What works for raising the attainment of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds?

What is the intervention?

**Pupil mentoring**

What does it involve?

- Pupil mentoring can take place through either learning mentors or peer mentors.
- **Learning mentors** are salaried, non-teaching school support staff who work with school pupils and post-16 learners of all abilities to help them address barriers to learning. These barriers can be wide-ranging and often personal to the individual in question. They include the need to develop better learning and study skills, personal organisation and coping strategies to deal with difficulties at home, behaviour, bullying or general disaffection and disengagement.
- **Peer mentoring** or mediation involves problem solving between children who are in conflict. It is often used to stop bullying and is part of a ‘no blame’ approach and can lead to a reduction in disputes, exclusions and violence. The aim is that children learn the skills of conflict resolutions (e.g. recognising the impact of quarrelling on others and how conflict can be resolved).

Who has it been used for?

- Learning mentors have been used in both primary and secondary schools.
- Pupil perceptions of learning mentors are generally positive. Pupils value the one-to-one aspects of the learning mentor role and often use learning mentors to mediate for them when relationships with teachers and/or pastoral staff have broken down.
- Teachers also view learning mentors positively. They value having access to non-teaching professionals who provide an alternative viewpoint and a different approach to pastoral work. Any negative opinion of learning mentors tends to decline over time as the learning mentor role becomes more established and accepted.
- Peer mentoring is the most common form of peer support used in secondary schools.

What impact does it have?

- Overall there is evidence that certain aspects of mentoring programmes and mentoring relationships have greater potential than others to maximise impact.

**Learning mentors**

- Meta-analyses of mentoring programmes (which include learning mentors) show that mentoring programmes have a significant and measurable effect on the young people who take part in them, but that the size of this effect is generally modest.
- Learning mentors can contribute to improving the attendance of the pupils they mentor, though the extent to which any improvements can be attributed directly to the work of learning mentors is unclear.
- Evidence is inconclusive as to whether learning mentors can help to improve pupil attainment. Qualitative evidence suggests that a positive impact is likely but quantitative analyses do not identify an effect.
Learning mentors are heavily involved in strategies to improve behaviour in schools and can help to realise this improvement.

Learning mentors can help to realise positive changes in the attitudes of the pupils they work with.

**Peer mentoring**

- Evidence from pupil surveys suggests that the majority of pupils finds peer mentoring useful and helpful.
- Peer mentoring has been found effective in helping primary school pupils with their transition to secondary school.
- There is mixed evidence on the impact of peer mentoring and support in relation to the reduction of the incidence of bullying and enhancing the perceptions of feeling safe at schools, as well as to attendance and behaviour.
- ‘Formalisation’ of peer mentoring has been associated with positive outcomes. This include:
  - pre-arranged mentor-mentee meetings set time, set place each week; formal meetings between mentors and mentees; designated mentoring area within the school; scheme coordinator available ‘around’ for sessions; mentor-mentee pairs being well matched with similar hobbies/interests; same gender mentee-mentor pairs; approachable scheme coordinators; having strong support systems in place.

*Where can I find out more information? Research evidence sources:*


