work with Skye each week. Skye gives effective and empowering feedback and tailors each lesson to the student in front of it.

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.



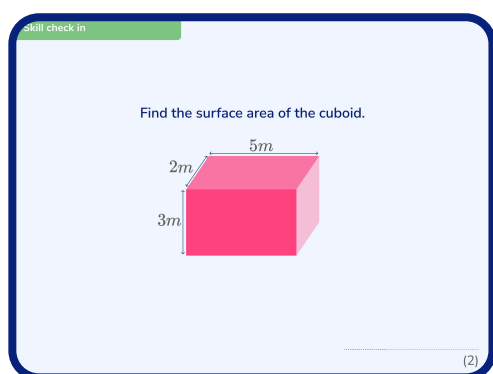
We currently run weekly after-school sessions with a group of Year 11 pupils. They log in from our IT room and complete personalised sessions with Skye while being supervised by a maths teacher. Attendance has been strong and pupils have taken to it quickly.



Nicola Caldwell
Deputy Headteacher, The Salesian Academy of St John Bosco

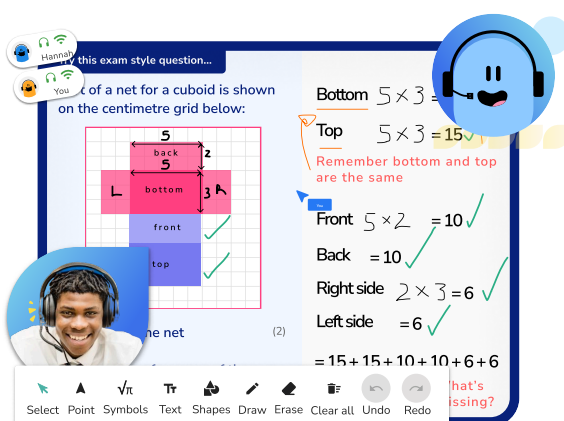


- ✓ Core components of successful one to one tuition include:
 - Accurately identifying the students that require additional support.
 - Understanding their learning gaps and selecting content appropriately.
 - Ensuring teachers are well-prepared for having high quality interactions with students, such 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.



Every Skye lesson, prompt and explanation is created by Third Space Learning's team of experienced maths teachers and pedagogy specialists:

- ✓ Students begin with a diagnostic question, the Skill Check In, and lessons are personalised to what it finds
- ✓ 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 session
- ✓ Lessons follow a mastery approach, with scaffolded teaching, effective questioning and carefully sequenced questions
- ✓ Students take an active role in their learning



When you look at how many students you could actually target [with traditional one-to-one tutoring] and the cost associated with that, it was just not cost effective for us. It was just too expensive, given the amount of students we would need across our trust.



Natalie Thompson
Academy Improvement Advisor for Maths and Numeracy, Fairfax MAT, West Midlands

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**

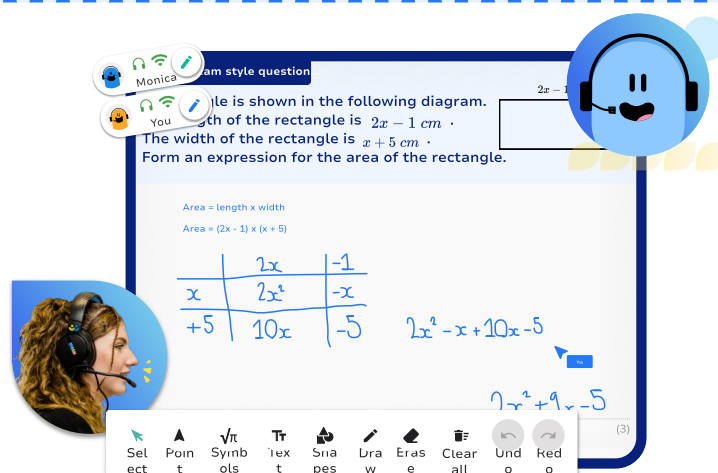
A collaborative (or cooperative) learning approach involves pupils working together in a group small enough to ensure that everyone participates. Students in the group may work on separate tasks contributing to a common overall outcome, or work together on a shared task

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 spoken AI tutoring encourages pupils to verbalise 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 increases access to additional learning in school for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Lessons are delivered in school during pre-booked slots, so students do not need to learn at home.

Schools choose their target students, often prioritising those eligible for pupil premium. Those students receive weekly one-to-one maths lessons from Skye, chosen to plug the gaps the diagnostic identifies, and aligned with the 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.

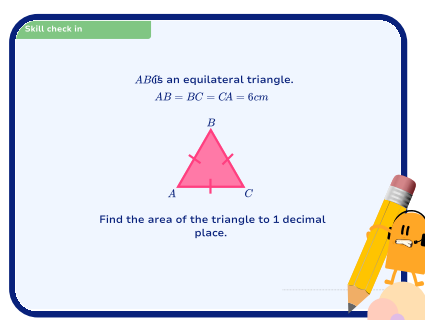
According to the EEF:

- ✓ 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.

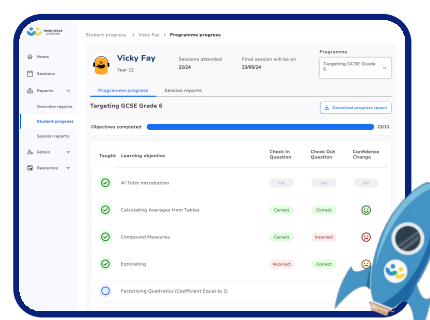


The Skill Check In diagnoses gaps, and Skill Check Out questions at the end of each lesson keep the picture of each student's gaps up to date. Teachers can log in and view the results.

Skill Check Out results are visible to teachers immediately after the session and contribute to cumulative progress reports. If a student does not demonstrate mastery, teachers can schedule a follow-up lesson on the same topic or flag it for classroom reinforcement.



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'd say the rollout has been uneven across all four schools. Two of them embraced it very quickly – maybe the schools actually in more challenging situations really, really embraced it."



Natalie Thompson
Academy Improvement Advisor for Maths and Numeracy,
Fairfax MAT

**Pupil Premium
success story**

Natalie Thompson is Academy Improvement Advisor for Maths and Numeracy at Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, four schools in the West Midlands. Three of them have 65% or more pupil premium. The trust had looked at one-to-one tutoring before and decided it was not affordable at the numbers they needed. When AI tutoring became an option, Natalie funded all four schools so every head of maths could try it without risk. Bournville, a small all-through school where 65% of pupils are disadvantaged, started with 15 Year 11 pupils. It now runs in Year 10.

 **Location:** West Midlands

Intervention student type:

- Year 11 and Year 10 pupil premium students
- GCSE



We wanted everyone to have that equity, to have that chance.



"There are just too many students for us to intervene with every single student individually."

It's not just Bournville. There are four schools in the Fairfax Multi-Academy Trust, three of them have 65% or more pupil premium. So it's actually a trust-wide issue. If you've only got one teacher trying to deliver an intervention, are they skilled enough to deliver it to all the different needs in the classroom. Only having one person feels like a bit of a drop in the ocean of how many students we can support.

"It was just too expensive, given the amount of students we would need across our trust."

When you look at how many students you could actually target with traditional one-to-one tutoring and the cost associated with that, it was just not cost effective for us. When I saw AI tutoring was an option I thought, oh this looks really interesting, because we knew it was going to be a fixed cost and that we could actually intervene with as many students as we could get into rooms at the time.

"We wanted everyone to have that equity, to have that chance."

We could support lots and lots of students instead of having to go, well that student gets some help, but we can't do that student – which felt really unfair that some students would get it and some wouldn't. I went out to my heads of maths and said the trust are gonna pay for this for your first year so you can have a go at it risk free.

"When we see the grade moves, it's the gap that is actually narrowing."

We know these are some of the highest attainment gaps between our non-PP and our PP students. It's not the cohort improvement, it's the gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged. When pupils get their diagnostic question wrong and then check out again 30 minutes later, we know it's 80% of students who are then getting the checkout question correct. Of 18 pupils who had intervention for more than 10 weeks, 9 improved their grade from the November mock to the March mock. And around 10 of our Year 10 pupils have started self-launching the lessons at home by themselves.

"The logistics is really the thing that needs to be thought about."

I'd say the rollout has been uneven across all four schools. Two of them embraced it very quickly. One of our schools had to take more time because they are packed to the rafters. Have you got someone who can sit with the students, have you got a space, laptops, computers, have you got the headsets ready to go? Sort out the logistics early.

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>



THIRD SPACE
LEARNING

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

Tutoring from our spoken AI maths tutor Skye gives schools an even more affordable option for every pupil.

- ✓ 90% cheaper than other tutoring providers
- ✓ Curriculum-aligned lessons designed by qualified teachers
- ✓ Discounts available for long-term bookings and MATs

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

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