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University of York 2020 Tutoring Programme: Evaluation Report

Joshua Edward Stubbs

joshua.stubbs@york.ac.uk

Derwent College, University of York

Psychology in Education Research Centre, Department of Education, University of York

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Executive Summary

The tutoring programme was established as part of the University of York's 2019/20 Access Agreement, which was prepared for the Office for Fair Access. The tutoring programme sought to support the attainment and confidence of pupils who would not otherwise have access to tutoring. Three schools in York participated in the tutoring programme. This report is based on an analysis of pre- and post-tutoring survey responses from 13 tutees, and the attainment of another 24 tutees, as well as post-tutoring survey responses from 16 tutors.

In response to open-ended questions, tutees reported becoming more confident in their academic capabilities as a result of tutoring. In addition, a third (33%) of tutees felt more informed about higher education post-tutoring, with approximately three fifths (58%) intending to remain in education post-school. The vast majority (> 90%) of tutees reported that they would recommend the tutoring programme to someone else.

Due to the particularly small sample size (< 20); absence of a control group; and Centre Assessed Grades used to produce the post-tutoring attainment, it is important to exercise a high degree of caution when comparing tutees' pre- and post-tutoring attainment. Nonetheless, tutees' mean (post-tutoring) actual attainment was higher than their mean (pre-tutoring) mock attainment. While consistent with previous findings (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019), future evaluations featuring larger sample sizes (> 30 pupils for each subject) are needed in order to gain a clearer and deeper insight into the effectiveness of tutoring programme.

The tutoring programme appears to have provided a particularly enriching experience for the tutors. The majority

(81%) reported that they would recommend the tutoring programme to someone else, and felt either mostly (69%) or extremely well prepared (31%) for the tutoring by the University of York. In addition, the vast majority (94%) considered the tutoring programme to have been either extremely (50%) or somewhat (44%) enjoyable, and all of the tutors who had cited a desire to become more aware of the school environment, as well as better at managing their time; problem-solving; working collaboratively; and reflecting considered these skill to have been well developed.

Other than recommending the provision greater support for tutors when travelling to and from their allocated school (via a shared taxi, for example), there is little to recommend on the basis of this evaluation. Indeed, the tutoring programme appears to be working well, and should be continued in its current format once face to face tutoring is permitted and safe to conduct again. As mentioned, however, in order to gain a clearer and deeper insight into the effectiveness of tutoring programme, and how it could be optimised, future evaluations featuring larger sample sizes (> 30 pupils for each subject) are needed.

1. Introduction

The tutoring programme was established as part of the University of York's 2019/20 Access Agreement, which was prepared for the Office for Fair Access. Building on a small-scale one-to-one tutoring programme that took place in 2017/18 (Hancock, 2019), as well as a larger-scale two-to-one tutoring programme that took place in 2018/19 (Stubbs, 2019), the 2019/20 tutoring programme sought to support the attainment and confidence of pupils who would not otherwise have access to tutoring. In total, three schools in York participated in the tutoring programme, which each identified up to twenty pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium[1] to receive tuition. By focusing on pupils' attainment and confidence in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) Maths, English Language and English Literature, the tutoring programme aimed to broaden the post-school opportunities of tutees.

Why tutoring?

Tutoring has been shown to considerably improve pupils' attainment (Bloom, 1984; Dietrichson, Bøg, Filges & Jørgensen, 2017; Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), 2017). In a recent review of the evidence on the effectiveness of tutoring, for example, the EEF (2017) found that one-to-one tuition can accelerate pupils' learning by an additional five months' progress. However, access to tutoring is unevenly distributed across the United Kingdom (UK), with pupils from particularly affluent backgrounds being notably more likely to receive it privately (Sutton Trust, 2016, 2019). Consequently, children from less affluent families who cannot afford private tuition are at risk of becoming further educationally disadvantaged. The tutoring programme can therefore help to address this inequality.

[1] Eligibility for the Pupil Premium is an indicator of social disadvantage

In the first iteration of the tutoring programme, it was found that tutees' confidence in both their study skills and subjects generally increased, although the particularly small sample size (< 30) meant that a high degree of caution needed to be taken when interpreting the findings (Hancock, 2019). In the second, larger-scale iteration of the tutoring programme, however, tutees again expressed a greater degree of confidence post-tutoring, albeit more specifically in relation to the specific subjects, and associated study skills, for which they received tuition (Stubbs, 2019). The first two iterations of the tutoring programme can therefore be considered to have been a success. Indeed, in the second iteration of the tutoring programme, it was found that the proportion of English tutees who stated that they felt 'very confident' in English Language increased from 7% to 21% post-tutoring; and that while none of the maths tutees expressed less confidence in Maths post-tutoring, 33% of those for whom it was possible to express a greater degree of confidence did so (Stubbs, 2019, pp. 13-14). Furthermore, in both iterations of the programme, maths tutees' mean attainment in Maths improved by an entire grade between their (pre-tutoring) mock and (post-tutoring) actual examinations, and English tutees also made progress in both England Language and English Literature.

Defining tutoring

For the purposes of the tutoring programme, tutoring was defined as: two-to-one tuition, whereby an undergraduate at the University of York tutored two secondary school pupils in an effort to provide them with tailored support in GCSE Maths or English Language and Literature.

Recruiting, training and supporting tutors

To be recruited as tutors, undergraduate applicants from the University of York must have studied for a General Certificate of Education Advanced Level (A-Level) in the subject in which they would be tutoring.

In their review, the EEF (2017) noted that 'short, regular sessions' over a set period of 6-12 weeks results in 'optimum impact.' The University of York's tutoring programme therefore provided eight one-hour sessions over the course of eight weeks in early 2019. Since the EEF (2017) also noted the importance of well-trained tutors and explicitly relating tutoring materials to what is being taught during pupil's lessons, staff from the University of York's Widening Participation & Access team worked closely with each school to prepare the tutors and ensure that the tutoring materials were complementary to pupils' lessons.

1.2 Focus of this report

This report shares findings from the third year of the tutoring programme. The research design and methodology adopted for the purpose of evaluating the tutoring programme is set out in the following chapter. The third chapter presents findings; and the fourth offers concluding remarks.

2. Research Design and Methodology

The evaluation of the tutoring programme has several aims; namely, it aims to enable the University of York and the participating schools to closely monitor tutees' and tutors' experiences of the tutoring programme; to understand its effectiveness; and, if necessary, to adapt practices during subsequent iterations. This is particularly important because most of the research into one- or two-to-one tuition has involved primary school pupils (Dietrichson et al., 2017; EEF, 2017).

Evaluation research design and methodology

The evaluation collected data from a number of groups involved with the tutoring programme and employed a variety of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. Tutees were asked to complete pre- and post-tutoring surveys which aimed to capture changes in their confidence and post-school pans, and schools provided tutees' pre- and post-tutoring attainment in the subjects for which they received tuition. Post-tutoring attainment was based on Centre Assessed Grades[2]. Tutors were also asked to complete a post-tutoring survey which aimed to generate an understanding of their experiences of tutoring. The research design and methodology adopted for evaluation of the tutoring programme was approved by the University of York's Education Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from all of the participants.

Schools and tutees

As noted, three schools in York participated in the tutoring programme. In accordance with ethical requirements, the schools and the participants are anonymised. Each school identified up to twenty pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium and their final year of school. In this report, the analysis is limited to pupils for whom parental or guardian consent was obtained. As is highlighted in the next

[2] Centre Assessed Grades are based on teachers' assessments

chapter, this resulted in a pupil sample of 38, with 5 at school A, 13 at School B and 20 at School C.

3. Findings

3.1 Tutees

Tutee sample

Each school employed shared eligibility criteria when recruiting for the tutoring programme in the sense that they recruited pupils who were both eligible for the Pupil Premium and in a position to benefit from tuition. Pupils from across the academic ability spectrum where therefore recruited. Pupils' demographic characteristics are displayed on Table 3a, below. It is important to note that post-tutoring surveys were obtained from School B, but not Schools A and C. In contrast, attainment data was obtained from Schools A and C, but not School B.

At the outset of the programme, most of the tutees were age 15 (68%); a majority were female (61%) or White British (82%). Less than a tenth (8%) of the tutees are known to have had a graduate parent or sibling in higher education.

	School			
	A	**B**	**C**	**Total**
Age				
15	60	62	75	68
16	40	38	25	32
Gender				
Male	60	46	30	39
Female	40	54	70	61
Ethnicity	0	0		
White British	80	69	90	82
Unknown	20	31	10	18
Graduate parent	0	Unknown	15	8
Sibling in higher education	0	Unknown	15	8

Table 3a. Demographic characteristics of pupils by school

Notes: School A *n* =5; School B *n* = 13; School C *n* = 20. Percentages displayed.

Confidence in study skills and subjects

In the pre- and post-tutoring surveys, tutees were asked to rate their confidence in their study skills (see 3b and 3c, below). Specifically, tutees were asked to rate their agreement with the statement 'I am good at…' on a four-point scale which ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' in response to several different study skills. As noted, the only tutees for whom post-tutoring surveys were returned were from School B. Tutoring was associated with a slight increase in confidence in several study skills. Post-tutoring, an additional sixth of tutees (16%) agreed (8%) or strongly agreed (8%) that they are good at problem solving and numeracy, for example. Having noted this, however, it is also clear that the majority of tutees felt relatively confident in their study skills pre-tutoring, which – along with the particularly small sample size (< 15) – could account for why so few pre- and post-tutoring differences were observed.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Baseline				
I am good at literacy	0	0	85	15
I am good at verbal communication	0	8	77	15
I am good at written communication	0	8	85	8
I am good at problem solving	0	39	62	0
I am good at numeracy	8	31	54	8
I am good at listening	0	8	46	46
I am good at self-directed study	0	31	62	8
Post-tutoring				
I am good at literacy	0	8	77	15
I am good at verbal communication	0	0	93	8
I am good at written communication	0	15	69	15
I am good at problem solving	0	23	69	8
I am good at numeracy	8	15	62	15
I am good at listening	0	0	62	39
I am good at self-directed study	8	15	62	15

Table 3b. Pre- and post-tutoring changes in pupils' self-reported confidence in their study skills

Notes: Tutees from School B $n = 13$. Percentages displayed.

Perhaps more importantly for the purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of the tutoring programme, tutees were also asked to rate their confidence in their subjects (see Table 1c, below). Specifically, pupils were asked to state whether they were 'not at all', 'somewhat' or 'very' confident in each of the subjects that they were studying. Table 1c, below, displays the percentage changes in tutees' confidence in their subjects after tutoring. Tutoring was associated with an increase in confidence in Maths and Geography, but not English Language or English Literature. Once again, however, it is important to exercise a high degree of caution when interpreting these findings due to the particularly small sample size (< 15).

	Not at all confident	Somewhat confident	Very confident
Baseline			
Maths	23	62	15
English Literature	0	85	15
English Language	15	53	31
Science	0	77	23
Foreign Languages	25	25	50
History	0	67	33
Geography	25	50	25
Post-tutoring			
Maths	23	54	23
English Literature	8	77	15
English Language	8	77	15
Science	8	69	23
Foreign Languages	25	25	50
History	17	33	50
Geography	25	38	38

Table 3c. Pre- and post-tutoring changes in tutees' confidence in their subjects

Notes: n = 13. Percentages displayed.

Importantly, several tutees commented on the confidence-enhancing and nature of the tutoring programme:

> Gained confidence and got more skills (Female tutee at School B)

> It's helpful to display your skills and know what you need to improve on (Female tutee at School B)

> I was very weak and not confident. Now I have confidence and gain marks on working out (Female tutee at School B)

> You understand the questions better and how to get more marks when answering them (Female tutee at School B)

In addition, when the tutees were asked what their proudest achievement had been during the tutoring programme, they tended to focus on gaining confidence and becoming better skilled:

> Working out questions I didn't think I could (Male tutee at School B)

> Managed to gain more confidence in maths (Male tutee at School B)

> I have gained confidence when answering questions (Female tutee at School B)

> Improving my grades in language after going through the papers in the tutoring groups (Female at School B)

Tutees' responses to the open comments therefore suggest that the tutoring programme did enhance their confidence and abilities, even if this was not particularly evident when comparing the pre- and post-tutoring survey data.

Attainment

Examining tutees' attainment pre- and post-tutoring provides a more robust measure of the effectiveness of the tutoring programme. Pupils' attainment in mock examinations prior to the tutoring programme has therefore been compared with their actual attainment (released in August) in an attempt to identify changes. As noted, the only tutees for whom attainment was obtained were from Schools A and C. In addition, due to the particularly small sample size (< 20); absence of a control group; and Centre Assessed Grades used to produce the August result, it is important to exercise a high degree of caution when interpreting the findings.

It is nonetheless notable, however, that the tutees' mean (post-tutoring) actual attainment was higher than their mean (pre-tutoring) mock attainment. These findings are consistent with those obtained in previous iterations of the tutoring programme (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019), and suggest that, at the very least, the tutoring programme did no harm to the tutees' academic progress.

	August result	Standard deviation	Grade change
Maths (with tuition)	3.4	1.3	**0.9**
English Langauge (with tuition)	3.9	1.2	**0.7**
English Literature (with tuition)	3.6	1.2	**0.7**

Table 3d. Tutees' mean attainment in the subjects for which they received tuition

Notes: Maths tutees $n = 9$; English tutees $n = 15$. Mean grade calculated.

Future plans and aspirations

This section considers changes in tutees' post-schools plans and perceptions of higher education before and after tutoring. As noted, the only tutees for whom post-tutoring surveys were returned were from School B. Prior to tutoring, most pupils (69%) intended to remain in full-time education post-school in order to study A-Levels. This continued to be the case after tutoring (see Table 3d, below). In addition, approximately half (~ 56%) of tutees intended to enter higher education pre- and post-tutoring, and a third (33%) felt more informed about higher education post-tutoring.

	Pre-tutoring	Post-tutoring	Pre to post change
Post-school plans			
Full-time education (A Levels)	69	75	6
Full-time education (BTEC)	15	17	1
Apprenticeship	8	0	-8
Traineeship	0	0	0
Part-time employment or volunteering alongside education or training	0	8	8
Intention to enter higher education			0
Yes	54	58	4
No	0	8	8
Undecided	46	33	-13

Table 3e. Pre- and post-tutoring changes in tutees' post-school plans

Notes: pre-tutoring n = 13; post-tutoring n = 12. Percentages displayed.

	Pre-tutoring	Post-tutoring	Pre to post change
Reason for post-school plans			
Gain practical experience	46	50	4
Develop particular skills	38	42	4
Embark on particular career	23	25	2
Enhance future earnings	69	75	6
Develop academic study	31	33	2
To progress to HE	31	33	2
To follow friends or family advice	0	0	0
To follow teacher or advisor advice	15	17	2
To fit around other commitments in life	8	8	0

Table 3f. Pre- and post-tutoring changes in tutees' reasons for post-school plans

Notes: pre-tutoring n = 13; post-tutoring n = 12. Percentages displayed.

	Post-tutoring
Do you feel more informed about higher education?	
Less informed	0
More informed	33
No difference	66
Have you changed your mind about higher education?	
No	50
Yes	0
Unsure	50

Table 3g. Pre- and post-tutoring changes in tutees' perception of higher education

Notes: Tutees from School B $n = 12$. Percentages displayed.

Due to the particularly small sample size (< 15) and absence of a control group, it is again important to exercise a high degree of caution when interpreting the findings. Nonetheless, it is promising to see that a large minority of tutees again felt more informed about higher education post-tutoring (Stubbs, 2019).

3.2 Tutors

Demographic characteristics

Approximately two thirds (*n* = 16; 59%) of tutors completed the online survey aimed at exploring their experiences of the tutoring programme. Seven respondents had tutored in maths, while ten had tutored in English. Respondents studied a variety of subjects, such as: Education (*n* = 1; 6%); English and Related Literature (*n* = 5; 31%); Mathematics (*n* = 2; 13%); and Psychology (*n* = 2; 13%). Just under half tutored at School A (*n* = 7; 43.8%), while the remainder tutored at School B (*n* = 4; 25%) or C (*n* = 5; 31%). Approximately a fifth (*n* = 3; 19%) were male, two thirds (*n* = 11; 69%) were female and a couple (*n* = 2; 13%) did not disclose their gender. Reflecting the characteristics of the undergraduates who volunteered for the previous tutoring programmes (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019), the respondents again predominantly originated from privileged social class backgrounds. Approximately a third (*n* = 5; 31%) reported having attended an independent (*n* = 3; 19%) or grammar (*n* = 2; 13%) school; and almost two thirds (*n* = 10; 63%) reported having at least one graduate parent.

Prior experience of tutoring

Half (*n* = 8; 50%) of the respondents had tutored before, of whom most (*n* = 6; 75%) had done so on a voluntary basis. Responses to open-ended questions indicated that the vast majority of tutoring that the tutors had previously done was at secondary education level, although some had tutored at primary education level as well. Approximately half (*n* = 9; 57%) of the respondents had previous experience of working in an educational setting, either as a tutor, teaching assistant, after school club leader or student volunteer as part of the University of York's York Students in Schools (YSIS) programme.

Reasons for volunteering

Tutors' reasons for volunteering varied, as they did in the 2017/18 and 2018/2019 iterations of the programme (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019). Positively, all of the tutors hoping to work with young people (n = 10; 100%); contribute to the University of York's local community (n = 9; 100%); gain practical experience (n = 11; 100%); develop particular skills (n = 6; 100%); and enhance their CV (n = 13; 100%) considered these aims to have been entirely achieved. In addition, the majority (n = 4; 80%) of those hoping that the programme would support their progression into a teaching career also considered this goal to have been entirely achieved.

Skills development

The extent to which the tutors felt that they had developed the skills that they had hoped to through the programme is displayed on Chart 3.2a, overleaf. All of the tutors stated that their skills had been either somewhat or well developed through the programme. Painting an particularly positive picture for the third consecutive year (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019), the majority of the respondents who cited a desire to improve their ability to work with young people (n = 10; 91%); communicate (n = 8; 89%); convey ideas (n = 7; 78%); and become more socially and culturally aware (n = 4; 80%) or resilient (n = 8; 89%) considered these skills to have been well developed. Furthermore, all of the respondents who had cited a desire to become more aware of the school environment (n = 4; 100%), as well as better at managing their time (n = 8; 100%); problem-solving (n = 4; 100%); working collaboratively (n = 6; 100%); and reflecting (n = 5; 100%) considered these skill to have been well developed. Importantly, none of the respondents considered themselves to have failed to develop a skill that they had hoped to.

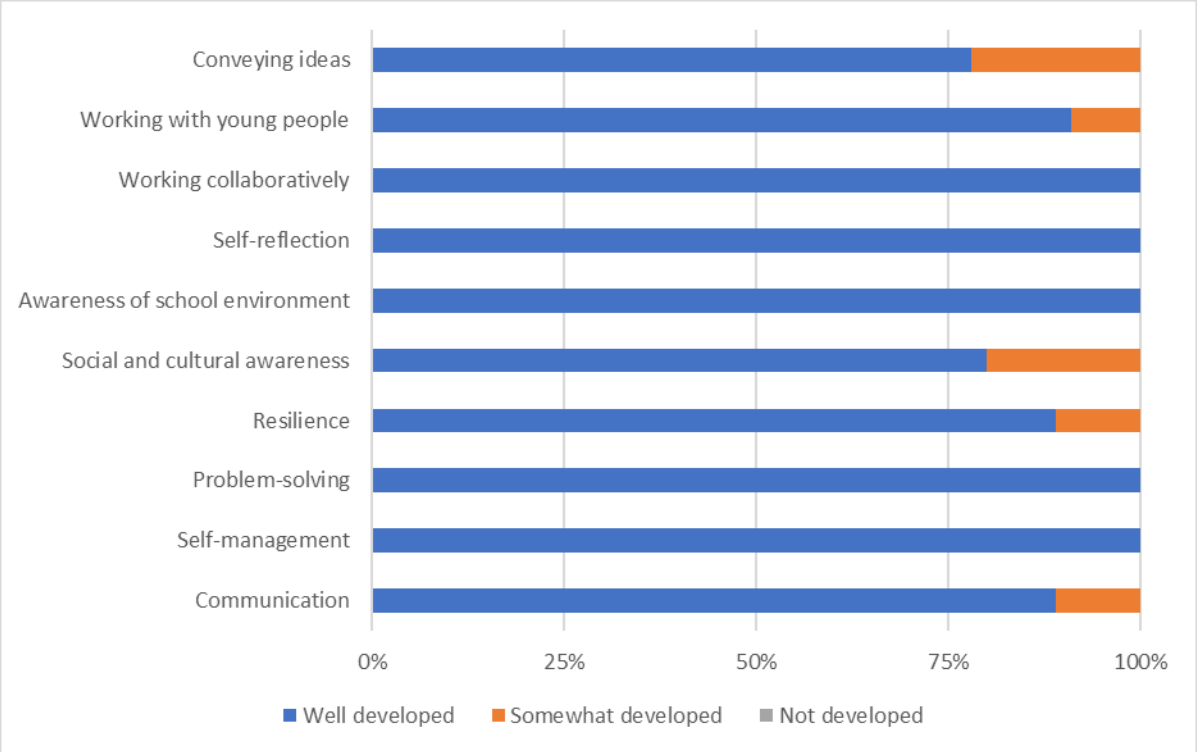

Chart 3.2b. Tutors' development of skills through tutoring

Notes: *n* = 16. Respondents rated the development of skills they had intended to enhance through tutoring.

Preparation for tutoring

The respondents reported feeling either mostly (*n* = 11; 69%) or extremely well prepared (*n* = 5; 31%) for the tutoring by the University of York. In response to an open-ended question, most described the training as helpful and confidence enhancing, with one respondent commenting that: 'the training sessions really set us up and helped us to better and more effectively communicate with the students' (Tutor at School C). One respondent did, however, comment that it would have been helpful to have known more about what kind of specific content they would be covering in greater advance of the tutoring beginning.

Experiences of tutoring

The vast majority (*n* = 15; 94%) of the respondents found the programme either extremely (*n* = 8; 50%) or somewhat (*n* = 7; 44%) enjoyable; one respondent did not comment on whether or not they enjoyed it. As has been the case in previous iterations of the programme (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019), the respondents considered participating in it to have been a challenging but worthwhile and rewarding experience. Respondents commented, for example, that it was: 'extremely satisfying to feel like [you] are making a difference' (Tutor at School B); and that it was: 'very rewarding teaching younger students and giving back to the local community' (Tutor at School C).

When asked to reflect on their experiences, comparative to their initial expectations, most (*n* = 82%) considered the programme to have been as (*n* =9; 56%) or better (*n* = 4; 25%) than expected, with the remainder (*n* = 3; 19%) considering it to have been more challenging than they expected it to be. Having noted this, however, almost all (*n* = 15; 93%) of the respondents considered their workload to have been manageable.

While the majority (n = 11; 69%) of respondents reported that they had felt extremely (n = 9; 57%) or somewhat (n = 2; 13%) well supported by their school, a small proportion (n = 3; 19%) stated that they did not feel well supported. When asked what they had found most challenging about the programme, respondents referred to finding it difficult to keep the pupils focused and engaged, as well as the toll of having to take several buses both to and from one of the schools. Such was the strength of feeling about the time and effort that it took some of the tutors to travel to and from their allocated school that two respondents commented that they would not participate in the programme again in the absence of their travel being catered for by taxis or minibuses:

> It took up a long portion of the day for just a 1 hour session as we had to leave an hour and a half before it started to get there on time as we had to get 2 buses and then it took a similar amount of time to get home. So, if there was some sort of taxi or minibus service going straight from the uni to the high school I would do it again but the travel was just too much (Tutor at School A)

> I would only participate in the scheme again if taxis were used instead of buses. It takes 2 buses and an hour and a half journey to get to School B so the entire volunteering is a 4 hour round trip. The taxi is only a 20-minute journey. If I had to use the bus again I would not take part in the scheme as it takes too much time out of my day (Tutor at School A)

Reflections

Approximately half (*n* = 9; 57%) of the respondents stated that they would participate in the programme again, while the remainder stated they would consider doing so (*n* = 4; 25%) or did not state whether or not they would (*n* = 3; 19%). Almost all (*n* = 13; 81%) of the respondents stated that they would recommend the programme to someone else; one (*n* = 1; 6%) stated that they would consider doing so; and the remainder (*n* = 2; 13%) did not state whether or not they would. Several again cited the enjoyable and enriching nature of the programme, with one respondent commenting that the programme had been: 'a very good scheme' (Tutor at School A); another that the programme: 'was excellent' (Tutor at School B); and another that the programme had led them to: 'develop greatly' (Tutor at School C).

It does seem, however, that some of the respondents found the amount of time and energy that was required of them to travel to and from the schools tiresome to the point that it may deter them from participating in the programme again. Funding permitted, shared taxis should therefore be considered in the future. At the very least, the amount of time that may be required of the tutors to travel to and from their allocated school should be clearly communicated prior to potential applicants.

4. Conclusion

Despite being based on patchier and therefore weaker evidence than had been hoped for prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, positive trends have nonetheless been observed. Once again, the vast majority of tutees (> 90%) reported that they would recommend the tutoring programme to someone else, as did most of the tutors (> 80%) (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019). In response to open-ended questions, tutees reported that their confidence had increased due to the tutoring programme, and improvements in their attainment have been observed; both of these findings reflect those obtained during previous iterations of the tutoring programme (Hancock, 2019; Stubbs, 2019). The tutoring programme also appears to have provided a particularly enriching experience for the tutors.

Other than recommending the provision greater support for tutors when travelling to and from their allocated school (via a shared taxi, for example), there is little to recommend on the basis of this evaluation of the tutoring programme. Indeed, the tutoring programme appears to be working well, and should be continued in its current two-to-one format once face to face tutoring is permitted and safe to conduct again.

In order to gain a clearer and deeper insight into the effectiveness of tutoring programme, and how it could be optimised, future evaluations featuring larger sample sizes (> 30 pupils for each subject) are needed. In the meantime, however, those involved in the tutoring programme should be commended for their hard work to date.

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