Cost	Evidence strength	Impact (months)	Effect size
£££		+2	0.13

What is it?

Mentoring in education involves pairing young people with an older peer or adult volunteer, who acts as a positive role model. In general, mentoring aims to build confidence and relationships, to develop resilience and character, or raise aspirations, rather than to develop specific academic skills or knowledge.

Mentors typically build relationships with young people by meeting with them one to one for about an hour a week over a sustained period, either during school, at the end of the school day, or at weekends. In some approaches mentors may meet with their mentees in small groups.

Activities vary between different mentoring programmes. While some mentoring programmes include academic support with homework or other school tasks, approaches focused primarily on direct academic support (sometimes referred to as “academic mentoring”) are not covered in this strand. See one to one tuition and peer tutoring.

Mentoring has increasingly been offered to young people who are deemed to be hard to reach or at risk of educational failure or exclusion.

Key Findings

1. The impact of mentoring varies but, on average, it is likely to have a small positive impact on attainment.

2. Positive effects on attainment tend not to be sustained once the mentoring stops, so care must be taken to ensure that benefits are not lost. It is important to consider how you can support pupils who have benefitted from mentoring to retain positive changes in their confidence and behaviour.

3. Both community-based and school-based approaches can be successful.

4. Mentor drop-out can have detrimental effects on mentees. It is important to consider how to support mentors.

How effective is the approach?

On average, mentoring appears to have a small positive impact on academic outcomes. The impacts of individual programmes vary. Some studies have found more positive impacts for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, and for non-academic outcomes such as attitudes to school, attendance and behaviour.

There are risks associated with unsuccessful mentor pairings, which may have a detrimental effect on the mentee, and some studies report negative overall impacts.

Programmes which have a clear structure and expectations, provide training and support for mentors, and recruit mentors who are volunteers, are associated with more successful outcomes.

There is no evidence that approaches with a single focus on improving academic attainment or performance are more effective, programmes with multiple objectives can be equally or more effective.

The evidence of mentoring programs directed at pupils in schools in the Arab world is limited. The evidence that does exist mainly focuses on outcomes other than attainment and of older students attending university. Interviews with mentoring participants show that mentoring programs are regarded as supportive environments for students. Particularly, in the Arab world, female students found that being mentored by another female helped them overcome their learning challenges and increased their self-confidence.

Some programs in the Arab world have explored mentoring of teachers (the global evidence summarized in the Toolkit focuses on mentoring of pupils). Teachers in these studies reported that the programs helped them to self-reflect on their teaching strategies and develop their job effectiveness. Individuals engaged in the mentoring activity showed an improvement on their leadership skills. A survey of school Principals in Kuwait found that Principals reported that mentoring improved their leadership and management skills that were deemed necessary to overcome the day-to day principalship issues. It also strengthened the relationships between students and their faculty and created a bridge between schools and universities.

Behind the average

Studies have been undertaken in both primary and secondary school settings with similar impacts.

Overall impact on mathematics and general school subjects tends to be higher than on reading or science outcomes.

Regular meetings of once a week or more frequently appear to be most effective.

Closing the disadvantage gap

While mentoring is not generally as effective in raising attainment outcomes as small group or one to one tuition, it is possible to target the approach to pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with particular needs. Some evidence suggests that some pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds show low engagement with or have low expectations of schooling. Mentoring interventions may be more beneficial for these pupils, as the development of trusting relationships with an adult or older peer can provide a different source of support.

Mentors dropping out of programmes can result in detrimental effects for pupils. For pupils who may have already experienced disillusion at their perceived lack of support from teachers and school, this risk may be intensified. Therefore, additional care should be given to the recruitment of reliable mentors when interventions are being used to support disadvantaged pupils.

How could you implement in your setting?

Mentoring requires close interaction between an adult or older peer and one or a small group of pupils. Conversations between mentors and mentees may address but would not be limited to: attitudes to school; specific academic skills or knowledge; self-perception and belief, particularly in relation to school-work; aspirations for future studies and career options. It is important to consider what support mentors might require to effectively deliver mentoring.

Mentoring interactions normally occur one to one between mentor and mentee – although mentors can mentor multiple pupils. Some mentoring approaches also include small group interactions.

Mentoring interventions are typically delivered over an extended period of time (often at least the length of a school year) in order to allow mentors and mentees to develop more lasting and trusting relationships. Frequent regular meetings of once a week or more tend to be more beneficial.

When introducing new approaches, schools should consider implementation. For more information see **Putting Evidence to Work – A School's Guide to Implementation.**

What does it cost?

The global evidence indicates that the average cost of a mentoring intervention is moderate. The cost to schools is largely based on mentor training, salary costs (for non-volunteer mentors) and resources. Some programmes also include continuous training and support for mentors which may increase costs.

Implementing mentoring interventions will also require a moderate and sustained amount of staff time, compared with other approaches.

Alongside time and cost, school leaders should consider how to maximise the recruitment of effective and reliable mentors that are well matched to mentees. Consideration should also be given to how any gains made in pupil confidence, resilience or aspiration are to be maintained after the intended period of mentoring, as studies show these changes can be difficult to sustain.

As yet there is no information about local costs.

How secure is the evidence?

The security of the evidence around mentoring is rated as moderate. 44 studies were identified that meet the inclusion criteria of the Toolkit.

As with any evidence review, the Toolkit summarises the average impact of approaches when researched in academic studies. It is important to consider your context and apply your professional judgement when implementing an approach in your setting.