

What is Tutoring with Alphie?

Tutoring with Alphie (TWA) is a web-based reading intervention programme with a proven record of success. The programme addresses pupils' individual needs for phonics and reading. Pupils are assessed in their first session to identify the level at which they will enter the programme and this is then used to automatically set appropriate activities. Daily tutoring sessions take about 30 minutes. Tutors can be trained via 3 online or face to face sessions of approximately 1 hour each. Once trained, tutors can run sessions with up to 6 pupils. Depending on school resources, each tutor could tutor 20 to 30 pupils a day. Pupils usually work in partnerships but the programme can also be run 1 to 1 with an individual pupil and a tutor.

The web-based programme can be used in the school or remotely with game-based elements that teach phonics, fluency, and comprehension as children read with a peer partner, alternating roles as "coach" and "player."

A child's initial session with TWA consists of a detailed assessment of all their reading skills so that the online programme can set tasks at exactly the right level. TWA then takes this information and systematically fills all the gaps in phonics and early reading skills.

Tutoring with Alphie was evaluated in three major studies, which found substantial positive effects of the programme, averaging an effect size of +0.43, or about five months of additional gain over an eight-month period of tutoring.

How are schools using the programme?

Since January 2020, 10 schools across England have been using the programme to support as many pupils as they can facilitate to catch-up.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic schools were utilising Teaching Assistants to run the programme with targeted pupils in school, mainly in afternoon sessions.

All schools received training, support and guidance from their SfA Implementation Partner to set up the programme, select pupils and commence the sessions.

How are schools using the programme during the pandemic?

As schools remained open to vulnerable or key worker children several schools were able to continue with tutoring sessions in school. Where the technology was available, schools are successfully continuing to deliver tutoring sessions remotely with pupils in their homes. One school has managed to complete nearly 100 sessions with 16 children in Y1, 2 & 3. A second school has to date completed almost 90 sessions with 10 pupils from March to the end of June.

The overall impact of Tutoring with Alphie

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has interrupted the full data analysis that was planned for July. However, all 10 schools have reported positively on the impact of the programme. Here is a selection of feedback:

"All but one of the 16 children have moved up from their initial assessment, the child who didn't move up has complex speech and language needs." School 1

"All children have made progress and their confidence has grown." School 2

"Year 1 children have made excellent progress since embarking upon the TWA programme. Grapheme-Phoneme correspondence has improved for all children and children are also applying this back in class." School 3

"The children receiving tutoring were making accelerated progress prior to lockdown. As well as noticing an increase in attainment, class teachers were commenting on the progress the children had made, as were parents. Many of the parents also discussed how the children's confidence and attitude to school had improved." School 4

"84% of pupils made progress between November's baseline assessment and February's reassessment. Those who didn't have complex needs." School 10

In addition, schools using the programme remotely during lockdown have commented on the impact it is having, supporting the most reluctant children and their parents to engage in their learning and reading!