Department for Education

National Tutoring Programme – Evaluation and Reflections

Research report

September 2024

Authors: Sarah Lynch, Eleanor Bradley, Katherine Aston, Gemma Schwendel and Pippa Lord: NFER

Government Social Research

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Benjamin Cordwell and Rushda Khandker at the DfE for their project management and guidance. Thanks also go to Kathryn Hurd and Katherine Stoodley at NFER for managing school engagement and survey administration. The authors are also grateful to Ben Styles for his comments on the draft report and to Vrinder Atwal for her administrative support. Finally, we would like to thank the school senior leaders who generously gave their time to take part in the research.

This research report was written before the new UK Government took office on 5 July 2024. As a result, the content may not reflect current Government policy.

Contents

List of figures 5

List of tables 6

Executive summary 7

- Participation in the NTP and its routes 8
- Pupils prioritised for the NTP 8
- Perceived impact of the NTP 8
- Overall satisfaction with the NTP 9
- Reasons for not participating in the NTP 9
- The general culture of tutoring in schools 10
- Other support for learning recovery 10
- The future of tutoring 11
- Recommendations 11

Introduction 13

- Background and context 13
- Aims of this evaluation 14
- Methodology 15
- Survey of senior leaders 15
- Interviews 17

Schools' participation in the NTP over its lifetime 17

- Reasons for engaging in the NTP 18
- Perceptions and experiences of routes 19
- Pupils prioritised for tutoring 24
- Enablers and barriers to pupil participation 26
- Perceived impact of the NTP 29
- Monitoring of NTP provision 33
- Overall satisfaction with the NTP 35

Reasons for not participating in the NTP 39

- Reasons for never participating in the NTP 39
- Reasons for ceasing involvement in the NTP 40

The culture of tutoring in schools 43

Implementation of non-NTP support for learning recovery 47
Tutoring and academic support before the Covid-19 pandemic 47
Other (non-NTP) tutoring 47
Other approaches to support learning recovery 49
Tutoring after the NTP 53
Reasons for delivering tutoring in the future 54
Reasons for not delivering tutoring in the future 55
Key findings and recommendations 58
How successful has the NTP been over its lifespan? 58
Why did schools choose not to participate in the NTP? 58
To what extent is tutoring part of daily provision in schools? 59
To what extent will tutoring be delivered in schools in the future? 60
Recommendations 61
Example stories 62
References 66
Appendix: Sample profiles 67
Survey profile 67
Interview profile, by phase and NTP participation 68

List of figures

Figure 1: Views on the Tuition Partner route 19

Figure 2: Views on the Academic Mentor route 21

Figure 3: Views on the School-Led Tutoring route 23

Figure 4: Views on pupil participation in the NTP 27

Figure 5: Views on the impact of the NTP on pupils 30

Figure 6: Processes for monitoring the quality of tutoring 33

Figure 7: Overall satisfaction with the NTP by phase 35

Figure 8: Overall satisfaction with the NTP by participation 36

Figure 9: Why schools decided to stop delivering the NTP, by phase 41

Figure 10: The culture of tutoring in schools 44

Figure 11: Likelihood of schools delivering tutoring in the future, with and without funding 54

List of tables

Table 1: Survey responses, by NTP participation 16

Table 2: Survey respondents' participation in NTP each year, by route 18

Table 3: Approaches to support learning recovery other than the NTP 49

Table 4: Focus of learning recovery 50

Executive summary

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP), launched in the 2020/21 academic year, provides primary and secondary schools with funding to spend on targeted academic support, delivered by tutors. The NTP has been an important part of the Government's Covid-19 recovery response, supporting schools to respond to the disruption to education caused by the pandemic. The Department for Education's (DfE) focus for the National Tutoring Programme (NTP) has turned towards the challenge of tackling the attainment gap more broadly and improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged pupils. There are 3 routes of tutoring support available for pupils via the NTP, which can be delivered in isolation or in combination:

- Tuition Partners (TPs): the TP route allows schools to build partnerships with tutoring organisations that have been quality assured
- Academic Mentors (AMs): these are salaried members of staff placed in schools who work alongside teachers to provide one-to-one and small group subject-specific tuition
- School-Led Tutoring (SLT), introduced in the second year of the programme: this route offers flexibility for schools to identify their own tutors (including their own staff)

For the academic year 2023/24, NTP funding can be used to pay for 50% of the total cost incurred by a school to deliver tutoring (subsidies were higher in previous years; 75% in 2021/22 and 60% in 2022/23). DfE recommended that schools use their pupil premium to fund the school's portion of the tuition cost.

The NTP was set up as a 4-year programme. The 2023/24 academic year is the fourth and final year of the NTP. DfE guidance suggests that schools use the final year to consider how they will deliver and fund tutoring in the future. The DfE aims for tutoring to continue within schools long term in order to provide targeted support for pupils. As the NTP entered its final year, the DfE commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake research to reflect on four years of the NTP and inform policies on tutoring in the future.

The research gathered data on the experiences of schools which have participated in the NTP in any of the 4 years, as well as those not participating (including some which had never participated and those which participated at some point then ceased involvement), via an online survey of 1,984 senior leaders, and interviews with a sub-sample of 28. The research also explored the intention to deliver tutoring in the future across all schools.

Participation in the NTP and its routes

Senior leaders highlighted the need for a programme which supported learning recovery after Covid-19 and therefore welcomed the NTP when it launched. Since its introduction in the second year of the NTP, SLT has been by far the most popular route among the sample (of our survey respondents 84% of those participating in the NTP in its fourth year were doing SLT, compared with 18% offering tutoring via a TP and 8% via an AM). SLT was favoured, mainly because of its flexibility and the existing relationships between tutors and pupils. Around 9 out of 10 leaders who had offered SLT tutoring said it was tailored to pupils' needs, was aligned to the curriculum, was of a high quality, and was having an impact on pupil attainment. Senior leaders were most satisfied with the quality of tutoring delivered through the SLT route (87%). SLT was most likely to be considered good value for money (65%).

Most leaders who had participated in the TP and/or AM routes were generally positive, but not to the extent as they were in relation to SLT. Most felt that the 2 routes were aligned to the curriculum (75% AM and 65% TP) and that they were tailored to pupil needs (74% AM, 64% TP). Two-thirds (66%) who had used AMs felt they were of high quality, compared with 53% who used TPs. Overall, views on the SLT route were most positive, followed by AM and then TP.

Most senior leaders felt that participating pupils had a positive experience from NTP tutoring sessions. Around three quarters agreed that pupils had engaged with the content of the tutoring (76%), had been able to access the content (76%) and that tutors had built positive relationships with pupils (74%). Similar proportions agreed that pupils found tutoring beneficial (72%) and that pupils had enjoyed the tutoring sessions (71%).

Pupils prioritised for the NTP

Most (81%) of senior leaders had prioritised pupils eligible for pupil premium funding for the NTP. Other pupils who were prioritised for the NTP included those who had fallen furthest behind with learning due to Covid-19 (68%), vulnerable pupils (52%) and pupils with SEND (51%). Less than half of senior leaders had prioritised other pupils for the NTP (for example, pupils with low school attendance, those in transitional year groups such as Year 6 or 11, pupils who were able and motivated to attend). More than three-quarters of senior leaders reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied that they had been able to provide tutoring to each of the pupil groups they had prioritised for tutoring.

Perceived impact of the NTP

Senior leaders perceived that the most significant impact of the NTP was on improving pupils' attainment and their self-confidence (61% agreed/strongly agreed). Over half of leaders also felt that the NTP was helping pupils to catch up with their peers (59%), was helping reduce the attainment gap (56%), was improving cognition and learning skills

(55%) and helping pupils' engagement in lessons (53%). Fewer, but still more than 40%, perceived the NTP to be improving pupils' communication and interaction skills, and supporting their social, emotional and mental health development. The NTP was perceived to be less effective for improving pupils' attendance in school (24% agreeing/strongly agreed). For all factors, a minority disagreed that the NTP had an impact.

Overall satisfaction with the NTP

Just over half (57%) of the 1713 senior leaders who had engaged with the NTP at some point over its lifespan reported satisfaction with the programme. A minority (16%) reported dissatisfaction with the NTP. The remaining respondents either did not answer the question (22%) or were unsure (4%). There was particular satisfaction with the SLT route. Those interviewed were satisfied by the perceived success of the programme and the perceived impact it had on pupils and on closing the attainment gap.

Any dissatisfaction amongst participating schools related to the funding (including reduction in subsidy rate) and reporting requirements placed on schools which were perceived to be complicated and onerous for leaders and school business managers. Some leaders felt that information about the amount of funding for each year could have been received earlier to assist them with their planning. Leaders would have preferred fewer funding restrictions.

Reasons for not participating in the NTP

Over two-fifths (43%) of senior leaders who responded to the survey were not using the NTP in the 2023/24 academic year. This included 29% of senior leaders who had participated in previous years, and 14% who had never participated.

Among the survey sample, the main reasons for never participating related to funding: a lack of available funding to top-up the subsidy (47%) or the funding allocation being too small to support sufficient tutoring (32%). However, these senior leaders also reported preferring non-NTP provision, through tutoring outside the NTP (26%) and/or other support for disadvantaged pupils (28%). Among those interviewed, some schools had not participated in the NTP in the first year as they thought their own staff would be the most effective tutors, which was not an option until SLT was introduced in the second year. They then did not re-visit the option of taking part. It is therefore likely that some non-participating schools delivered tutoring in the second and subsequent years of the NTP which would have been eligible for NTP funding (or could have been adapted to be eligible), but not claimed the NTP subsidy.

For those who previously participated, their main reasons for ceasing involvement related to NTP funding and administration. Almost two-thirds (69%) reported that the reduced subsidy rate for 2023/24 was a key reason for no longer participating. The administration

of NTP funding was another reason, including a high administrative burden for accessing funding (33%), difficulty in forward planning given the annual funding arrangements (33%), and burdensome reporting requirements (30%).

It was less likely for leaders to say they no longer participated because they preferred to offer non-tutoring support (20%), had difficulties sourcing suitable tutors (15%), or that the NTP was not improving pupil attainment (13%).

The general culture of tutoring in schools

All senior leaders were asked to select statements relating to tutoring culture that they agreed were occurring in their school, including if there is a positive tutoring culture in their school, if tutoring is part of daily provision, and if the school has a tutoring strategy.

It was more likely for senior leaders currently participating in the NTP to select each statement compared to those not participating, although in most cases still only around half, or less. Just under half of NTP participating schools reported that there was a positive culture of tutoring (47%) or that tutoring was part of the school's daily provision (46%). Less than a third (28%) had developed a tutoring strategy. Proportions were much lower in schools no longer participating in the NTP or which had never participated.

These findings suggest that challenges remain in fully embedding tutoring across schools, despite the government emphasis on this form of support over the last four years. Interviews suggested that the NTP had helped schools to enhance the culture and quality of tutoring compared with before Covid-19, because they had the funding to do so. There was concern, however, about the longevity and sustainability of that enhanced culture following the final year of NTP funding.

Other support for learning recovery

Some senior leaders who did not use NTP funding had developed their own tutoring provision during the lifetime of the NTP, some of which could have been eligible for NTP funds. For example, senior leaders reported that, in the first year of the NTP, they preferred to use their own staff to deliver tutoring, rather than external tutors. SLT was not an option until the second year, by which point some senior leaders had developed their own processes and did not re-visit the option to use their NTP funding to provide tutoring.

Senior leaders also reported other approaches to supporting learning recovery rather than tutoring, such as booster groups, other catch-up programmes, and interventions often aimed at small groups or individual pupils. This suggests that NTP tutoring is part of a broader culture of support.

The future of tutoring

Most senior leaders (64%) who responded to the survey said they would be likely/very likely to offer tutoring in the future, if ringfenced funding were to be available. However, if funding was not available, just 15% said they were likely/very likely to offer tutoring in the future.

Of those who said it was likely they would provide tutoring in future, with or without ringfenced funding, this was most often because they wanted to provide more disadvantaged pupils with individual or small group support, and they felt that tutoring would benefit pupils' academic outcomes. Among those interviewed, there was a belief that tutoring boosted pupils' progress, attainment and confidence.

For those who were unlikely to offer tutoring in the future, it was most often because of insufficient funding to deliver tutoring. Most senior leaders interviewed reported that without additional funding – both the government funding available specifically for tutoring and school budgets more broadly – it would not be sustainable for them to continue tutoring beyond the lifespan of the NTP because they cannot afford to pay for tutoring from core budgets. Some senior leaders also wanted more flexibility to design tutoring or other interventions which were different to what the NTP funding allowed. These findings suggest that the future of tutoring is heavily reliant on the availability of ringfenced funding and the flexibility of its use. Other than funding, staff capacity was raised as a barrier for some to the future provision of tutoring.

Recommendations

- DfE should explore funding options to allow tutoring to be embedded more securely in schools.
- Schools should be provided with more information on how to access funding to support tutoring/learning recovery (for example, charitable grants, which some schools had obtained successfully).
- DfE should also consider how they can encourage and support the long-term delivery of tutoring in schools in other ways. For example:
    - DfE should build and disseminate the evidence-base around best practice in tutoring - optimum tutoring dosage, session duration, frequency, mode of delivery (online versus in-person), how best to align sessions with the school curriculum and time of delivery (during the school day or outside of normal teaching hours).
    - Existing guidance on practical tips for the delivery of tutoring is available and should be further promoted to schools (for example, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2023a; (NFER, 2023b).

- DfE should share examples of how schools have ‘embedded’ sustainable tutoring into their daily provision, and how some have provided tutoring outside of the NTP funding or have reported they will find ways to do so in future.

Introduction

Background and context

The National Tutoring Programme (NTP), launched in the 2020/21 academic year, provides primary and secondary schools with funding to spend on targeted academic support, delivered by tutors. The NTP has been an important part of the Government's Covid-19 recovery response, supporting schools to respond to the disruption to education caused by the pandemic. DfE's focus for the NTP has turned towards the challenge of tackling the attainment gap more broadly and improving outcomes for the most disadvantaged pupils. There is a large body of evidence that small-group tuition is effective, particularly where it is targeted at pupils' specific needs. For example, the EEF (2021b) toolkit on small-group tuition, based on a review of existing evidence, show that it can be an effective intervention. Average impact of small- group tuition is said to be four additional months' progress in primary schools and two additional months' progress in secondary schools over the course of a year. There is evidence that tutoring can be particularly effective for disadvantaged pupils. Evidence from the evaluation of the second year of the NTP (Lucas et al., 2023) found that School-Led Tutoring (SLT – defined below) led to small improvements in Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 maths and English.

There are three routes of tutoring support available for pupils via the NTP, which can be delivered in isolation or in combination:

- Tuition Partners (TPs), in all four years of the programme: the TP route allows schools to build partnerships with tutoring organisations that have been quality assured.

- Academic Mentors (AMs), in all four years of the programme: these are salaried members of staff placed in schools who work alongside teachers to provide one-to-one and small group subject-specific tuition.

- School-Led Tutoring (SLT), introduced in the second year of the programme: this route offers flexibility for schools to identify their own tutors. These may be people recruited from their own staff, such as current classroom teachers or teaching assistants. Alternatively, retired, supply or returning teachers can provide tutoring.

For the academic year 2023/24, NTP funding could be used to pay for 50% of the total cost incurred by a school to deliver tutoring (subsidies were higher in previous years; 75% in 2021/22 and 60% in 2022/23). DfE recommended that schools use their pupil premium to fund the school's portion of the tuition cost.

Across the four years of the NTP, there has been a focus on targeting pupil premium (PP) pupils for tutoring, although schools could include other pupils if considered appropriate. For primary school pupils, tutoring could be given in mathematics, English

and science. For secondary school pupils, it could be provided in mathematics, English, science, humanities and modern foreign languages. Alternative tutoring interventions were available for pupils with SEND. It was recommended by DfE that tutoring was delivered in tutor-pupil ratio group sizes of 1:1 up to a maximum of 1:6. Based on the evidence (EEF, 2021a), between 12-15 hours of tuition was recommended to have meaningful impact. Tuition could be delivered in-person or online at an appropriate time to maximise attendance.

The 2023/24 academic year is the fourth and final year of the NTP. The government guidance (DfE, 2024) suggests that schools use the final year to consider how they will deliver and fund tutoring in the future. The DfE aims for tutoring to continue within schools long term in order to provide targeted support for pupils. As the NTP entered its fourth and final year in 2023/24, the DfE commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) to undertake research to reflect on 4 years of the NTP and inform policies on tutoring in the future.

Aims of this evaluation

This research has explored schools' experiences over the four-year lifespan of the NTP. It has gathered data on the experiences of schools which have participated in the NTP in any of the four years, as well as schools not participating (including those which have never participated and those which participated at some point then ceased involvement). The research has also explored the intention to deliver tutoring in the future across all schools. More specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

For participating schools:

- How successful has the implementation of the NTP been overall across its lifespan?
- What are senior leaders' perceptions of the different routes of the NTP?
- To what extent have schools been able to support pupils most vulnerable to missed learning (including disadvantaged pupils, those who had fallen furthest behind during Covid-19, pupils with SEND, and pupils with poor school attendance)? What have been the barriers and enablers to supporting vulnerable pupils?
- Have schools been able to access quality tutors? How are schools monitoring the quality of tutoring?
- What are senior leaders' perceptions of the most effective models of tutoring delivery and why?

For non-participating schools:

- What were the key factors schools considered when choosing not to take part in the NTP?

- Did schools take part in the NTP in previous years then stop participating? If so, why?
- Were there any barriers which prevented them from taking part or continuing with the NTP?

For all schools:

- To what extent is tutoring (NTP tutoring or otherwise) part of daily provision in schools? How can this be sustained long-term? What are the barriers and enablers?
- What other interventions have schools offered to pupils to support missed learning, other than the NTP? Which were perceived to have most impact and why?
- To what extent will tutoring be delivered in schools in the future? What are the barriers and enablers?

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, comprising an online survey of school senior leaders to offer breadth of data collection, as well as a series of qualitative interviews with senior leaders to add more depth, as described below. The findings are therefore based on self-reported data from survey respondents and interviewees; the evaluation did not include analysing or reporting management information data which is published separately by DfE.

Survey of senior leaders

An online, mainly quantitative, survey of senior leaders was carried out in November to December 2023. The survey was sent to all schools in England listed in NFER's Register of Schools (this included primary, secondary, special schools and alternative provision settings). It was also sent to NFER's Teacher Voice survey panel, which included a nationally representative sample of schools. The survey covered the research questions listed above in the aims section, with respondents being routed to questions that related to their participation in the NTP.

To maximise response, all individual respondents were offered the opportunity to be entered to win one of five £200 prizes for their school (either a £200 Amazon voucher or national book token). Details of the achieved sample can be seen in Table 1. A total of 1,984 responses were received (1546 from primary schools, 315 from secondary schools, 81 from special schools, and 42 from other types of schools including alternative provision). The responding schools are broadly representative of types of schools in the sample (see Appendix A). More than half (57%) of the respondents were from schools currently participating in the NTP, while just under a third (29%) were from schools which had previously participated in the programme but were no longer involved. A notable minority of survey respondents (14%) had never participated in the NTP.

Table 1: Survey responses, by NTP participation

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Other	Total
Currently using/planning to use NTP this academic year and this is the first time the school has used it	30 (2%)	5 (2%)	1 (1%)	1 (2%)	**37 (2%)**
Currently using/planning to use NTP this academic year and school has used it previously	789 (51%)	239 (76%)	44 (54%)	21 (50%)	**1093 (55%)**
Previously used the NTP but are not using/do not plan to use it this academic year	502 (32%)	58 (18%)	13 (16%)	10 (24%)	**583 (29%)**
Never used the NTP	225 (15%)	13 (4%)	23 (28%)	10 (24%)	**271 (14%)**
Total	**1546 (100%)**	**315 (100%)**	**81 (100%)**	**42 (100%)**	**1984**

Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey

The data collected from the surveys is presented in accompanying Excel data tables. Throughout the text in this report, the relevant survey and question numbers are indicated so that the corresponding table(s) can be found in the data tables. Sometimes in the report and in charts categories are grouped (for example, strongly agree and agree) which means there might be round errors when comparing with figures in the tables. For key questions (if the number of respondents was sufficient), cross-tabulations were carried out by school phase and/or NTP participation. Statistical significance tests were carried out for some key questions (as shown in the final data table tab) and any statistically significant differences between groups of schools are mentioned in the text.

Interviews

A series of 28 semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of senior leaders took place in December 2023 to February 2024. These included 12 currently participating in the NTP, 8 previous NTP participants, and 8 who had never participated. See Appendix A for a breakdown by phase. Interviews were recorded (following agreement), summarised and imported into the MAXQDA qualitative analysis software for thematic analysis across school types (phase and NTP participation).

Schools' participation in the NTP over its lifetime

This section presents the findings on participation in the NTP among the survey sample over the lifetime of the programme, from the 2020/21 academic year when the NTP was introduced, to the current academic year, 2023/24. The section includes findings from senior leaders who reported that they were participating in the NTP this year and the retrospective views of leaders who had previously participated in the NTP. Findings are presented on senior leaders' perception of the NTP routes and the decision making which led to their patterns of engagement. The pupils who have received tutoring, the perceived impact and how tutoring provision has been monitored are also reported.

[Survey Q1] Over half (57%) of senior leaders who responded to the survey were participating in the NTP in its fourth year. Overall, 55% of respondents had done so in previous years. Just 2% were participating in the NTP for the first time. Among the responding sample, 78% of secondary schools reported participating in the NTP in 2023/24, compared to 53% of primary schools.

[Survey Q2] Each year, schools could participate in more than one route of the NTP. In Year 1, schools had the option of using a Tuition Partner (TP) or Academic Mentor (AM). From Year 2 onwards, schools could also opt to deliver School-Led Tutoring (SLT). Participation by route in each NTP year is shown in Table 2 below. In the first year of the NTP, the TP route appeared more popular amongst survey respondents (39%) compared to the AM route (14%). Over half (51%) reported that they had participated in the first year but were unsure of which routes they engaged with. Overall, amongst the survey respondents, participation in the NTP peaked in its second year (2021/22), decreasing in the third and fourth years of the programme. While reported participation in the TP and AM routes steadily declined over the course of the NTP, since the introduction of the SLT route in the second year of the NTP, this has been by far the most popular route, with 75% of responding schools delivering this route in 2021/22, increasing to 83% and 84% in the third and fourth years respectively.

Table 2: Survey respondents' participation in NTP each year, by route

Route	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Tuition Partners	368 (39%)	363 (26%)	307 (23%)	185 (18%)
Academic Mentors	136 (14%)	134 (10%)	138 (10%)	83 (8%)
School-Led Tutoring	-	1049 (75%)	1116 (83%)	855 (84%)
Participated but unsure of route(s)	482 (51%)	120 (9%)	44 (3%)	30 (3%)
Total participating	**952**	**1393**	**1345**	**1022**
Did not participate this year	596	155	203	26

Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey

Reasons for engaging in the NTP

The interviews with senior leaders who had participated in the NTP (n= 20) provided insight into their reasons for initially engaging with the programme. Many senior leaders reported that the availability of funding had been an incentive and they wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to support pupils' catch-up after Covid-19. Senior leaders liked that the funding prioritised targeted catch-up support for pupils most in need and allowed them to deliver similar support to that provided pre-NTP, such as booster groups or revision sessions, but on a larger scale. They also liked that the funding gave them the additional capacity to do this through enabling them to employ additional teachers or external tutors to deliver this.

> Anybody that's giving me money to spend on the children, whether it's ringfenced or not, the children need to benefit from that opportunity.- *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Senior leaders highlighted the need for a programme which supported learning recovery after Covid-19 and therefore welcomed the NTP when it launched. They reported that initially, they provided tutoring to pupils who had fallen furthest behind with their learning during Covid-19, for example because they had not engaged with home learning. The pupils prioritised for tutoring, and how this changed over the course of the NTP, are covered later in this section.

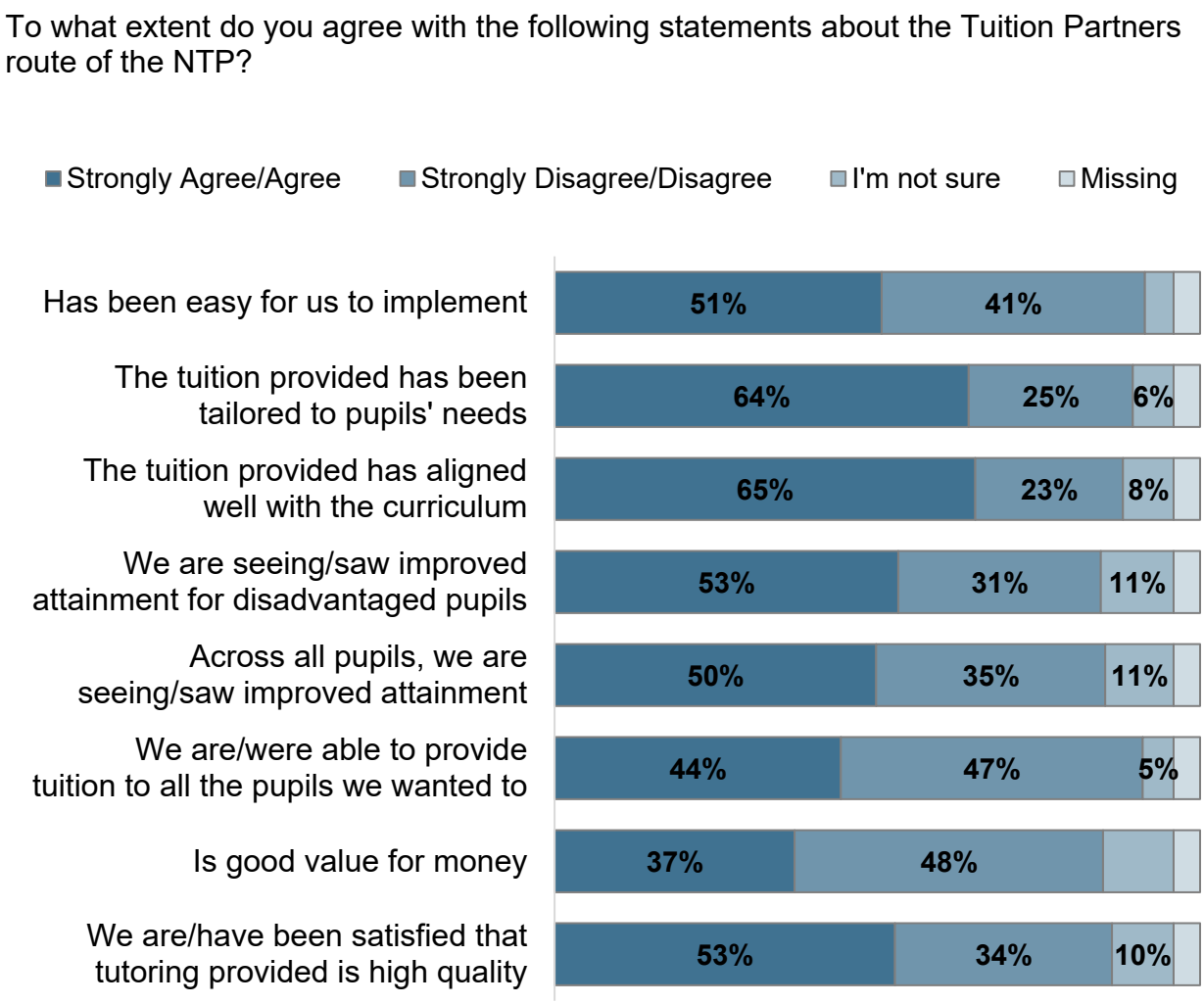
Perceptions and experiences of routes

Tuition Partners

[Survey Q6] Senior leaders (N = 586) who reported that they had participated in the TP route at any point in the NTP's life course were asked the extent to which they agreed with statements about the route. At least half of these senior leaders agreed or strongly agreed with most statements (

Figure **1**). Senior leaders appeared most positive with the alignment of TP tuition to the curriculum (65%) and the tailoring of tuition to pupils' needs (64%). Fewer felt able to provide TP tuition to all the pupils they wanted to (44%; 47% disagreed) or that the TP route was good value for money (37%; 48% disagreed).

Figure 1: Views on the Tuition Partner route



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the Tuition Partners route (N=586)
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

There were some differences (greater than 10 percentage points) in the level of senior leader agreement with the statements by phase, with primary senior leaders being more likely to agree that they: had seen improved attainment across all pupils receiving tuition through the TP route; were satisfied with the quality of tutoring delivered; and felt the TP route was good value for money.

Some senior leaders reported that they had opted for the TP route because they did not have the capacity in school to deliver tutoring themselves. Engaging with a TP allowed them to increase capacity to support disadvantaged pupils, without taking a member of staff out of the classroom, or away from delivering other interventions. Several senior leaders reported that they already had relationships with tutoring agencies pre-dating the NTP and because they were satisfied with the quality of the tuition they had previously received, had continued to engage with them once they became TPs. Similarly, senior leaders who had engaged with a TP in the first year of the NTP and had a positive experience reported that they had continued to engage with the same TP in subsequent years. They reported that over time, tutors had built relationships with pupils and staff, developed an understanding of pupils' needs and the continuity in tutor was beneficial for the pupils.

> The fact that I was able to source it through an agency that's near to us that we'd already used before for supply and they'd set up as an NTP partner, it fitted really well. We were very lucky that the person we got was willing to stay for the full two years so actually that was one of the draws that we got the same person. So the first year it was a bit of a let's see what this is all about and let's see if it works, is it working at all? And then, because we were able to keep the same person the second year, we said, well actually yes, because she knows the school, she knows our children, she knows the needs of our children, it kind of made sense. - *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

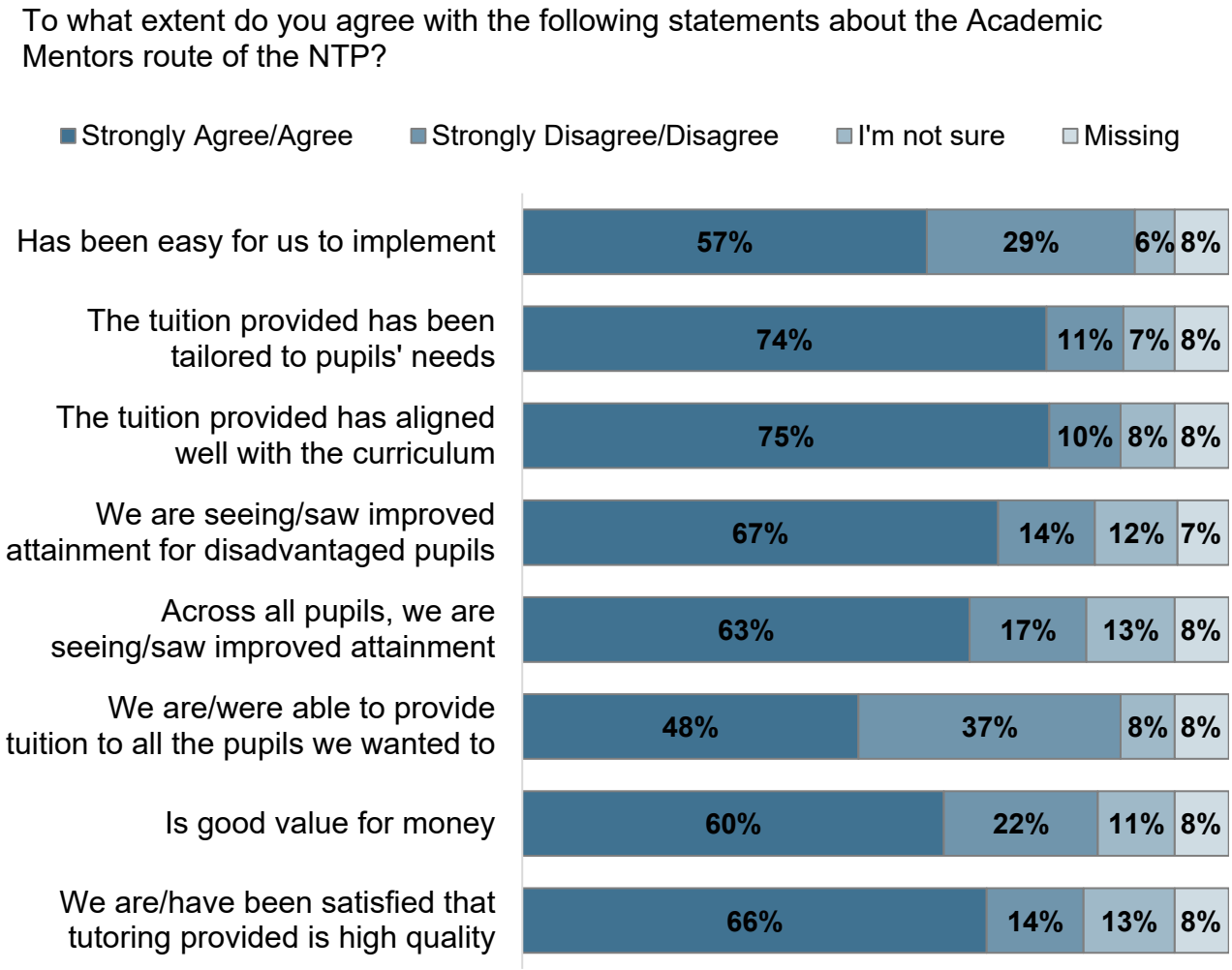
Among those interviewed, senior leaders who had never engaged in the TP route were largely driven by the reported negative experiences of other schools. Reasons for ending engagement with the TP route were driven by their own poor experiences, such as poor quality, tutors being unreliable yet schools still being charged for cancelled sessions and a perception that the tutoring had little or no impact on pupils. A small number of leaders reported that they tried to engage with TPs in the first year of the NTP, but did not receive any response, or that tutors put forward by TPs did not have the necessary skills and experience, for example to work with pupils with SEN, and therefore did not consider the route in subsequent years.

Academic Mentors

[Survey Q7] Senior leaders (N = 248) who reported that they had participated in the AM route at any point in the NTP's life course were asked their perceptions of the route. Based on the percentage of leaders who agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements, perception appeared more positive compared to the TP route. At least 60% of senior leaders agreed with most statements (

Figure **2**). Senior leaders appeared most positive with the alignment of the AM tutoring to the curriculum (75%) and the tailoring of the tuition to pupils' needs (74%). Just over three-fifths of senior leaders also agreed that they had seen improved attainment, both across all pupils (63%) and specifically for disadvantaged pupils (67%), and that the AM tutoring was of high quality (66%). Fewer felt able to provide tuition to all pupils the schools wanted to (48%; 37% disagreed).

Figure 2: Views on the Academic Mentor route



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the Academic Mentors route (N=248)
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

Among the senior leaders interviewed, a small number talked about how they had successfully engaged with an AM and attributed this success to the AM being integrated into phase or subject teams and being viewed by pupils much like another teacher. Several, however, reported that they had wanted to employ an AM, but had been unable to access any mentors, or that they had had very little impact.

> We thought the academic mentor would be a really good route to go down. Unfortunately, because of the quality and the access to academic mentors, we didn't pursue that any further. We did have one academic mentor, a language mentor...but it had very little impact. We wanted English and maths or science and humanities, but there was no access to [additional] academic mentors in that first year. - *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

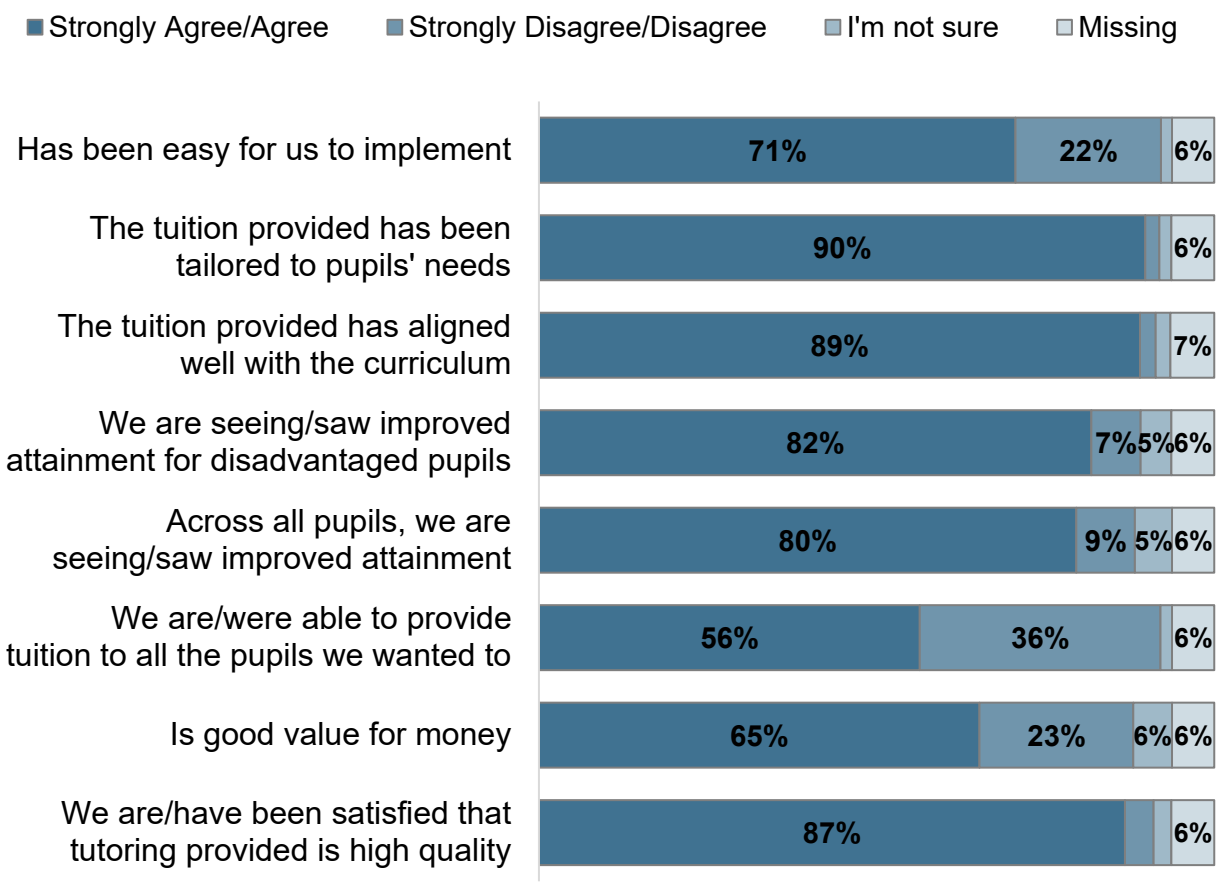
School-Led Tutoring

[Survey Q8] Senior leaders (N = 1291) who had participated in the SLT route also provided their perceptions. Views appeared more positive for the SLT route, compared to the TP and AM routes. Almost all senior leaders strongly agreed/agreed that the tuition provided had been: tailored to pupils' needs (90%); well aligned with the curriculum (89%); and was of a high quality (87%) (Figure 3). Many leaders also reported that the SLT route had led to improved attainment across all pupils (79%) and specifically for disadvantaged pupils (82%). Much like findings from the TP and AM routes, senior leaders were least likely to agree that they had been able to provide tuition to all the pupils they wanted to through the route (56%; 36% disagreed), suggesting that the scale at which schools could deliver tutoring was a challenge across all routes.

Overall, there was little difference in senior leaders' perceptions of the SLT route by school phase. However, more secondary than primary senior leaders agreed that the SLT route was good value for money.

Figure 3: Views on the School-Led Tutoring route

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about the School-Led Tutoring route of the NTP?



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the School-led Tutoring route (N=1291)
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

Amongst those interviewed, there was the feeling that SLT offered the greatest flexibility to provide pupils with tutoring bespoke to their needs and in the way which best suited them, for example in terms of timing and delivery format. Crucially, they also reported being able to tutor more pupils through the SLT route, largely due to it being the most cost-effective route due to not having to pay TP fees on top of tutor salaries.

Capacity in school was a key enabler of SLT. Senior leaders reported a range of ways they had created this capacity, including part-time teachers who wished to increase their hours, teachers returning from maternity leave looking for a part-time role, and colleagues who had left teaching, or had provided supply cover, and wished to return to the school in a tutoring capacity. Senior leaders reported a range of benefits of SLT, including: confidence in the quality of tutors' delivery; tutors' understanding of school processes and interventions and most importantly, having existing relationships with pupils and knowing their needs, which was seen to lead to higher pupil engagement and

better outcomes. Leaders reported that these benefits could not be assured if they engaged with tutors from the TP or AM routes, so committing funding to the SLT route was perceived to be lower risk.

> Once they changed it so that you could do in-school tutoring, that's really where we've picked it up and wanted to run with it because we felt that would be far more appropriate that our teachers who know how to teach to the highest level and who know the students and just logistically, having anyone outside of school involved is a nightmare. You've got to think about safeguarding and all these things and actually when it's our staff who we know are vetted and who know the kids, it works far, far better, and they know the curriculum that the kids are following and what they should be doing and what they need to work on, so we bought into it at that stage. – *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Pupils prioritised for tutoring

[Survey Q9] In line with NTP guidance (DfE, 2024), the majority (81%) of senior leaders who responded to the survey had prioritised pupils eligible for pupil premium funding (including those eligible for Free School Meals (FSM)) for the NTP. A large proportion had also prioritised pupils who had fallen furthest behind with learning due to Covid-19 (68%) and just over half had prioritised vulnerable pupils (52%) and pupils with SEND (51%). Less than half of senior leaders had prioritised other groups, such as pupils with low prior attainment, pupils with upcoming national assessments/exams or pupils expected to make the most progress from tuition. Leaders were least likely to cite requests from pupils or parents (7%), pupil motivation to attend tutoring (14%) or pupils' general school attendance (19%) as reasons for prioritising pupils.

[Survey Q10] The majority of senior leaders (over three-quarters) reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied they had been able to provide tutoring to each of the prioritised pupil groups.

The interview findings from senior leaders who had ever participated in the NTP largely aligned with findings from the survey. Leaders spoke of the disparate experiences that pupils had during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Pupils eligible for pupil premium funding and those who had fallen furthest behind during Covid were prioritised for tutoring, to support them to catch up with their peers. These groups of pupils continued to be prioritised throughout the course of the NTP. However, senior leaders also welcomed the opportunity to offer tutoring to other pupils they felt would benefit. This meant they could include all pupils whose learning had suffered and were identified as having gaps in their skills and knowledge, not just those who were disadvantaged, reflecting that many pupils returned from lockdown with a variety of academic and socio-emotional needs. Senior

leaders also welcomed being able to provide tutoring to high achieving pupils who could achieve greater depth in their SATs and achieve the higher GCSE grades.

> Initially, it was to get students who had big gaps...but we've been able to open it up to many more students so it's not always the disaffected and the disadvantaged, it could be for any reason. So it could be attendance, it could just be struggling with the concept. We always make sure around 50% to 60% of the students doing it are pupil premium, but that's not the only reason they get identified, and the buy-in has been fantastic. - *Secondary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

Interviewees reported that they had initially placed a lot of focus on Year 6 and Year 11 pupils to ensure they were prepared for SATs and GCSEs and, while these year groups have remained a priority, senior leaders reported that tutoring was taking place across all year groups where a need had been identified.

Primary senior leaders reported that in key stage 1, they had prioritised tutoring for pupils who required additional support in phonics and early reading to ensure they passed the phonics screening check and could access other areas of the curriculum. Similarly, the small number of special school senior leaders who participated in an interview reported prioritising tutoring on speech, language and communication skills as this is the foundation to accessing the curriculum and engaging in tutoring in other subjects.

> So all our year 1 and year 2 children were a priority and we focused specifically on phonics and speech language communication needs with those, because that's often where their biggest gaps are. And those gaps can underpin a lot of their behaviour challenges, because so much of the curriculum requires language and literacy. - *Special school senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

Senior leaders reported identifying pupils who required tutoring through the monitoring of progress and attainment data and conversations with class teachers, either informally or formally through pupil progress meetings, to gain their recommendations of which pupils would benefit from tutoring. They reported regularly tracking progress to monitor the impact of tutoring, such as through assessments and grading of pupils' work and comparing these scores with age-related expectations or GCSE target grades. If they perceived a pupil to have 'caught up', they reported there was flexibility to switch them out of the tutoring group with another pupil who needed the support.

Some senior leaders who had engaged in more than one NTP route reported prioritising pupils by route. For example, they had found TP tutoring to work better for maths, compared to literacy/English tutoring, which they found better for older pupils and for highly engaged, high achieving pupils who were motivated to log on to tutoring sessions at home. On the other hand, they had prioritised SLT and AM for literacy/English tutoring,

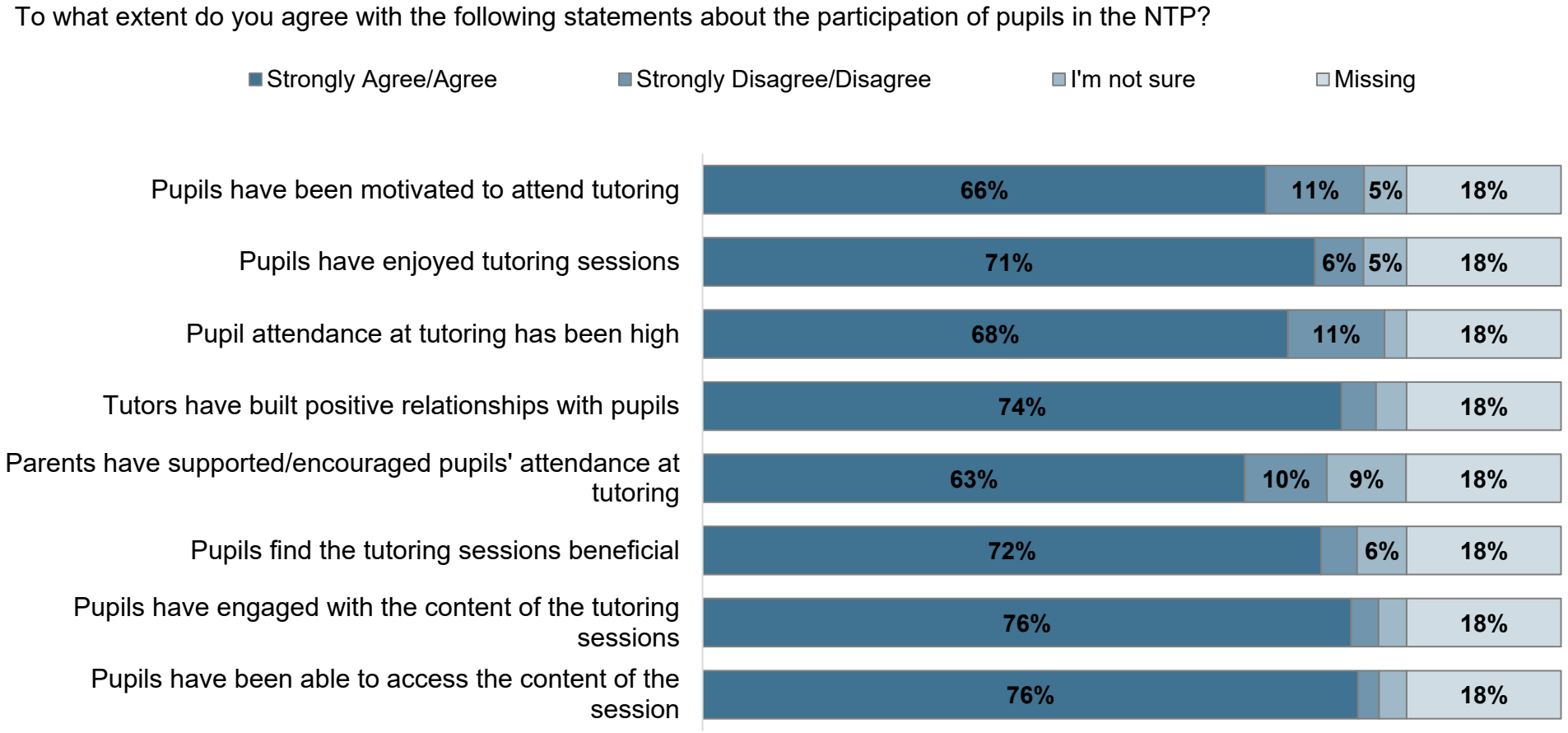
for younger pupils and those who tended to be less engaged – both of whom benefited from being tutored by a known adult who could ensure they attended the sessions.

Enablers and barriers to pupil participation

[Survey Q11] To ascertain enablers and barriers to pupil participation in the NTP, senior leaders were presented with a list of statements relating to factors which may have supported or hindered pupils' participation. Overall, senior leaders who had ever participated in the NTP appeared positive about pupil participation, with over 60% agreeing or strongly agreeing with each of the statements (Figure 4).

Leaders appeared to be particularly positive with the extent to which pupils had engaged with the content of the tutoring sessions and that pupils had been able to access this content (both 76%). Around three quarters (74%) of senior leaders also agreed that tutors had built positive relationships with pupils. The findings also suggest that pupils were positive about the tutoring, with 72% of senior leaders agreeing that pupils find tutoring beneficial and 71% agreed that pupils had enjoyed the tutoring sessions. Agreement was lowest with the statement relating to parents encouraging their child to attend tutoring, however 63% of senior leaders still agreed that this had happened. Survey findings suggest that overall, pupil attendance and motivation were not significant barriers to participation. There were no notable differences in senior leaders' responses by NTP route.

Figure 4: Views on pupil participation in the NTP



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the NTP (N=1713)
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

In line with findings from the survey, senior leaders who were interviewed reported that pupils' enjoying the tutoring and perceiving it to be beneficial to their progress were key enablers of participation in tutoring. Strong tutor-pupil relationships were also seen to enable participation because pupils were comfortable and looked forward to attending the sessions. This was seen to be a particular benefit of tutoring delivered through the AM or SLT routes.

However, in contrast to the survey findings, amongst the smaller interview sample, low attendance was the main barrier senior leaders faced. This was particularly an issue when tutoring took place online with a TP, after school, where pupils were expected to log on at home. Senior leaders reported the importance of pupil and parent buy-in for overcoming this. Whilst some had gained this, for example through sending letters home and asking pupils if they would like to receive tutoring, others had still faced challenges with attendance despite reminding pupils at the end of the school day and phone calls and emails to parents.

> When I initially put the programme out, there was (*sic*) two sessions in the evening, so it was 4pm till 5pm and 5pm till 6pm. So, it gave them time to get home from school and I actually gave them a choice, so they chose which night, which time they wanted to do. I'd literally be chasing them up on the playground at lunch and break and you know, they come out with all sorts of reasons, 'I forgot', 'I had badminton', 'I promise I'll go next week' and then it'd be the same. It was the hardest part of my job that I've ever done. The battle, and how much the tutoring sessions were costing because some nights, the tutors were getting paid for teaching one child over the two hours. - *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

One senior leader reported that they had anticipated low attendance in online tutoring sessions taking place after school and they were also conscious that not all pupils would have access to a device at home. Consequently, they had only delivered tutoring in person, at school, to ensure equal access and enable pupil participation. Another senior leader reported that they had overcome low attendance to tutoring sessions during the school day through including the session on pupils' timetable because this did not rely on pupils remembering to go to tutoring, or a tutor having to collect them. Despite these strategies, senior leaders highlighted that the pupils who most needed tutoring support were also those who were mostly likely to be absent from school and therefore miss sessions, for which tutors still needed to be paid.

Several senior leaders reported challenges with timetabling tutoring sessions during the school day, in a way which did not lead to pupils missing out on other core subjects, or subjects such as art, PE and music which they enjoyed. Senior leaders reported that the ideal way of overcoming this was to deliver tutoring after school, however not all had the capacity to do this. Senior leaders who had been able to deliver after school reported that

some pupils who they would have liked to receive tutoring did not attend, for example because they did not want to stay after school, or because they could not be collected later.

> That was another thing that was a bit of a headache because if you're taking children out of their English to go and do more maths, they're missing their English so fitting it in was definitely a struggle. I didn't go down the route of the online because most of our families haven't got access to online devices, so I did want it to be in school so that everybody got equal access to it. And also then you had children that didn't want to miss something like PE, because that might be the only lesson that they do well in, so you don't want to pull them out of that so we did try and circulate it so the children didn't always miss the same things, but it just makes it a bit more complex. - *Primary senior leader, previously engaged in the NTP*

Perceived impact of the NTP

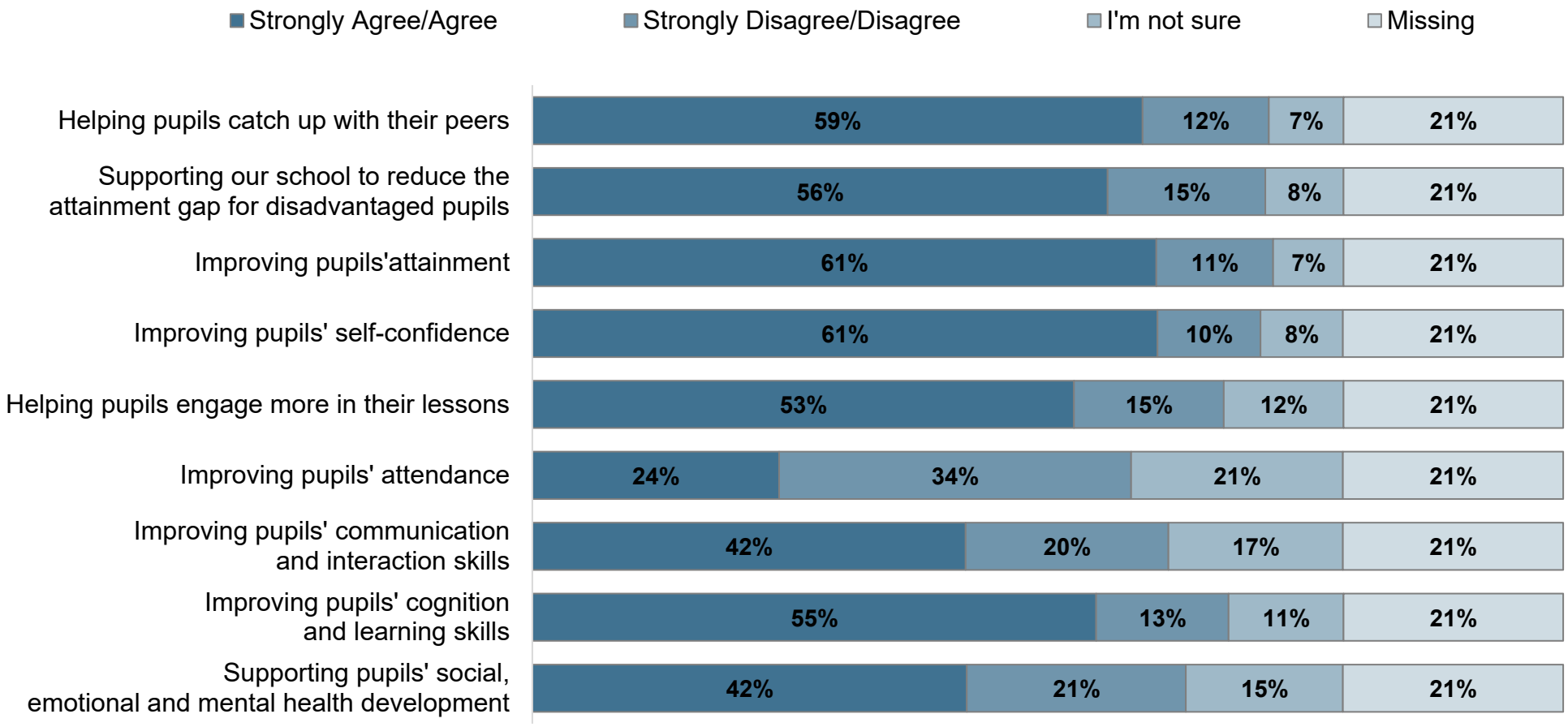
[Survey Q14] Between 50% and 60% of senior leaders who had ever participated in the NTP (N = 1713) were positive about the impact of the NTP on pupils across most of the factors they were presented with. These results were largely similar across primary and secondary schools, however a slightly larger proportion of primary leaders agreed/strongly agreed that the NTP was improving pupils' cognition and learning skills and supporting social, emotional and mental health development.

For all factors, a minority disagreed that the NTP had an impact (it was more likely for the question not to be answered than for a respondent to express disagreement). Senior leaders perceived the NTP to have had the greatest impact in improving pupils' attainment and their self-confidence (61% agreed/strongly agreed). Over half of leaders also felt that the NTP was helping pupils to catch up with their peers (59%), helping reduce the attainment gap (56%), improving cognition and learning skills (55%) and helping pupils' engagement in lessons (53%). Just over 40% also perceived the NTP to be improving pupils' communication and interaction skills, and supporting their social, emotional and mental health development. There was the perception that the NTP was least effective for improving pupils' attendance in school, with only 24% agreeing/strongly agreeing that they had recognised this to be an impact, however this may not be an expected outcome of the NTP.

These results were largely similar across primary and secondary schools, however a slightly larger proportion of primary leaders agreed/strongly agreed that the NTP was improving pupils' cognition and learning skills and supporting social, emotional and mental health development.

Figure 5: Views on the impact of the NTP on pupils

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the impact of the NTP on pupils?



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the NTP (N=1713)
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

In line with findings from the survey, most senior leaders interviewed who had ever participated in the NTP reported that it had positively impacted pupils' progress and attainment through supporting pupils to catch up with their peers and therefore narrow the attainment gap.

> We've seen academic progress. So we've seen those children start to close the gap and I think that's the key thing for us. The children we choose to be part of tutoring groups are those that have gaps somewhere in their learning or that, you know, they need to boost somewhere. So, for the majority of children, we're seeing those gaps closing and then starting to catch up more with the rest of their cohort. – *Primary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

Primary senior leaders reported increases in the percentage of pupils passing national tests such as the phonics screening and times tables check and compared their results to national averages. They also commented on the impact they had seen on their reading, writing and maths outcomes in SATs. Similarly, secondary senior leaders drew on the improvements they had seen for GCSE outcomes, with pupils improving by 0.5 to 2 grades between their mock exams and the exams they sat in the summer term.

> On average, there was a whole grade improvement which I was amazed it was so high. There were some students who improved two grades between their mock grade in January and their actual GCSE grade in June. We don't normally see a whole grade improvement, normally as a school it's about a fifth of a grade and some of those were our most disadvantaged students...so that's a really big impact. - *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Several senior leaders also commented on the positive impact tutoring had on pupils' confidence, self-esteem and resilience. In a small number of cases, senior leaders perceived tutoring to have a greater impact on pupils' confidence, compared to progress and attainment. Senior leaders fed back anecdotal evidence, such as that pupils were more confident asking tutors and teachers to explain content they did not initially understand in a different way, were engaging more in lessons and offering responses. Senior leaders also reported seeing improvements in pupils' self-perception of their own abilities.

> [Tutoring is] giving them the confidence that they can achieve the next level - I suppose it's social mobility we're talking about - those young people are able to see life beyond this school...They might be the first person in their household to go on to study A Levels or a Level 3 course at college, but as long as they've got that foundation of English and maths that facilitates that, it's a real boost to post-16 education. – *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Senior leaders largely attributed the impacts they had seen to the NTP funding which had allowed them to increase capacity to deliver bespoke, one-to-one and small group support by qualified teachers, or tutors they perceived to be of high quality. Several senior leaders reported that while they may have seen impact from their usual processes of teaching assistants delivering small group interventions, they felt that tutoring delivered by qualified teachers had accelerated progress and the impacts they had recognised were due to teachers' experience and pedagogical knowledge.

> It's always better impact when it is an experienced teacher just because of their subject knowledge and how they can respond so much more quickly to children's challenges. And you know, they get stuck on something in [tutoring] and the teacher can really quickly adapt to that or scaffold it in a different way that perhaps support staff might not be as skilful in doing. - *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

A small number of senior leaders commented on the wider school impacts they had recognised from engaging with the NTP. They reported that class teachers had benefitted from having the additional support (from tutors) to help pupils' learning recovery and meet their needs. One senior leader also perceived this additional capacity to positively impact on teachers' wellbeing:

> I think certainly for our maths and English departments, building that extra capacity into their daily experience has been good for wellbeing. We're a small school, therefore we have small departments, any capacity you can add to those departments in maths and English has been beneficial. – *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Some senior leaders also reported that delivering tutoring had been a development opportunity for teachers who tutored, commenting that tutoring practice is very different to whole class teaching. They reported that the impacts they had seen from tutoring had encouraged them to reflect on how they deliver one-to-one and small group support more broadly across school. Two senior leaders said they had started to consider how teachers may also implement such support in the classroom, to ensure impacts are sustained even if tutoring comes to an end. As one commented,

> They've been able to do a lot more around that [sensory needs and self-regulation] on a 1:1 basis, which they then looked at 'how can this also help within the classroom' so it's embedded and longer term? So, in that sense, we've also used it for school development and staff development of practice that you can use in your classroom, that we've seen outside the classroom. - *Special school senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

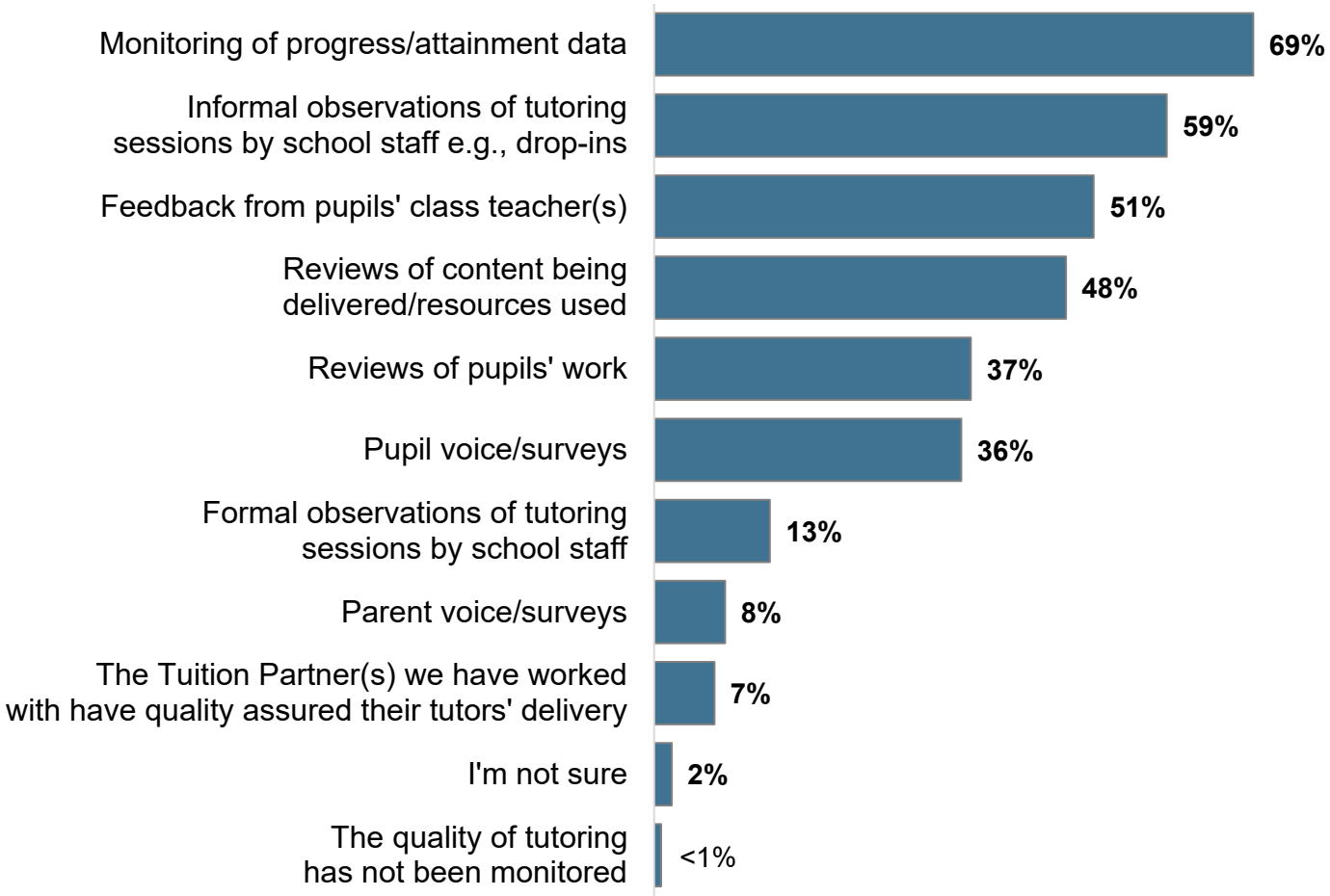
Monitoring of NTP provision

[Survey Q12] The survey asked senior leaders who had ever participated in the NTP (N = 1713) to indicate what steps they had taken to monitor the quality of tutoring. Almost 70% reported monitoring pupil progress and attainment data and almost 60% said that school staff had carried out informal observations of the sessions (Figure 6). Only a minority (13%) had carried out formal observations. Around half had gained feedback from pupils' class teachers and had reviewed the content and resources being used in tutoring sessions. Just over a third had reviewed pupils' work or collected feedback from pupils.

By phase, secondary senior leaders were more likely than primary leaders to report that they had collected pupil or parent feedback, however primary leaders were more likely to report carrying out reviews of pupils' work.

Figure 6: Processes for monitoring the quality of tutoring

How, if at all, has the quality of the NTP tutoring provided to your pupils been monitored?



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation survey
Respondents who have taken part in the NTP (N=1713)

Amongst those interviewed, there were examples of senior leaders who delivered the SLT route who were implementing the same monitoring processes as they would for class teachers, including observations, ‘book looks’ and ‘learning walks’. There were also examples of leaders who had observed TP tutors to quality assure delivery. Regardless of NTP route, it was common for pupils to complete assessments at the start and end of a tutoring block so the impact could be monitored, and for tutors to keep records of the topics they had covered with pupils in each session. Senior leaders reported having meetings with tutors and the pupils’ class teacher to discuss these reports, the evidence of impact that tutors had collected and how impacts were being transferred into lessons. Several senior leaders reported collecting feedback from pupils, for example through surveys, to ascertain whether they were enjoying tutoring and how they felt it was benefitting them.

Senior leaders were most satisfied with the quality of tutoring delivered through the SLT route (87% of leaders who had participated in SLT; also see section on perceptions of the SLT route, Figure 3). Senior leaders who were interviewed explained that the SLT route was delivered by their own experienced teachers, and they were therefore very confident in the quality of tutoring and did not see the need for formal monitoring.

> I'd approached them for a reason because I knew they were strong teachers and, you know, we monitor our teachers all the time. So I had no concerns over the quality of what we were delivering. Had we have used external partners that that might have been very different, but I was really secure in who was delivering and because we already had those relationships. – *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

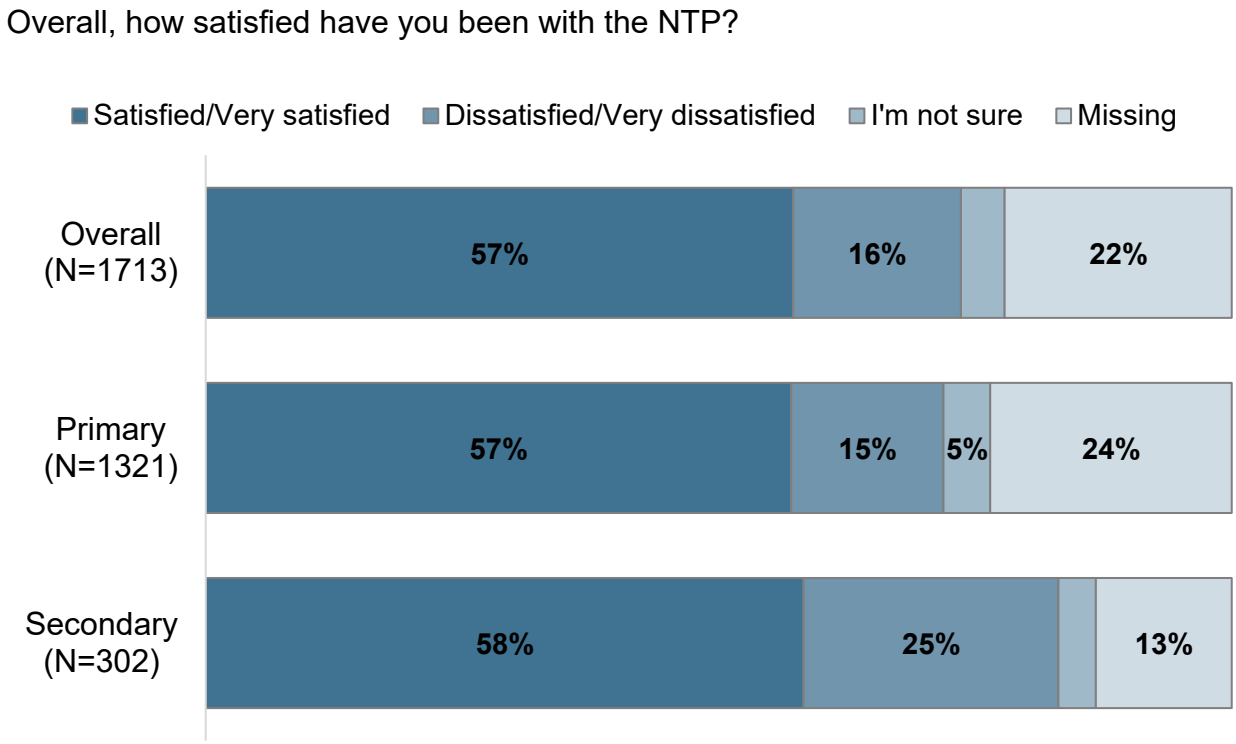
Amongst the interview sample, in cases where tutors were not pupils’ class teachers, regular dialogue between tutors and teachers was seen as essential for ensuring quality tutoring. Leaders reported that teachers had guided the content of tutoring sessions and had met with tutors to discuss pupils’ strengths and where they needed additional support to ensure the content delivered by tutors was bespoke to pupils’ needs. Senior leaders also highlighted the value in integrating tutors into departments, and the school as a whole, for example through including them in whole school CPD, departmental meetings and progress meetings to ensure they felt valued and part of the team. Leaders felt this helped to align tutors with the schools’ vision and meant they were committed to the pupils’ achievement.

Other factors which senior leaders felt aided the quality of tutors who were not class teachers included: having teaching experience; having secure subject knowledge, and knowledge of GCSE exam specifications when tutoring GCSE pupils; and understanding the needs and contexts of the pupils and school with which they were working.

Overall satisfaction with the NTP

[Survey Q20] Just over half (57%) of the 1713 senior leaders who had engaged with the NTP at some point over its life span reported satisfaction with the programme (Figure 7). Of those, the majority (44%) were satisfied and only a small proportion (13%) were very satisfied. A minority (16%) reported dissatisfaction with the NTP.

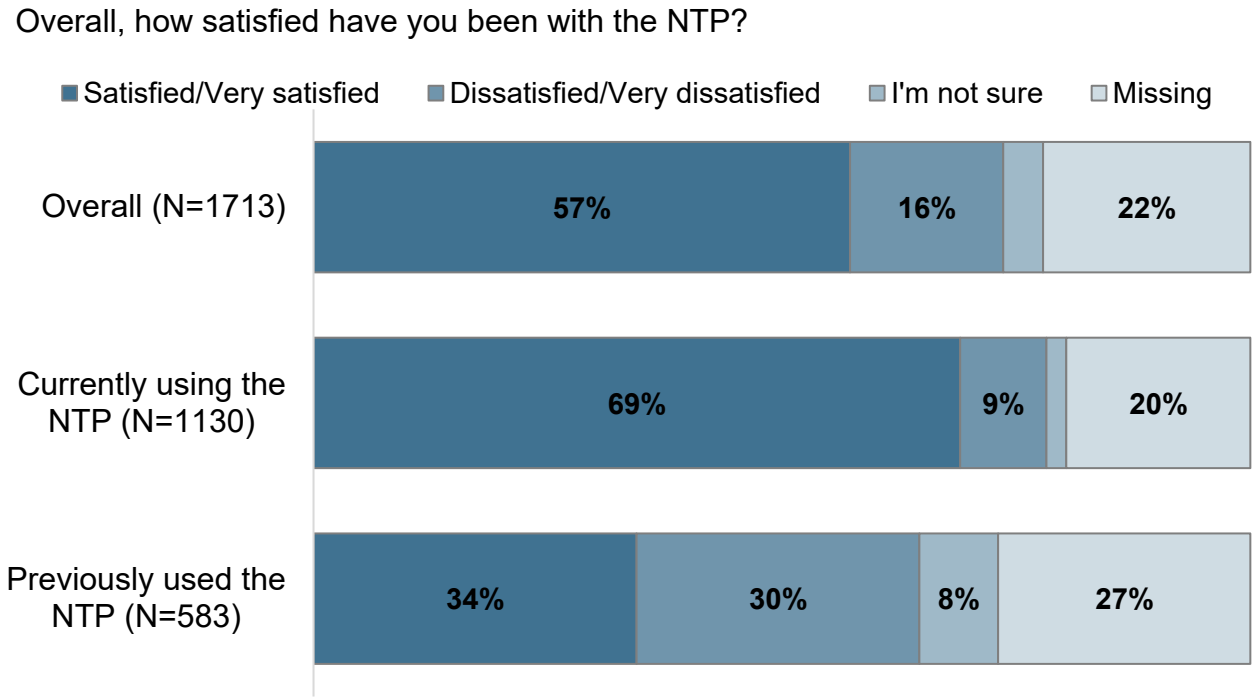
Figure 7: Overall satisfaction with the NTP by phase



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the NTP
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

There were some differences in the levels of satisfaction by phase and participation in the NTP. Across the phases, the percentage of senior leaders who reported that they were satisfied/very satisfied with the NTP was similar (primary 57%; secondary 58%; special 55%; other 59%). However, secondary leaders were more likely than primary leaders to report that they were dissatisfied with the NTP (25% compared to 15%).

Figure 8: Overall satisfaction with the NTP by participation



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
Respondents who have taken part in the NTP
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

Senior leaders who were participating in the NTP in the 2023/24 academic year were considerably more satisfied with the programme (69% satisfied/very satisfied) compared to senior leaders who had previously engaged with the NTP then ceased involvement (34% satisfied/very satisfied).

Among those interviewed, several senior leaders reported that the commitment to funding a programme to support catch-up following Covid-19 had been welcomed and was 'the right thing to do'. As discussed earlier, they were particularly satisfied with the SLT route. Similar to their reasons for becoming involved in the NTP, leaders were satisfied with the opportunity it had given them to build their capacity to offer more tailored, small group support.

Satisfaction with the NTP largely resulted from the perceived success of the programme and the perceived impact it had for pupils and with closing the attainment gap. For example, one secondary senior leader said: 'it was the best initiative that I've come across for helping disadvantaged young people'. Senior leaders drew on the evidence

previously discussed in this report around the perceived impacts for pupil in terms of progress, attainment and self-esteem.

Any dissatisfaction among interviewees related to the funding and reporting requirements placed on schools, which was perceived to be a complicated and onerous process for leaders and school business managers. Senior leaders spoke of their experiences of having to account for each hour of tutoring delivered and several leaders reported that despite this, they still had money reclaimed without understanding why.

> I guess the problem with the NTP, and it was a massive problem, it was just far far far too complicated and just, give schools the funds to be able to use them, don't ask schools to account for every single hour. It was dreadful and certainly at the beginning; it was too complicated to mean we would want to replace our existing way of working with something different. We've sent huge amounts of our NTP money back because we haven't spent it, and it galls me. We sent £29,000 back last year and it's because it was too difficult. Especially when you've got an online provider that you're trying and you just know the quality isn't there, why would we set that up for multiple children and spend how many hours, why would we do that? - *Secondary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

Despite the numerous comments from senior leaders that the intention behind the NTP was positive, there were barriers to its sustainability longer-term (also see section on the future of tutoring). Leaders acknowledged that the NTP was temporary but felt that information about the amount of funding for each year could have been timelier to assist them with their planning and arranging tutoring. For example, one senior leader reported that they would have continued with the NTP into the fourth year but the late announcement that the government subsidy rate would reduce to 50%, rather than the initially intended 25%, meant that the decision not to continue and how to reallocate the school funding had already been made. Several senior leaders also reported that the amount of funding they received, particularly from the second year of the NTP onwards, was not sufficient to meet the scale of pupil need. Leaders faced challenges in topping up the subsidy, citing other demands on school budgets such as increasing energy bills and the teachers' pay rise which was supported but is not fully funded.

Many senior leaders commented that they would have preferred for schools to receive the money without the restrictions. While they acknowledged the need for some criteria and accountability over the spending, there was a feeling that senior leaders should have been trusted to spend the money where they felt the greatest need was, for example on pastoral and mental health support to help pupils return to school after the lockdowns.

I think it was a good idea, but it just didn’t translate into school settings at all. It should have been, we’re putting this money aside for you to use in whichever way you choose, and I think as a school, we would have put that into counselling and pastoral and those facilities because once you’ve got the kids in the door, we can do all the other things in school. - *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Reasons for not participating in the NTP

[Survey Q1] Over two-fifths (43%) of senior leaders who responded to the survey were not using the NTP in the 2023/24 academic year. This included 14% of senior leaders who had never participated, as well as 29% who had participated in previous years. This chapter explores schools' reasons for not participating.

Reasons for never participating in the NTP

[Survey Q4] Senior leaders who had never participated in the NTP (n=271) were asked the main reasons for this (they were asked to select up to five reasons). The most commonly reported reasons related to funding: i.e. lacking funding to top-up the subsidy (47%) and the funding allocation being too small to support sufficient tutoring (32%). However, around a quarter of senior leaders also reported preferring non-NTP provision, through tutoring outside the NTP (26%) and/or other support for disadvantaged pupils (28%). Open responses to this question (n=46) most often related to the NTP not being suitable for its pupils (n=17, with 13 of these from infant schools and special schools).

Interviews with a sample of survey respondents who had never participated (n=8) showed that most senior leaders had considered whether to participate during the first year of the NTP (2020/21). There were two key reasons for not participating at that point.

Firstly, some schools thought their own staff would be the most effective tutors, which was not an option in the Year 1 NTP model.[1] Rather than joining the NTP, they introduced internal tutoring or small-group interventions to support learning recovery, commonly using other sources of catch-up funding such as Recovery Premium. As one leader commented:

> Although [NTP] was subsidised and that was an incentive, we wanted to use internal staff that were familiar with the children. We used catch-up recovery budget money to pay additional hours for existing members of staff instead…We needed class teachers who were best placed to plug the gaps for the children in their own classes, and knew what those gaps were…what they been learning in lessons, and maybe modelling that had already taken place in the classroom that they could then mirror....So that was the decision, that our own staff were best placed to do that. - *Primary senior leader, never participated in the NTP*

Secondly, some schools had already committed their budget and/or staff to other support strategies, which they prioritised over participating in the NTP. For example:

> Initially, I think it was three-quarters funded and that we would have to find that extra money. Realistically it's just a case of the budget is so tight, that even though it's only asking for a quarter of the amount that it was going to cost, I didn't have

[1] School-Led Tutoring was introduced as an option in the second year of the NTP (2021/22).

> that quarter in the first place to spend. We are quite lucky that we have been able to facilitate a teaching assistant in each class, but obviously that comes with a cost and it means that we are quite stretched on our budget. So it just means that we have to be careful where we spend those extras, and it was something that we felt our current interventions, would help us gain the ground that was lost, without us having to outlay the extra money. - *Primary senior leader, never participated in the NTP*

Generally, senior leaders indicated that after making the initial decision not to participate in NTP, they had not revisited that decision in subsequent years.

> That original decision was made and then we've just continued to do what we did…it hasn't been investigated since. - *Primary senior leader, never participated in the NTP*

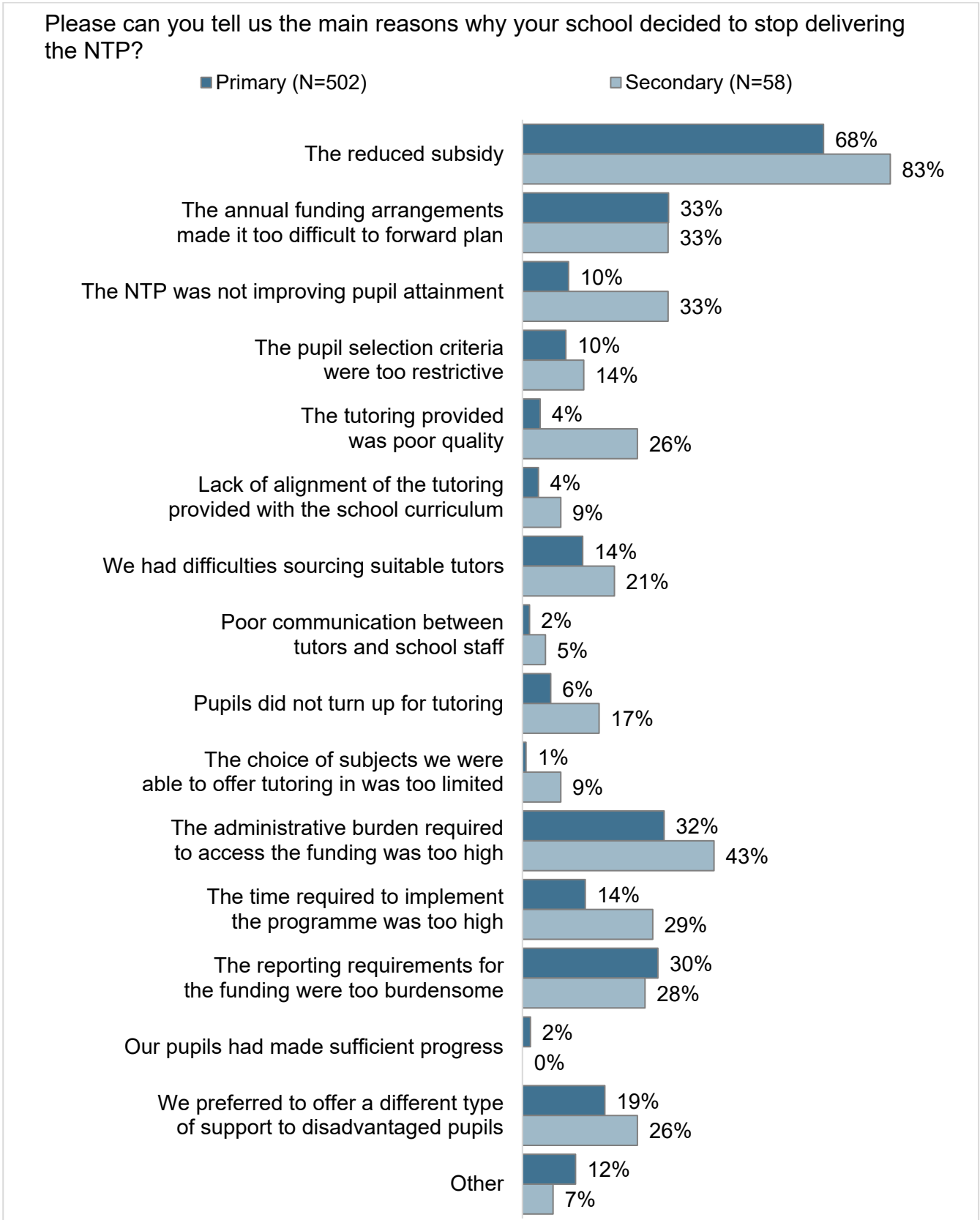
Given the changes in the NTP model, particularly the introduction of SLT, some never-participating schools may have delivered tutoring which would have been eligible for NTP funding (or could have been adapted to be eligible) but did not claim the NTP subsidy.

Reasons for ceasing involvement in the NTP

[Survey Q3] Senior leaders who were not participating in 2023/24, but had previously participated, were asked to select up to five main reasons for this decision. The most commonly reported reasons related to NTP funding and administration. For almost two-thirds of senior leaders (69%), the reduced subsidy for 2023/24 was a key reason for no longer participating. The administration of NTP funding was another commonly reported reason, including a high administrative burden for accessing funding (33%), difficulty in forward planning given the annual funding arrangements (33%), and burdensome reporting requirements (30%).

Fewer leaders reported reasons relating specifically to tutoring, for example, preferring to offer non-tutoring support (20%), difficulties sourcing suitable tutors (15%), or that tutoring was not improving pupil attainment (13%). However, secondary senior leaders more commonly reported leaving the NTP due to poor quality of tutoring (26% of secondary leaders, but only 4% of primary leaders) and/or because of a perception that tutoring did not improve attainment (33% of secondary leaders, 10% of primary leaders).

Figure 9: Why schools decided to stop delivering the NTP, by phase



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation survey
Respondents who previously used the NTP but are not using/do not plan to use it this academic year (N=583)

Open responses to this question (n=68) most often related to not being able to afford to deliver tutoring (n=29), tutoring provision not being suitable for pupil needs (n=13), or funding changes, restrictions or ‘clawback’ (n=12).

While issues relating to funding administration (annual approach to funding, administration to access funding, and reporting requirements) were a driver of non-participation in schools with previous NTP participation (30-33%), they were less important in schools which had never participated (differences of 13-20 percentage points).

Interviews with a sample of survey respondents who had previously participated in the NTP (n=8), reinforced the survey findings that funding was a key driver of no longer participating, along with the administrative burden.

There were two additional key themes from interviews with previously participating schools. First, some schools had stopped participating in the NTP in response to additional budget demands. As one senior leader commented:

> You know that there's too many things in the school budget that you have to pay for…finding that 50% is still hard and all schools are making really difficult decisions. Of course, we want to prioritise our children's progress, but I have to pay the electricity bill which has quadrupled. It's really difficult decisions. - *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

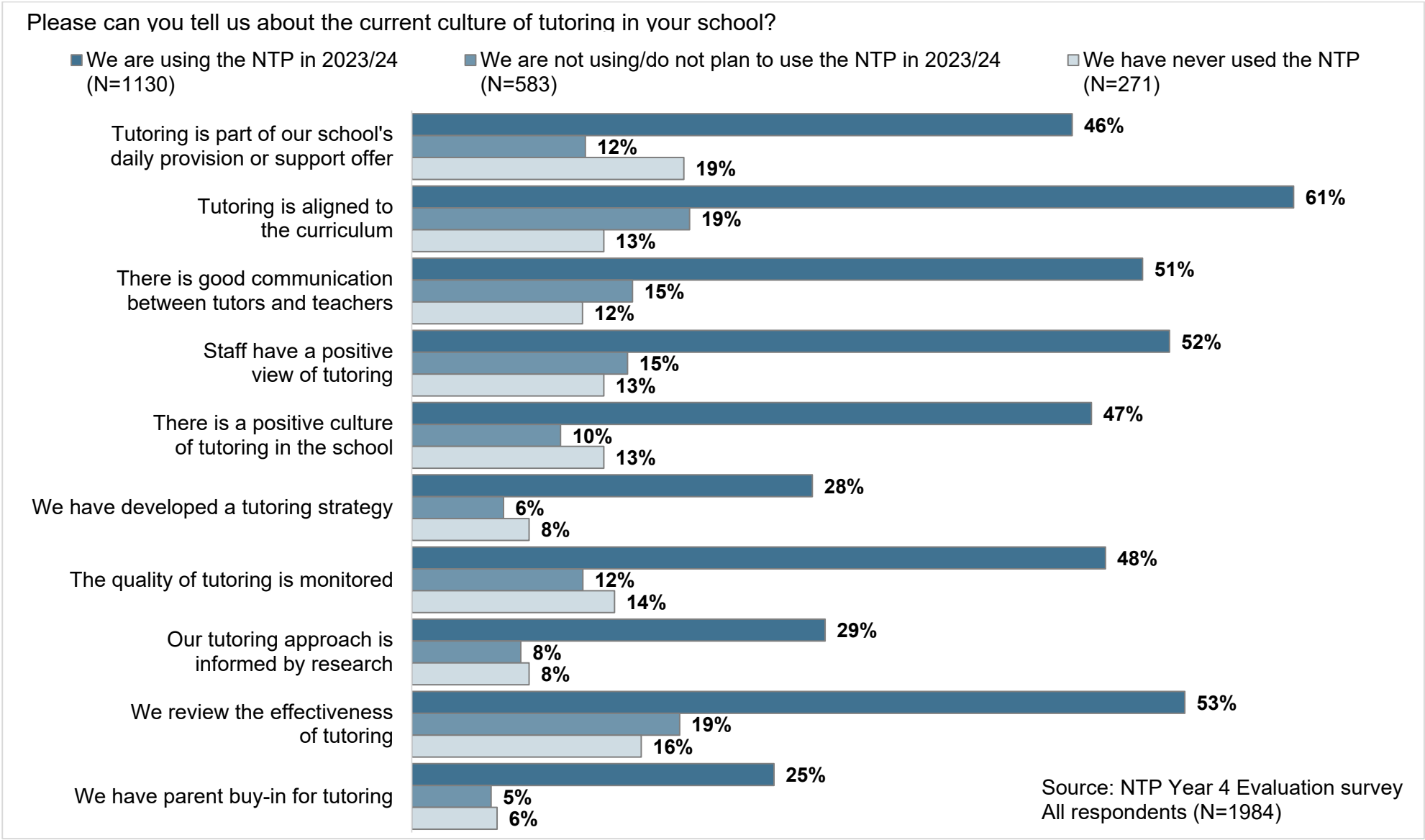
Second, senior leaders who weighed up continuing with the NTP with funding their own support for pupils decided that the NTP subsidy in 2023/24 was ‘not worth it’. Reasons for this included the decreased subsidy, the ‘hidden costs’ of funding administration, and wanting more ‘flexibility’ to design non-NTP tutoring and/or non-tutoring interventions (see section on other support).

> I would rather just pay for it and not have the extra level of burden and do it exactly as we want and not to have to account for it in the same way.
> - *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

The culture of tutoring in schools

[Survey Q13] To explore the current culture of tutoring in schools, all senior leaders were asked to select statements relating to tutoring culture that they agreed were occurring in their school. It might be expected that schools participating in the NTP have a more positive culture of tutoring, so the responses were explored according to NTP participation (Figure 10). It was more likely for senior leaders currently participating in the NTP to select each statement, although in most cases still only around half, or less. Just under half of NTP participating schools reported that there was a positive culture of tutoring (47%) or that tutoring was part of the school's daily provision (46%). Less than a third (28%) had developed a tutoring strategy. Proportions were much lower in schools no longer participating (in Figure 10, those not planning on using the NTP in 2023/24) in the NTP or which had never used the NTP. Those who had participated in the NTP previously but were no longer doing so were least likely to say tutoring was part of their daily offer, that there was a positive culture of tutoring, or that they had a tutoring strategy.

Figure 10: The culture of tutoring in schools



Across all senior leaders surveyed (not just NTP participants), secondary senior leaders were significantly more likely than primary leaders to report that tutoring is part of daily provision (41% and 30%) and that they had developed a tutoring strategy (36% and 16%).

The findings overall show that there are still challenges faced across all types of schools in fully embedding tutoring, despite the government emphasis on this form of support over the last four years. Interviews with senior leaders helped to explore the reasons for this. They suggested that the NTP funding had helped schools to enhance the culture and quality of tutoring compared with before Covid-19, because they had the funding to do so. There was concern, however, about the longevity and sustainability of that enhanced culture without continued government funding for tutoring (see an example story taken from the interviews later in the report). Comments from senior leaders included:

> Tutoring wasn't as high quality [before the NTP] as it is now with a qualified teacher delivering it, but it was ok...not as impactful as it is now. It is [now] part of the school culture. It's very positive, very much embedded. The only downside is that we can't secure it [funding] again, we don't know the longevity of it. – *Primary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

> It's [the NTP] actually supported us to change the culture of the school. I think a continued commitment to funding [is required]. If I was funding that purely myself, that would be challenging. I could do some of the things I want to do if I was to be operating that myself…[but] it will be on a much-reduced scale. If it gets diluted down then it will lose its value. - *Secondary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

It is worth noting in this context that, even with NTP funding, senior leaders have not always been able to provide the amount of tutoring they would like. The section above on satisfaction with the NTP reflects on this point, as did NFER's evaluation of the third year of the NTP (Lynch et al., 2023), which found that less than half of senior leaders who were surveyed felt the NTP funding allowed them to offer the amount of tutoring they wanted to provide in 2022/23. Tutoring was being delivered more than before Covid-19, but not as much as leaders would have liked. This is likely to have an impact on the creation of a positive culture of tutoring.

Note, though, that some senior leaders preferred to talk about a 'culture of support', emphasising that tutoring was part of a broader offer (see the section on other support).

Interviews revealed possible facilitators for developing a positive culture of tutoring (other than funding), including arranging the timing of tutoring to maximise attendance and avoiding the same lesson being missed each time, and attaching a positive label to it.

This suggests that understanding what models of tutoring are most effective could act as a facilitator for a positive culture of tutoring. There was a broad consensus among the small sample of interviewed senior leaders that the effectiveness of tutoring was underpinned by both teaching expertise and tutors' relationship with pupils, including

knowledge of pupils' needs. Many senior leaders believed that qualified teachers had a higher impact as tutors. While most leaders reported that tutoring had worked best with internal staff, who already had relationships with pupils, some found that long-term work with external tutors, who did not have competing responsibilities in school, had worked better for their school. For other delivery aspects, such as group size and session length, senior leaders felt that the ideal model varied by context, considering factors such as pupil age, focus and tutoring activities. For group size, leaders also weighed up the benefits of larger groups to reach more pupils, against a higher perceived impact of one-to-one or smaller groups. But there is not enough evidence of which model has most impact. A few of the senior leaders interviewed called for additional evidence, for example of the most impactful group size. Others wanted to learn more directly from other schools about that is working for them in terms of delivery of tutoring. Some wanted more information on funding sources (e.g. charitable grants). More evidence and understanding could help to instil a longer-term positive culture of tutoring.

Implementation of non-NTP support for learning recovery

Senior leaders were asked about their non-NTP support, including non-NTP funded tutoring and other types of other support. It is important to note that some senior leaders conceptualised tutoring and interventions as overlapping, rather than distinct. For example, small-group literacy work with a teaching assistant over the course of a term may have been framed as an 'intervention' before the Covid-19 pandemic but re-framed as 'tutoring' within the NTP.

Tutoring and academic support before the Covid-19 pandemic

Interviews with senior leaders (n = 28) suggest that sustained tutoring (which was defined as a programme of regular, targeted academic classes, which may be delivered 1:1 or in small groups) was rare before the Covid-19 pandemic. Where tutoring was in place, it was typically targeted at pupil premium pupils, and was delivered by external tutoring agencies.

Before 2020, the most common approach to supporting academic progress was through other interventions. In primary schools, these were most commonly focused on literacy and/or numeracy and delivered by teaching assistants. In secondary schools, literacy and numeracy interventions were typically delivered by teaching assistants, while subject-based interventions (e.g. boosters and revision sessions) were mainly delivered by teachers in those subjects. Across school phases, interventions were primarily targeted by learning need, rather than disadvantage, potentially limiting the impact of interventions on the attainment gap.

In interviews, senior leaders made a distinction between their NTP tutoring provision and previous models of academic support. For example, NTP tutoring was often delivered by qualified teachers, used smaller groups than some other support, and offered more regular, sustained support to pupils. This echoes previous findings on the characteristics of NTP tutoring (Lynch et al., 2023). These tutoring characteristics are associated with stronger impact on attainment (EEF, 2021b, 2021a).

Other (non-NTP) tutoring

[Survey Q4] For about a quarter (26%) of senior leaders who had never participated in the NTP, a key reason was preferring to offer non-NTP tutoring to disadvantaged pupils. Three examples from the interviews are described below, across the range of approaches to provision.

Primary School A

A range of tutoring support is delivered by internal staff:

- Looked after children receive 1:1 tuition with a qualified teacher from the school.
- Children with gaps in early reading receive 1:1 reading tuition before school, with a Learning Support Assistant, based on a personalised learning plan developed from literacy software.
- Children who are not making progress join an intervention/booster group, delivered by teaching assistants, teachers or senior leaders.

The school reports that tutoring has improved pupils' academic progress and confidence.

The school considered participating in the NTP in 2020/21, at which point a school-led tutoring model was ineligible for NTP funding. The school did not reconsider the decision in subsequent years. They had set up their own model of tutoring which they felt was working and did not want to change it. The school's tutoring would only be eligible for NTP funding if it were additional to staff's core role and responsibilities.

Primary School B

The school offers tutoring to pupils who are struggling with reading, writing or maths, based on prior data. Tutoring is delivered by qualified teachers, brought in to the school for tutoring. Pupils receive two one-hour sessions each week, in a group of up to three pupils. The school reports improved KS2 attainment in English and maths, and that pupils were more aware of their performance and how to improve, due to the additional weekly input from skilled teachers. A fuller description of tutoring delivered in this school can be found in the stories later in the report.

The school funds the full costs of tutoring.

Secondary School

Maths tuition is delivered to Year 10/11 pupils, targeted if they fall behind their expected progress. Tuition is in small groups (1:3), one lesson a week for a 12-week block, before a progress review to decide if the pupil needs further tutoring. The tutor is from a tutoring agency and can tutor c.90 pupils in each 12-week block. Based on school data, tutoring improves maths attainment for most participating pupils.

This provision was previously eligible to be funded by the NTP. It became ineligible for NTP funding in 2022/23 as the tutoring agency was not an approved NTP Tuition

Partner. The tutoring is currently funded by an external charitable grant, which covers the full tuition costs. As this provision was ineligible for NTP funding, the scope of tutoring reduced from four tutors covering English and maths, to one maths tutor.

Other approaches to support learning recovery

[Survey Q15, Q16] Senior leaders were asked about other approaches, other than the NTP, that their school had implemented to support learning recovery (Table 3) and the focus of other approaches (Table 4).

Schools were using multiple approaches to support learning recovery (Table 3), suggesting that NTP tutoring is part of a broader culture of support. The most common approaches involved working with pupils in small groups or one-to-one, including interventions for pupils with SEND. While parental engagement and support for online/home learning were least commonly used (used 'to a great or some extent' by 54% and 46% of senior leaders), these were still used by about half of senior leaders.

Secondary senior leaders were more likely to report they had employed parental engagement strategies (64% of secondary leaders, 53% of primary leaders); online/home learning support (67% of secondary leaders, 44% of primary leaders) and interventions specifically for SEND (83% of secondary leaders, 72% of primary leaders).

Table 3: Approaches to support learning recovery other than the NTP

Approach	% of schools using 'to a great' or 'to some extent'
Small group work	78%
Interventions specifically for pupils with SEND	73%
One-to-one support	72%
Staff redeployment	68%
Catch-up schemes, initiatives or programmes	62%
Revised curriculum	57%
Parental engagement strategies	54%
Online/home learning support	46%

Source: NTP Y4 evaluation survey, all respondents (n=1984)

Most schools reported several priorities for learning recovery activities outside of the NTP. These were most often academic catch-up in literacy/reading and maths (for each subject, 75% of senior leaders reported this 'to a great/some extent') and pupil wellbeing (70%). However, for all priorities asked about, more than two-fifths of senior leaders were

focusing on them ‘to a great/some extent’. For most priorities, a higher proportion of secondary senior leaders than primary senior leaders reported this to ‘a great/some extent’ (>10 percentage points).

Table 4: Focus of learning recovery

Focus	% of schools using ‘to a great’ or ‘to some extent’
Academic catch-up – literacy/reading	75%
Academic catch-up – maths	75%
Pupils’ wellbeing	70%
Pupils’ readiness for school transitions	64%
Pupils’ readiness for national assessments	62%
Pupils’ behaviour	55%
Pupils’ attendance	55%
Academic catch-up – other subjects	46%

Source: NTP Y4 evaluation survey, all respondents (n=1984)

[Survey Q3, Q4, Q5] For about a quarter of senior leaders who were not currently using the NTP, a key reason was wanting to offer a different type of support to disadvantaged pupils (20% of leaders who previously participated, 28% of leaders who had never participated). These leaders were asked to describe the support they offered. The most common type of support was specific interventions, for example booster groups, catch-up programmes and pre-teaching. These were delivered by existing staff, such as teachers or teaching assistants, either 1:1 or in small groups (n=108). These approaches sound similar to the support available via the NTP, although the scale, regularity, and number of sessions made available to pupils is not known, making it difficult to compare to NTP tutoring.

Other common forms of non-tutoring support (n = 25-34) were:

- Increasing teaching capacity, to enable additional teaching hours, smaller classes, more in-class support, or to cover teachers who were working with small groups. Schools achieved this by deploying senior leaders as teachers or employing additional teachers or subject specialists.
- Enhancing classroom teaching, for example supporting high quality teaching, inclusive or adaptive teaching, or heightened teacher focus on supporting disadvantaged pupils in the class.
- Broader non-academic support, for example social and emotional learning, counselling and wellbeing support, and cultural capital or enrichment approaches.

Senior leaders currently participating in the NTP reported in interviews that NTP tutoring was the most effective form of academic intervention they were offering. Their most common reasons for considering NTP tutoring more effective included that NTP had enabled schools to deliver tutoring at a larger scale, to focus on curriculum subjects, and to fund qualified teachers to deliver tutoring.

Senior leaders interviewed who were not currently participating in the NTP had a range of views. Some believed that their current support was more effective than NTP tutoring.

Three examples of non-NTP academic support are described below, across schools which had and had not participated in the NTP.

Secondary School (currently participating in NTP)

In addition to NTP tutoring, the school has a dedicated pupil premium team who support disadvantaged students and refer them for interventions, including 'life coaching' work with a former member of staff. The school also runs a youth club after school, offering peer mentoring, clubs and activities to promote engagement.

Primary School (never participated in NTP)

The school has a very low proportion of pupil premium pupils and a small allocation of NTP funding. Any tutoring provision would need to be 1:1 (with higher per-pupil costs) because pupils have varied year groups and attainment levels. Instead, the school has invested in teaching assistants for every class, and staff CPD. Staff have a heightened focus on pupil premium pupils (and other pupils as needed) within the classroom. This includes strategies such as marking work more frequently, prioritising pupils in questioning and 1:1 feedback, and pre-teaching. This is reported to have narrowed learning gaps.

The school has also enhanced their Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) provision in response to heightened SEND needs. Through this work, some pupils have closed their learning gaps in language and communication, while other pupils have had applications for Education and Health Care Plans submitted more quickly than in previous years.

Secondary School (previously participated in the NTP)

Revision and catch-up groups run at lunchtime or after school, targeted to pupils with lower progress, and most commonly for Year 11. This is in larger groups than tutoring

(e.g. 20 pupils). This provision has been in place since before the pandemic, and in 2021/22 and 2022/23 ran alongside NTP tutoring.

The school would have preferred to continue with NTP tutoring but did not participate in 2023/24 due to lower funding, high time costs for NTP administration, and lack of staff interest in continuing to tutor. The senior leader thinks NTP tutoring is likely to be more effective, due to the targeted, smaller groups. With NTP tutoring they saw large gains (about one grade) between mock exams and GCSE.

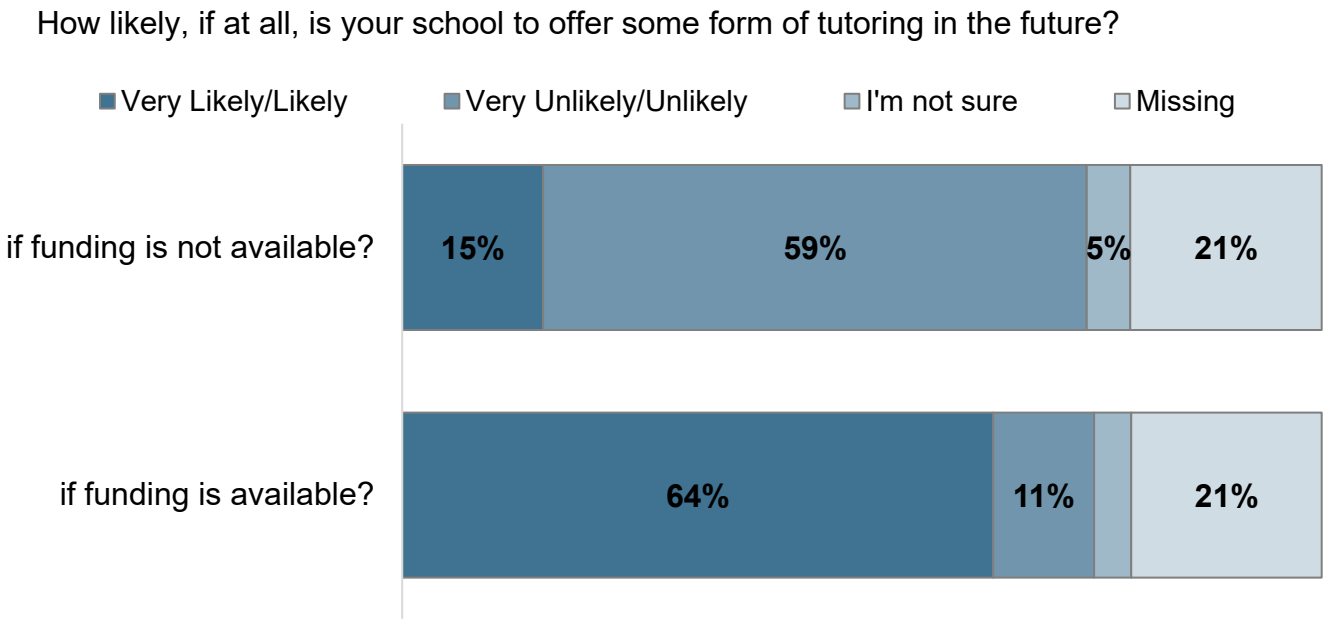
Tutoring after the NTP

[Survey Q17] The survey asked all senior leaders (N = 1984) how likely it would be that they would offer tutoring in the future if funding were available, and if it were not (Figure 11). Just under two-thirds (64%) said they would be likely/very likely to offer tutoring in the future if funding were to be available. However, if funding were not available, just 15% said they were likely/very likely to offer tutoring in the future. These findings suggest that the future of tutoring is heavily reliant on the availability of ringfenced government funding. Most senior leaders in schools which were participating in the NTP in the fourth year reported that they were topping up the 50% subsidy with pupil premium funding. Others with smaller pupil premium budgets reported that this funding was coming from wider school budgets. However, there will be no NTP subsidy after 2023/24, and many senior leaders interviewed said they would not be able to fund tutoring (at least not to the same scale) just with pupil premium or wider school budgets in the future due to pressures on budgets. NFER's Teacher Voice report (Moore and Lord, 2023), based on the views of a nationally representative sample of school leaders on the sustainability of tutoring, found that other priorities for pupil premium funding meant not all schools could use this money to provide tutoring.

By phase, secondary senior leaders were significantly more likely than primary leaders to report that they would be likely/very likely to continue deliver tutoring if funding were available (77% compared with 63% of primary schools), and if it were not (21% and 14% respectively).

There were also differences by NTP participation. Senior leaders in schools currently using the NTP were most likely to report that it would be very likely/likely for them to deliver tutoring if funding is available (76%), compared to leaders in schools who previously used the NTP (53%) and leaders in schools who had never used the NTP (43%). Senior leaders in schools currently using the NTP were also more likely to report delivering tutoring even if funding is not available (19%), compared to leaders in schools who previously used the NTP (10%) or had never used the NTP (11%).

Figure 11: Likelihood of schools delivering tutoring in the future, with and without funding



Source: NTP Year 4 Evaluation Survey
All respondents (N=1984)
Note: percentages less than 5% are not displayed

Reasons for delivering tutoring in the future

[Survey Q18] Senior leaders who reported that it was likely that they would continue to deliver tutoring were asked their reasons for this. The most common reason was that tutoring will allow schools to provide more disadvantaged pupils with individual or small group support (71%), followed by the perception that tutoring will benefit pupils' academic outcomes (67%). Just less than half felt that tutoring was a more effective method of improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils than other interventions (45%). Senior leaders also had the opportunity to provide an open response to the question. Responses were largely conditional, with senior leaders' comments relating to the factors which would enable them to deliver in the future, including: tutoring being fully funded; funding being unrestricted; the availability of high-quality tutors and the willingness and capacity of school-staff to deliver so SLT can continue. These conditions were also highlighted during the interviews, with leaders commenting that tutoring would only continue if there was the funding and capacity to maintain their current tutoring model.

> We've gone down from two tutors to one. We now only have one maths tutor in school. And that's because we found another pot of money, which is the [local education grants charity]. So it's where we can find these organisations that are prepared to put money into the school. We will always continue with tutoring. The one intervention that we know from our experience that works for students who

are pupil premium is the 1:1 or 1:3 tutoring and it's hugely beneficial for them. - *Secondary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Among interviewees, the most common reason for intending to deliver tutoring in the future was that they perceived it had so far boosted pupils' progress, attainment and confidence. Senior leaders had also identified the need for this style of support to continue to help close the attainment gap.

However, several interviewed senior leaders who wanted to continue with tutoring said that if the funding available decreases, they would have to reduce the scale of tutoring they provide. In the fourth year, most leaders who were interviewed had been able to maintain the number of pupils receiving tutoring. They had achieved this through engaging with SLT, which they reported was cheaper than employing a tutor through a TP, and where appropriate, by delivering tutoring to groups of up to six pupils, rather than one-to-one or paired tutoring. However, they said that their capacity to maintain the current scale of tutoring in the future would depend on availability of government funding. For example, some senior leaders said that they would only be able to offer tutoring to pupils most in need of extra academic support, whose parents could not afford to pay for tutoring themselves. Senior leaders in both primary and secondary schools reported that they may have to just focus support on the youngest year groups (i.e., Early Years, Year 1 and Year 7) to ensure that the gaps identified are resolved early. They also indicated that support in Years 6 and 11 such as booster groups for SATs and revision sessions for GCSEs would continue in a similar capacity to pre-NTP funding.

Reasons for not delivering tutoring in the future

[Survey Q19] Senior leaders who reported that it was unlikely that they would continue to deliver tutoring in the future were asked their reasons for this. The most common response was that schools would not have sufficient funding to deliver tutoring (77%).

Most senior leaders interviewed reported that without additional funding – both the government funding available specifically for tutoring and school budgets more broadly – it would not be sustainable for them to continue tutoring in the long-term because they cannot afford to pay tutors themselves.

> The biggest barrier is the money and that's just the reality, which is sad, really sad, because it [tutoring] could be really good. - *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

> It's showing itself to be a really effective way of closing the gap, of boosting children, giving a bit of extra support...We know it works and if we can carry on with it, we will if we can, if we have the funding, the money to do it, we will do it as best we can. - *Primary senior leader, currently participating in NTP*

Several leaders reported that in the past, their schools had monetary reserves and had this still been the case, they would have been able to continue funding tutoring themselves, without a government subsidy. However, due to current contextual factors such as rising energy bills and teacher pay rises which are supported but not fully funded, this is no longer a possibility.

Several senior leaders who were interviewed commented that, even if NTP funding continued in future years, they would not deliver NTP tutoring because of the lack of flexibility in how the funding could be used. Several also reported that while they appreciated the additional funding, ideally, they would have liked for schools to have been trusted to spend the money on the areas they felt best for their pupils. Several senior leaders said that it would have been more beneficial to be able to employ additional teachers on a permanent basis who could work intensively, over a long period of time, with pupils not working at age-related expectations, thus also reducing class sizes and allowing class teachers to deliver more targeted support to the rest of the pupils. Leaders across all phases found the funding too restrictive, reporting that instead they would have found it more beneficial to be able to spend the money on areas such as speech, language and communication, social-emotional development and mental health – areas which were particularly negatively impacted by the lockdowns.

In the interviews, several senior leaders also commented on the paperwork they had to complete each year to receive the funding, which they found complicated and time-consuming. Some senior leaders felt it was not worth the effort to complete this, particularly when they had money taken back, and as the funding available reduced.

> It's the complexity behind it, if you've got to fill in so much paperwork, it just doesn't seem worth it which again is wrong isn't it because it should be something that all children have entitlement to. - *Primary senior leader, previously participated in the NTP*

Through the survey, senior leaders also expressed concerns that they would not have sufficient capacity to deliver tutoring (33%) or have sufficient time and resource to manage tutoring (27%). Several senior leaders interviewed reported that they would not be continuing with tutoring due to lack of capacity. There was the concern that teachers and LSAs are already very stretched, and senior leaders did not feel it fair for them to continue delivering, particularly without receiving the additional pay which the funding had enabled. Senior leaders expressed concerns of burnout, as well as the recruitment and retention challenges which were apparent amongst LSAs as well as teachers.

Most senior leaders who were interviewed reported that, in the absence of government funded tutoring, they would revert to delivering interventions with LSAs, much like pre-NTP funding. However, there were concerns that the same rate of progress which had been made from teachers delivering tutoring sessions would not be maintained.

They [pupils] would potentially achieve less. Because I know from my data the impact of my tutoring groups, and I know that their outcomes improved by being in those groups. So potentially they would achieve less, they'd make less progress. They also would have potentially less interaction with their teachers on that smaller scale. I'll have to go back to my larger scale intervention programmes. - *Secondary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

Without this funding, students that require one-to-one to stand a chance of gain in the required exam results, because not everyone learns the same way in a classroom, will get left behind. The data is overwhelmingly positive for the extra tuition, and it must remain in place. - *Secondary senior leader, currently participating in the NTP*

Key findings and recommendations

This chapter draws together the key findings from the survey and interviews in relation to the key research questions. Recommendations are made to inform policies on tutoring in the future.

How successful has the NTP been over its lifespan?

Participating schools had seen the need to support pupils' learning needs following Covid-19 and were positive about the intentions of the NTP. Most senior leaders who had participated in the programme were satisfied with it overall. Those who had experienced any of the routes were generally positive about most aspects of them, but SLT was favoured, mainly because of its flexibility and the existing relationships between tutors and pupils. SLT was most likely to be seen as value for money, and there was most satisfaction that the tutoring provided via SLT was of high quality.

Senior leaders were prioritising pupils for tutoring who were most vulnerable to missed learning (particularly PP pupils and those who had fallen furthest behind during Covid-19). There was a perception across participating senior leaders that pupils were positive about tutoring and enjoyed the sessions. This was particularly facilitated by positive tutor-pupil relationships. Satisfaction amongst leaders was driven by a perception of impact, especially related to attainment, confidence, pupils catching up with their peers, and helping pupils to engage more in their lessons. Impact was driven by the NTP allowing schools to enhance their tutoring provision; the funding enabled them to provide bespoke one-to-one or small group support, often delivered by qualified teachers. Perceptions of impact should, however, be considered alongside the findings from the larger-scale quantitative evaluation of the impact of the programme on attainment (e.g., see Lucas et al., 2023).

Dissatisfaction with the NTP was related to funding (a perception it was not enough to meet pupil needs and/or that schools had to top-up to receive the funding) and what were deemed to be complicated reporting requirements. For some schools, staff capacity also appeared to be a facilitator or barrier to the successful implementation of the programme.

Why did schools choose not to participate in the NTP?

Schools which have never participated in the NTP were mostly influenced by funding – either by not having sufficient funds to top-up the subsidy or by not being allocated enough funding to be able to provide sufficient tutoring (likely due to the proportion of eligible pupils). For some, the decision was based around the NTP routes available in the first year of the programme, preferring to use their own staff to deliver support for pupils following the pandemic. By the time SLT was introduced they had processes in place and did not re-visit the possibility of being involved in the NTP, even though in some cases they would have been eligible for the subsidy.

Those who previously participated in the NTP but subsequently ceased their involvement were also influenced by funding arrangements – either the reduced subsidy and/or what they considered to be complicated and burdensome funding requirements.

Some senior leaders reported preferring non-NTP provision, either tutoring outside the NTP and/or other interventions for disadvantaged pupils

To what extent is tutoring part of daily provision in schools?

Findings suggest that the NTP funding had enabled schools to increase the scale and quality of small group or 1:1 academic support compared with what they had provided prior to the pandemic. However, fewer than half of NTP-participating schools said that they had a positive culture of tutoring and that it was part of everyday school life. Less than a third had a tutoring strategy. Evidence also suggests that around half of senior leaders who have used NTP funds have still felt unable to provide tutoring to as many pupils as they would have liked. Findings have highlighted that the scale of tutoring has declined each year with a reduction in subsidy. This emphasises that challenges remain in fully embedding tutoring across schools, despite the government emphasis on tutoring over the last four years. The findings suggest that funding (the reduced subsidy over the course of the programme and the discontinuation of funding in the future) had been the main factor diluting any embedded culture.

Note that some school leaders referred to a broader ‘culture of support’ within which tutoring sits alongside other interventions. Leaders were using multiple other approaches to support learning recovery outside of the NTP including other small group work and one-to-one support, other catch-up schemes or programmes, and curriculum revisions.

Some senior leaders referred to other non-NTP support that they offered that sounded very similar to NTP tutoring (including one-to-one and small group work), although the scale, regularity, and number of sessions made available to pupils is not known, making it difficult to compare to NTP tutoring.

There is a suggestion from the evidence that, without continued ringfenced funding, schools may revert back to pre-pandemic levels and models of tutoring which may not be as impactful. With this in mind, DfE should consider defining for schools what tutoring should look like following the programme in order to maximise its impact.

To what extent will tutoring be delivered in schools in the future?

The DfE wants tutoring to continue long term and advised schools to use the final year of the NTP to consider how they will deliver and fund tutoring in the future. For the academic year 2023/24, DfE recommended that schools topped-up the 50% subsidy with their pupil premium to fund. This is indeed what most senior leaders did. However, evidence suggests that other priorities for this funding may mean that not all schools can use this money to provide tutoring in the future, particularly the amount required once the subsidy ceases at the end of the 2023/24 academic year.

Yet there was still a perceived need for tutoring among school senior leaders and a belief that future tutoring would benefit pupils' academic outcomes and confidence. There is, therefore, a conflict between a perceived need and wanting to deliver tutoring and the reality of being able to do so without continued funding specifically for this purpose. Increased costs and pressures on school budgets meant that leaders were having to make careful decisions on how to spend their funds in future. Whilst there was high satisfaction with the NTP and a desire to continue, most schools will need financial support to do so.

For some, the lack of continued funding will be a barrier to the future provision of tutoring at all, while for others it may mean a highly scaled back and more targeted provision. Some senior leaders talked about reverting to old implementation approaches, including tutoring delivered by TAs rather than qualified teachers. This raises questions about the likelihood of diminished additionality, quality and impact. There was a concern that the rate of pupil progress would not be maintained without tutoring being provided. Overall, senior leaders wanted to deliver tutoring but could not always see how they would be able to longer-term without funding.

Recommendations

It is evident that the most likely way of sustaining tutoring in schools (at the additional level of provision and quality that the NTP enabled) is with continued funding. With pressures on school budgets, DfE should explore funding options to allow tutoring to be embedded more securely in schools.

Schools should be provided with more information on how to access funding to support tutoring/learning recovery (for example, charitable grants, which some schools had obtained successfully).

DfE should also consider how they can encourage and support the long-term delivery of tutoring in schools in other ways. For example, schools may be influenced by a deeper understanding of what models of tutoring are most effective in practice. DfE should look to build and disseminate the evidence-base around best practice in tutoring - optimum tutoring dosage, session duration, frequency, mode of delivery (online versus in-person), how best to align sessions with the school curriculum and time of delivery (during the school day or outside of normal teaching hours). In the absence of that level of evidence, existing guidance on practical tips for the delivery of tutoring is available and should be further promoted to schools (for example, EEF, 2021b, 2021a; National Foundation for Educational Research, 2023a, National Foundation for Educational Research, 2023b). DfE should also share examples of how schools have ‘embedded’ sustainable tutoring into the fabric of their daily provision, and how some have provided tutoring outside of the NTP funding or have reported they will find ways to do so in future.

Example stories

The sustainability of a culture of tutoring

Prior to Covid-19, this primary school provided tutoring run by LSAs, using accredited materials for various programmes they ran in school. After Covid-19, those LSAs were providing other targeted provision. The introduction of the NTP meant that the school could pay a qualified teacher to stay after school to deliver tutoring. The senior leader felt that 'there was a definite need when [pupils] came back [after Covid-19]'.

The NTP funding had helped to develop a culture of tutoring in the school. The senior leader commented, 'it is part of the school culture. It's very positive, it's very much embedded. We have had the same tutor for a long time now. Everyone knows why she is here and what she is doing. NTP definitely helped with this'.

The leader perceived that the NTP tutoring was of higher quality than that provided previously by LSAs and, as a result, was more impactful – 'she is an experienced, qualified teacher…you can see a marked difference by who is running [the tutoring sessions]'. They reported that 'the culture has changed in that way – we don't just assign someone to deliver an intervention who doesn't have all the skills and knowledge, we want high quality and the NTP has provided us with this, and the funding has helped'.

The senior leader felt that there was still a need for tutoring. 'The progress [pupils] have made…they are still 'working towards' children… but the progress they have made has been amazing, it's been very worthwhile. The attainment gap is narrowing, it's not closed, but is closing'.

There was concern, however, that without continued funding, the current culture and impact of tutoring would not be sustained. 'The quality is now better and more impactful, but that is thanks to the funding. If it were to go, it wouldn't be sustainable to continue, we'd have to go back to the old model of support staff delivering. It's effective, but not as effective. I'm certain we would see a dip in pupils progress and attainment if she were no longer here'. To try to maintain an impact, the senior leader said they would try to find a way to fund the tutor after the NTP, but the scale of tutoring would decrease and the sustainability was questionable: 'we are going to try and keep it going…even if it means a reduction in hours, we will do what we can to continue funding. I just don't know how long we can keep it up…if the funding won't continue to be there'.

An alternative tutoring model

Most pupils in this primary school were eligible for pupil Premium funding, and pupils joined the school with low baseline assessments. Prior to Covid-19, every class had a teaching assistant who provided interventions in literacy, numeracy and social, emotional and mental health.

When the NTP was introduced, the school leader chose not to use the NTP model of external tutors: ‘It was very simple. I have high quality staff in school so for me, it made sense to use staff who have the skill level and who the children know and respect already…. The main thing is making sure you have a skilled practitioner because then quality first teaching is guaranteed. That isn’t always guaranteed with TAs. Teachers are working at a higher level, they have a greater awareness so they can have a greater impact.’

The school employed two of their teachers as tutors, with each phase (early years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) receiving two days of tutoring each week. Tutors ‘liaise effectively with the [class] teachers, they can make it more bespoke to have a greater impact.’

Pupils were targeted if they ‘struggled’ with reading, writing or maths or were expected to reach ‘greater depth’ in Key Stage 2 national assessments. They were tutored twice a week, in groups of up to three pupils. Tutoring focused on literacy and/or numeracy, targeted to the needs of the cohort. This model had been running for two years at a cost of c.£60,000 each year for the school. The senior leader noted that this was about four times what they could have claimed through NTP funding allocations ‘so it [NTP funding] doesn’t even touch the sides.’ Despite this, after making their original decision not to use the NTP, the school had not reconsidered their decision to use NTP funds.

The school has seen improved Key Stage 2 results in English and Maths, in both attainment and progress. The senior leader reported that ‘children became more aware of how they were performing, what they needed to do to get to the next level because they are having weekly input from skilled teachers.’

The school is planning to scale back tutoring next year, because they expect the spending to be unsustainable in their budget situation.

NTP journey

Most pupils in this secondary school were eligible for pupil premium funding.

Before Covid-19, the school had a significant tutoring programme. This included working with local charities who provided one-to-one tuition outside school hours via local tutoring agencies. Tutoring targeted c.30 Key Stage 4 students who were behind on their target grades, and focused on English, maths and science. The school successfully bid for schools' priority funding for in-school full-time tutors to support English and maths. The school also ran other academic interventions, including booster lessons, academic mentors, and mentoring/tutoring from local professionals.

When the NTP was introduced, the school was keen to engage. 'Anybody that's giving me money to spend on the children, whether it's ringfenced or not, the children need to benefit from that opportunity.'

In the first year of the NTP, the school engaged with NTP Academic Mentors and external Tuition Partners, based on their prior experience of both approaches. With Academic Mentors, the school wanted English, maths, science and humanities tutors, but were only able to access a language tutor. The school reported that this tutoring did not show an impact on attainment. The school stopped using this route due to the quality and access issues. During the first and second years of the NTP, the school worked with a local tutoring agency with which they had previously worked, and which provided 'brilliant' tutors. In the third year, schools could only work with accredited Tuition Partners and the school reluctantly switched to an accredited Tuition Partner. To mitigate for the decreased funding, the school secured priority schools' funding to add to the tutoring budget.

The senior leader felt the NTP was 'brilliant at first and it got successively worse each year'. In making tutoring decisions, they were focused on 'ensuring quality provision and at minimal cost to the school. Those are the two factors.' Because of the further subsidy reductions in the fourth year of the NTP, the absence of priority schools funding, and the restriction of needing to use accredited Tuition Providers, the school did not continue to participate in the programme: 'we tried, we looked at what we would need from the NTP in order to continue with what we were doing last year financially, and the numbers just didn't stack up whichever way we looked at them.'

The senior leader is committed to tutoring, but the school are 'having to be very, very creative' to find funding for tutoring. This year, they successfully applied for an external charity grant to fully fund one-to-three maths tutoring. However, the scale and focus of their tutoring had decreased compared with their previous tutoring.

'From my point of view, as somebody who's been in education for [over 30] years, [tutoring] was the best initiative that I've come across for helping disadvantaged young people. We look at reports all of the time about the gap between disadvantaged and

non-disadvantaged students, and how that gap is widening in the current climate…yet we're not investing in something that proved to have impact for the socially disadvantaged.'

References

DfE (2024) National Tutoring Programme: guidance for schools academic year 2023/24. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-academic-year-202324/national-tutoring-programme-guidance-for-schools-academic-year-202324 (Accessed: 20 March 2024).

EEF (2021a) One to one tuition. Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/one-to-one-tuition (Accessed: 7 February 2023).

EEF (2021b) Small group tuition. Available at: https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit/small-group-tuition (Accessed: 7 February 2023).

Lucas, M. et al. (2023) Independent evaluation of the National Tutoring Programme year 2: impact evaluation. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6530d24692895c0010dcba04/Independent_Evaluation_of_the_National_Tutoring_Programme_Year_2_Impact_Evaluation.pdf (Accessed: 21 March 2024).

Lynch, S. et al. (2023) Evaluation of the National Tutoring Programme year 3: implementation and process evaluation. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/653fd1926de3b9000da7a64b/National_Tutoring_Programme_year_3_-_implementation_and_process_evaluation_-_research_report.pdf (Accessed: 21 March 2024).

Moore, E. and Lord, P. (2023) Tutoring sustainability: understanding the views of school leaders. Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/5395/tutoring_sustainability_understanding_the_views_of_school_leaders.pdf (Accessed: 4 July 2023).

NFER (2023a) Implementing effective tutoring: a ‘how-to guide’ with practical tips and considerations for school leaders and teachers. Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3bdjclsn/implementing_effective_tutoring_guide_nfer_classroom.pdf (Accessed: 21 March 2024).

NFER (2023b) Tutoring: what’s next for schools? Available at: https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/wlek1ija/nfer_classroom_tutoring_guide_for_schools_nov_2023.pdf (Accessed: 21 March 2024).

Appendix: Sample profiles

Survey profile

	Population (N=20,997 schools)	Survey (N=1984 schools)
Phase		
Primary	16374 (78%)	1546 (78%)
Secondary	3265 (16%)	328 (17%)
Special school	1017 (5%)	81 (4%)
Other	341 (2%)	29 (1%)
FSM Quintile		
Missing	1350 (6%)	108 (5%)
Q1 (lowest 20%)	3909 (19%)	384 (19%)
Q2	3942 (19%)	430 (22%)
Q3	3944 (19%)	410 (21%)
Q4	3936 (19%)	341 (17%)
Q5 (highest 20%)	3916 (19%)	311 (16%)
Region		
East Midlands	2027 (10%)	199 (10%)
East of England	2498 (12%)	262 (13%)
London	2475 (12%)	186 (9%)
North East	1103 (5%)	68 (3%)
North West	2778 (13%)	265 (13%)
South East	3275 (16%)	351 (18%)
South West	2317 (11%)	261 (13%)
West Midlands	2340 (11%)	209 (11%)
Yorkshire and the Humber	2184 (10%)	183 (9%)

Interview profile, by phase and NTP participation

	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Currently using/planning to use NTP this academic year and this is the first time the school has used it	2	0	0	**2**
Currently using/planning to use NTP this academic year and school has used it previously	2	6	2	**10**
Previously used the NTP but are not using/do not plan to use it this academic year	4	3	1	**8**
Never used the NTP	7	1*	0	**8**
Total	**15**	**10**	**3**	**28**

*Attempts were made to include more senior leaders in non-participating secondary schools (including targeted emails, telephone calls, and an invitation message included in NFER's Teacher Voice panel survey), but it proved difficult to recruit them.

Department for Education

© Department for Education copyright [2024]

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3.

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Reference: RR1444

ISBN: 978-1-83870-548-0

For any enquiries regarding this publication, contact www.education.gov.uk/contactus.

This document is available for download at www.gov.uk/government/publications.