

# TutorMate: The story of our impact so far

Innovations for Learning's TutorMate programme transforms children's futures with one-to-one support at a time when they need it most.

TutorMate connects corporate volunteers and struggling readers via a fully supported, online platform, enabling them to enjoy engaging, 30-minute, weekly interactive sessions throughout the school year. Volunteers help young children develop critical literacy skills, like fluency and comprehension, and build their reading confidence, enjoyment and self-belief.

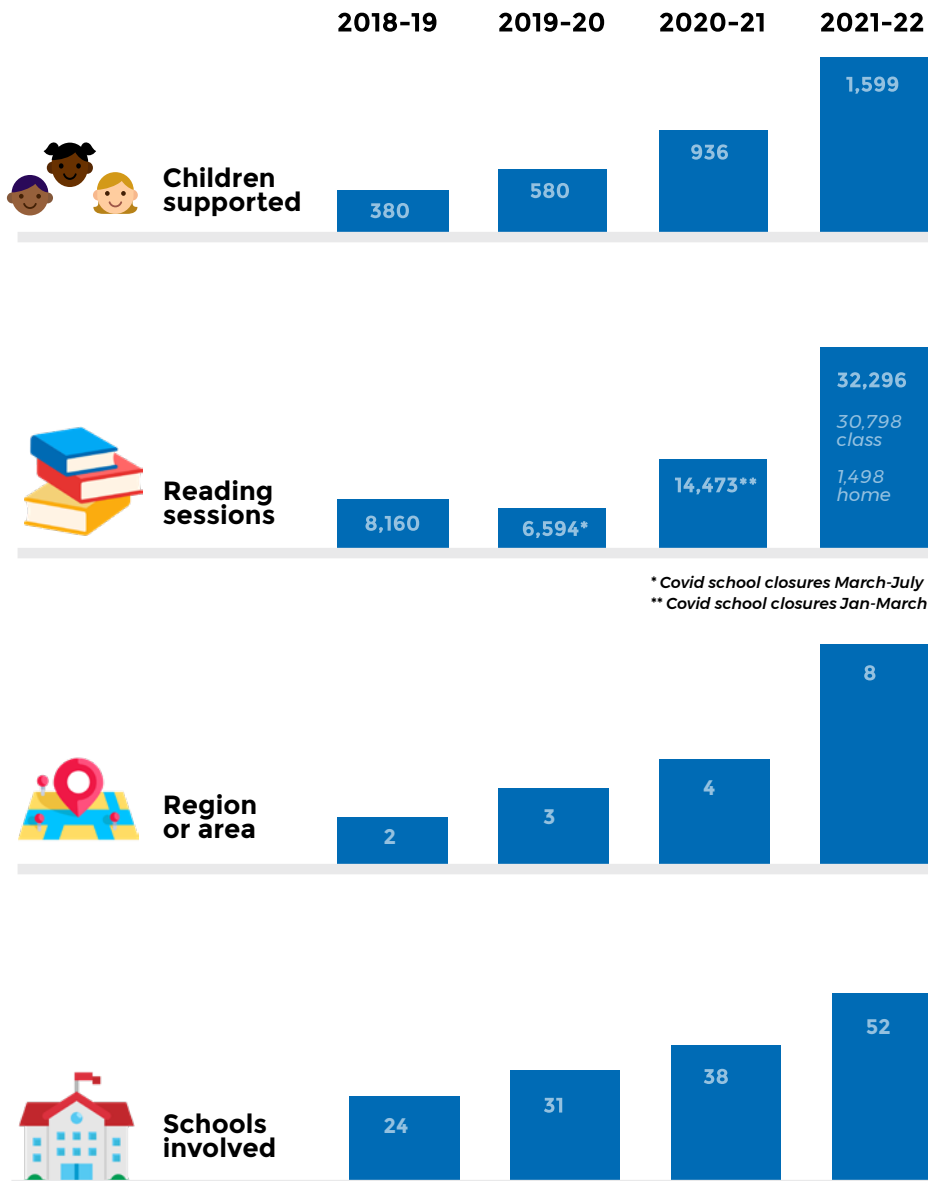
In 2022 the TutorMate programme entered its fifth school year since launching in London and Bradford in the autumn of 2018. Thanks to our volunteers, corporate partners and supporters, over this period we have extended our online reading programme to thousands of children in other disadvantaged communities across the UK, expanded our support to schools and volunteers, and devised new evaluation frameworks to improve how we measure our impact.

We're delighted to share this report, which tells the story of our impact from 2018-2022.

*Please note: In February 2023, Innovations for Learning changed its name to Chapter One.*



# Our reach: TutorMate 2018-2022 at a glance



We have a relentless focus on communities experiencing educational disadvantage, some of which find it challenging to access external support. Thus, in 2018 we launched in schools in Bradford and in three London boroughs with high rates of child poverty.

**In 2022-23, TutorMate corporate volunteers are supporting children in disadvantaged communities up and down the UK, from Glasgow in Scotland, to Tyneside schools in Middlesbrough, moving south to Leeds, Doncaster and Peterborough, right down to schools in East Sussex. Our reach in London has also extended and we are due to launch in West Cumbria and Edinburgh in early 2023.**

Our impact: TutorMate's benefits for children

## 2018-19: our pilot year

In the pilot year of our TutorMate online reading programme we commissioned an independent evaluation of the programme in London and Bradford from the National Literacy Trust.

Overall it showed that TutorMate boosts children's enjoyment of reading, strengthens their belief that they are good readers and sparks their excitement about the world of books

*For details of the methodology used and lessons learned, please go to the Appendix on page 10.*



TutorMate **boosts children's enjoyment** of reading, **strengthens their belief** that they're good readers and **sparks their excitement** about the world of books

Compared to other children in their class:

x2

TutorMate children showed **twice the rate of increase** in their reading enjoyment

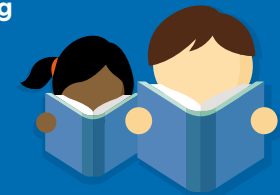
TutorMate children showed **much higher increase** in their perception of themselves as good readers

**TutorMate children also thought more positively about reading**



TutorMate children with the two lowest levels of ability **progressed most** in their reading

Results were especially strong for **reluctant readers**



**100%** of teachers felt that TutorMate was beneficial for their pupils

**100%** of volunteers would recommend the programme to a friend



## 2019-21: trialling new impact approaches amidst Covid disruption

In our second year of delivery, building on learning from our pilot, we commissioned ImpactEd to devise an even more comprehensive evaluation framework. Unfortunately, our ability to effectively connect with schools, pupils and volunteers was impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of schools.

As multiple studies have now confirmed, over the 2020-21 school year, despite the huge efforts by schools and families to maintain learning through the lockdown, children in Years 1 and 2 lost an average of three months of progress in reading. Disadvantaged children were the hardest hit by the disruption.

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Despite the negative impact of the school closures, the ImpactEd 2020-21 evaluation of the TutorMate programme demonstrated that with statistical significance, the more TutorMate sessions a child had the more they progressed in reading.



## Our impact: TutorMate's benefits for children

# 2019-21: at a glance

*"I urge businesses to support their staff to volunteer for TutorMate. The difference the volunteers make is real, it is almost immediate, especially with Year 1, and it is transformative to a child's educational experience and, ultimately - and I don't say this with any exaggeration - to their life chances."*

Hina Shah, headteacher, Earlsmead Primary School, Tottenham, June 2021



Interviews with teachers and parents underlined the value of TutorMate's 1:1 supported reading model as a way of improving reading comprehension and confidence, ensuring children felt **special** and **supported**.

Teacher assessments also demonstrated that the more sessions a child received, the more confident and motivated that child was about their own learning (their self-efficacy).

*For details of the methodology used and lessons learned, please go to the Appendix on page 10.*

Children with 0-5 sessions achieved only 1.74 reading levels of progress. Children with 21 - 25 sessions achieved 3.41 reading levels of progress

### Reading levels progress of participants

0-5 sessions

1.74

21-25 sessions

3.41



Teachers who would recommend TutorMate to other teachers

*"They blossomed in having individual attention, and made fantastic progress"*

- Teacher

*"I can't emphasise how important this is to the children"*

- Parent

## 2021-22: a refreshed approach to measuring impact

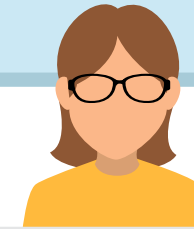
With children back in the classrooms from September 2021, we were able to deliver a full year of the programme without interruption over the 2021-22 academic year. We again commissioned ImpactEd to evaluate our impact.

**Once again, with statistical significance, we demonstrated that the more TutorMate reading sessions a child received, the better their reading became.**

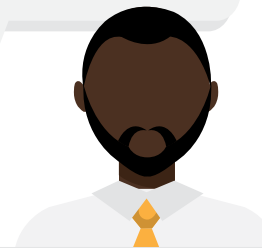
Overall, teachers reported that one-to-one learning time was a key motivation and benefit of the programme for children. Teachers saw many positive changes across participating students, such as increased confidence, self-efficacy and engagement with reading, which they believe was down to the TutorMate programme.

Volunteers and pupils developed strong relationships which provided a non-judgemental environment for pupils to build on their reading skills and confidence. These relationships were cited as a big part of why the programme helps pupils improve.

*"I've got two girls on the TutorMate programme who, at the start of the year, would barely say anything, they wouldn't put up their hands to answer questions. And since the TutorMate sessions, they've just really enjoyed engaging with that one person, but it's also then had an impact in the class. They're more willing to put up their hands and answer questions. They don't mind if they make a mistake. They know it's okay. And I do think the TutorMate programme has had a role in that: their confidence and self-belief has definitely improved."*



*"The students who received regular, consistent sessions have made great progress. Their overall confidence has grown and they enjoy reading more. It also provided 1:1 time for our children who need it most."*



*"I've got a little boy in my class. When he came into Year one, I knew his confidence level was just really, really low. And then he started TutorMate. And he's formed such a great bond with his tutor, like he really loves her. And I can tell from her messages that she cares for him too [...] his confidence levels have just continued to rise."*



All quotes from teachers using the TutorMate programme in KS1 in 2020-21

Our impact: TutorMate's benefits for children

## 2021-22 at a glance



TutorMate pupils made average progress of 3.9 reading levels

### Pupils' literacy attainment

- TutorMate pupils progressed further in their reading level score than the previous year's TutorMate cohort
- **66%** of teachers said they noticed better reading fluency
- **64%** of teachers were clear that TutorMate children made more progress than their non-participating peers
- **84%** of volunteers noted that their pupil increased their reading level during the programme



81% of volunteers said their pupil reader was more confident at the end of the programme

### Reading enjoyment, confidence and motivation

- Participating pupils had a higher percentage change in reading enjoyment, confidence and motivation in comparison to a group of higher achieving peers
- **79%** of teachers said reading confidence had improved
- **43%** of teachers said participating children now read more

# 17%

increase in teacher-reported self-efficacy scores for both pupil premium and non-pupil premium pupils using TutorMate

### Pupils' self efficacy

*A child's ability to take control of their own learning, or their motivation to learn*

- There was a greater positive change in self-efficacy scores for pupil premium pupils than non-pupil premium pupils when comparing participating pupils with a higher achieving peer group
- White British pupils had the highest percentage change (**25%**) in self-efficacy score, alongside Other (**20%**) and Other White (**19%**)



# 95%

of teachers said the programme was beneficial/very beneficial

### Overall satisfaction with the programme

- **85%** of teachers said the programme was very easy/easy to run
- **94%** of teachers were very satisfied/ satisfied with TutorMate
- **87%** of volunteers said they would volunteer with TutorMate again

# 97%

of teachers said they would recommend TutorMate to other teachers

*For details of the methodology used and lessons learned, please go to the Appendix on page 10.*





## Case studies



### Sadiya\* - English as an additional language pupil

Sadiya is from an English as an additional language background. Her mother felt guilty as she was struggling to engage Sadiya with reading, as she was not confident herself, and particularly found it difficult to teach her to pronounce words correctly.

With support from her volunteer, Sadiya has seen large improvements in phonics, fluency and comprehension. Her reading level has improved, and she is now working at the expected level for her age. She has begun to engage with the story, and her volunteer notes how where before she read in a 'military' style, she is now reading with fluency and expression. She has the confidence to tackle long and unfamiliar words.

Further, Sadiya's non-cognitive skills have improved. Her mother believes that she is now more confident and motivated to read and said that Sadiya now thoroughly enjoys reading. She now wants to read every night and wants to be read to sleep when she is too tired to read herself.

Although her teacher notes she was a very confident child anyway that enjoys learning, she has noticed improvements in her wellbeing and interest in reading. Having the 1:1 support and attention from a reading volunteer has been beneficial to her, especially as the programme is conducted over the phone, which offers a non-judgemental environment for her to attempt new words and reading styles.

### Jack\* - Improved comprehension and fluency

Although Jack was generally positive about reading before starting the TutorMate programme, the programme has had several positive changes regarding his reading. Most notable was Jack's improved comprehension, which both his teacher and the volunteer reading with him commented on.

Jack needed extra support with answering questions and extending his answers and having a dedicated adult volunteer reading with him has enabled this to be focused on in sessions. He has now begun to take in the story and understand that questioning the story is part of the experience of reading. His teacher also notes that TutorMate has helped with his fluency and over the year his reading had improved greatly and increased his reading level.

This improvement in comprehension was also paired with increased confidence with reading - his teacher noticed he started choosing more adventurous and challenging books, instead of easy options. TutorMate has contributed to him being at a good starting point for Year 2.

### Penny - Improved confidence

Penny struggled with going into Year 2 and was falling behind, particularly with her reading. She was shy and nervous when it came to reading and was only choosing books with pictures. At home, her parents tried to help her improve by reading with her but they struggled to know how to teach phonics and how to pronounce certain words, which caused stress and conflict between them.

Penny has thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the TutorMate programme and cannot wait for her reading sessions with the volunteer. Since TutorMate, both her teacher and mother have noticed a marked change in her confidence and motivation. She has started to question what will happen next, attempting longer words and choosing more advanced books. This has caused her to go up a reading level and her volunteer commented on a drastic difference in her reading scores.

Not only has there been improvements in her reading but there has also been a knock on impact on her other skills such as her writing, independence and general self-confidence. Her mother describes her as bubbly and her teacher notes she has increased concentration and independence with her work at school.

Her mother also notes how she has learned techniques from the volunteer who read with her on how to adapt her teaching style for Penny, breaking down words. She now feels she is no longer a barrier to the child's reading and truly appreciates the support TutorMate has given both her and Penny.

\* Names have been changed where necessary in order to protect anonymity.



# With huge thanks to our corporate partners and volunteers!

Our work is made possible by the support of our amazing corporate partners whose staff are our reading volunteers. From 31 partners in 2018, we now have 112 and counting! Many are supporting our work for the 4th or 5th year.

Our volunteers highly value the flexibility and convenience of TutorMate's online model which enables them to make a direct impact on the future of a disadvantaged children in a flexible and time-efficient way.



**In interviews, volunteers also routinely recognise and value the impact that the 1:1 interaction with a child has on their own wellbeing and development.**

*"My favourite 30 minutes of the week! I'm finding TutorMate really easy to use and most importantly Jayden loves it. He doesn't read much out of school or have many books at home...I've seen his confidence increase in all sorts of ways...I was initially skeptical of this not being 'face to face' but it works surprisingly well and means that there is no wasted time getting to and from the school."*

– Roger Thompson, Chief Financial Officer, Janus Henderson Investors



*"Sometimes when you volunteer, you can be quite a few steps removed from the beneficiaries. With TutorMate you have real interaction with the child you are helping. Reading with a child over the course of a school year allows you to build up a rapport, establish a relationship with them and watch them grow."*

– Samantha Scott, Sodexo

*"I have been volunteering with TutorMate for several months now, and I absolutely LOVE it. The platform works perfectly and my 30 minute weekly slot can be flexible to fit with my schedule. My mentee's reading level has increased twice since I started, which has been immensely satisfying."*

– Philip Kenley, Senior Manager, Salesforce

*"The student I have been paired with is so engaged and clearly enjoys our weekly session too. He even said last week that 'we're so lucky to be doing this' and 'I love this'. I'm already looking forward to next week!"*

– Dom Rooney, Wates Group

*"Despite life returning to normal in 2022, this virtual volunteering opportunity remains one of our most popular programmes! The platform is safe, tutoring times are flexible and it is a quality interaction with the child!"*

– Krishen Vaya, Ocado Group

*"With TutorMate, I know I'm making an impact. I'm seeing it, literally making it directly, which is incredible!"*

– Laura Haigh, Rothschild & Co

# Appendix: Methodology and lessons learned

## Data sources 2018-19

- Pre- and post- intervention reading session and progress data from our platform for a randomised selection of schools
- Pre- and post-intervention child attitudinal surveys to measure any changes in reading enjoyment, behaviour and confidence vs a comparison group from the wider class
- Post-intervention teacher questionnaires gathering perspectives on changes in children's reading enjoyment and confidence
- Post-intervention volunteer surveys to explore their experience and perception of the benefits of TutorMate for children and themselves

## What lessons did we take into 2019-21?

We decided to increase our sample size, reframe our comparison group composition and deepen the rigour of our analysis using validated scales for 2019-20.

## Data sources 2019-21 (disrupted by Covid!)

- Pre- and post- intervention reading session and progress data from our platform for randomised selection of schools
- Pre- and post-intervention child attitudinal questionnaires using validated scales to measure any changes in reading enjoyment, self-efficacy and confidence (participants vs a matched control group)
- Pre- and post-intervention teacher questionnaires using validated scales to establish teacher views on changes in children's reading ability and self-efficacy (participants vs a matched control group)
- Post-intervention teacher surveys gathering perspectives on changes in children's reading enjoyment and confidence
- Post-intervention volunteer surveys to explore their experience and perception of the benefits of TutorMate for children and themselves

## What lessons did we take into 2021-22?

Covid-19 pandemic challenges compromised both the work of the programme and data collection, so our sample size and results were incomplete. We refined our design and decided to include more qualitative elements for 2021-22.

## Data sources 2021-22

- Pre- and post- intervention reading session and progress data from our platform for a randomised selection of schools
- Pre- and post-intervention child attitudinal questionnaires using validated scales to measure any changes in reading enjoyment, self-efficacy and confidence (participants vs a matched control group\*)
- Pre- and post-intervention teacher questionnaires using validated scales to establish teacher views on changes in children's reading ability and self-efficacy (participants vs a matched control group\*)
- Post-intervention teacher surveys gathering perspectives on changes in children's reading enjoyment and confidence
- Post-intervention volunteer surveys to explore their experience and perception of the benefits of TutorMate for children and themselves
- Focus groups with teachers
- Interviews with teachers, parents and volunteers

## What lessons did we take into 2022-23?

The additional investment we made in qualitative methods was valuable. However, it became clear that the matched control group that we'd aimed for, was not in fact matched, but rather a higher-achieving comparison group. The challenges in devising a control group methodology have led us to redesign our approach for 2022 and beyond.



# What next for our impact and evaluation journey?

We are constantly looking to improve how we measure our impact. For the 2022-23 year, we've decided to pause our pupil surveys because of the limitations of finding reliable ways to ask such young children for their written feedback. We have also changed the teacher survey so that it will be completed online and have a new emphasis on reading behaviours. We are giving more guidance to teachers on their selection of a control group, although we increasingly recognise that establishing a robust control group without a large scale trial is a challenge! We're also investing more in seeking qualitative feedback from volunteers and teachers.

**TutorMate**<sup>®</sup>  
Online Literacy Programme



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Registered Company No. 11116416

Innovations for Learning is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children and young people and requires all staff and volunteers to share this commitment and undertake DBS checks as appropriate for their role.

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