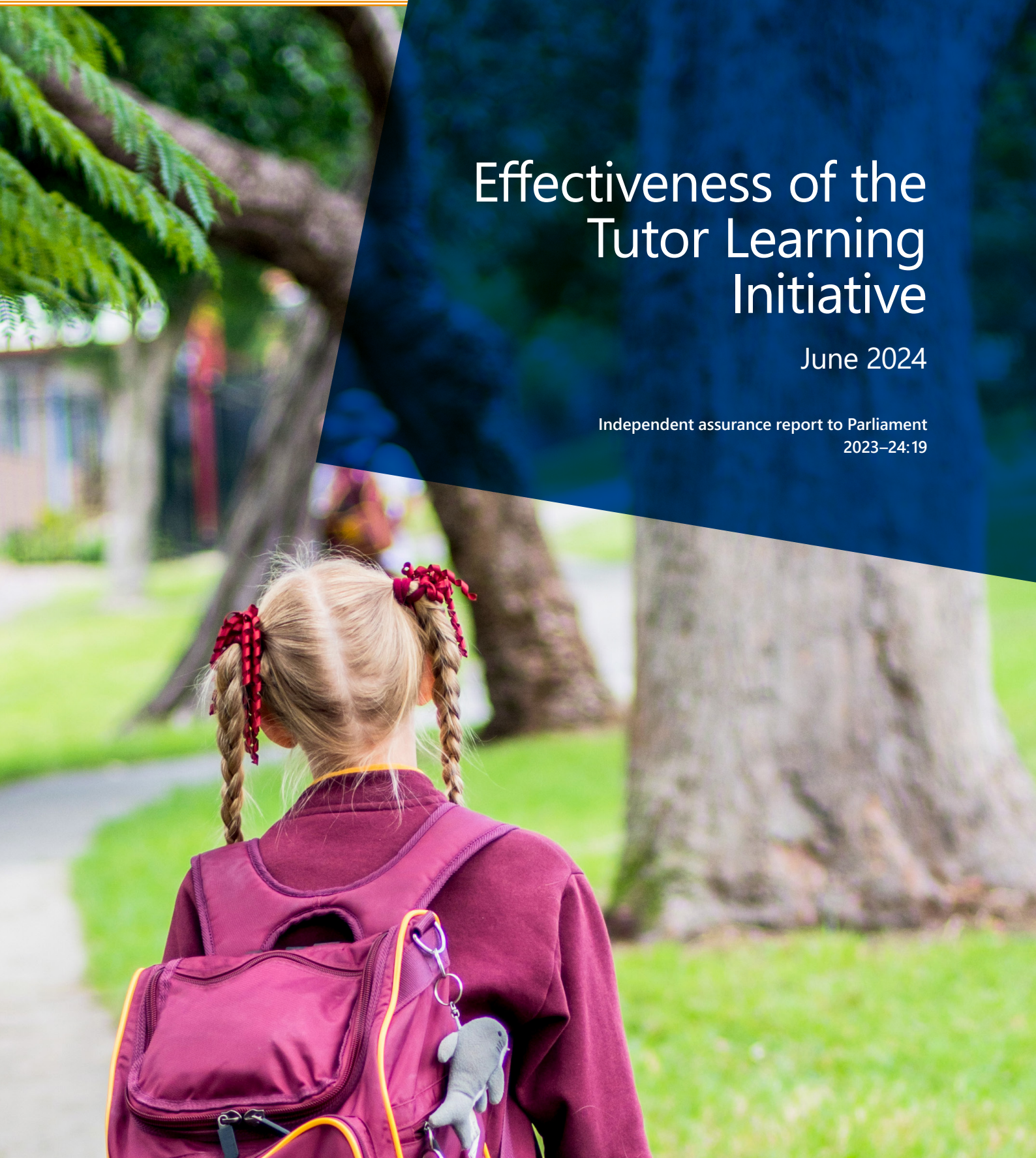


# Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative

June 2024

Independent assurance report to Parliament  
2023–24:19



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# Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative

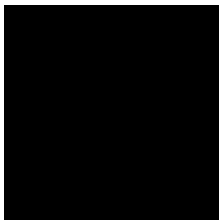
The Hon Shaun Leane MLC  
President  
Legislative Council  
Parliament House  
Melbourne

The Hon Maree Edwards MP  
Speaker  
Legislative Assembly  
Parliament House  
Melbourne

Dear Presiding Officers

Under the provisions of the *Audit Act 1994*, I transmit my report *Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative*.

Yours faithfully



Andrew Greaves  
Auditor-General  
19 June 2024

The Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters throughout Victoria. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their continuing culture, and to Elders past and present.

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# Audit snapshot

## What we examined

We examined whether the Tutor Learning Initiative improved learning and engagement outcomes for participating students in government schools.

Agency examined: Department of Education.

## Why this is important

When students fall behind in school, not getting the support they need can have lifelong consequences. Small group tutoring can help these students catch up and succeed in the classroom.

The Victorian Government has invested \$1.2 billion in the Tutor Learning Initiative (the initiative). This statewide program funds schools to employ tutors to deliver targeted small group learning support to students who need it most.

The Department of Education (the department) has a responsibility to improve schools' delivery so these statewide programs achieve their objectives.

## What we concluded

We found that the initiative did not significantly improve students' learning compared to similar non-tutored students.

The department provided effective support so that schools delivered tutoring when students needed it.

Many schools' tutoring practices in 2023 were not fully effective. When this happened, schools' tutoring was not well targeted and not well enough connected to students' classroom learning and their particular learning needs.

The department can do more to improve schools' delivery of the initiative. The department has the information it needs to do this but has not used it to drive improvement.

## What we recommended

We made 2 recommendations to the department about improving the delivery of the initiative and one recommendation about:

- adopting a staged roll-out for system-wide programs
- using the department's implementation tools to improve schools' delivery of the initiative.

[→ Full recommendations](#)

## Key facts



The initiative is the **largest** single initiative in targeted learning support in Victoria's history with total funding of over **\$1.2 billion** from 2021 to 2025

Over **1,500** government schools have participated in the initiative every year since 2021



Around **600** low-fee non-government schools have participated in the initiative every year since 2021

Over **127,000** government school students participated in the initiative in 2023



Over **44,000** low-fee non-government school students participated in the initiative in 2023

Note: Further information about the tutoring model is available in Appendix D.  
Source: VAGO.

# Our recommendations

We made 3 recommendations to address one issue. The agency has accepted all recommendations in full or in principle.

Key issue and corresponding recommendations	Agency response	
<b>Issue: The Department of Education can do more to improve schools' delivery of the Tutor Learning Initiative</b>		
Department of Education	<b>1</b> Collect and analyse data on schools' tutoring model and dosage so the Department of Education understands and promotes the models and dosage that are effective for different school types and student groups (see Section 2).	Accepted
	<b>2</b> Establish measurable goals for schools' performance in the Tutor Learning Initiative with processes to drive sustained improvement (see sections 2 and 3).	Accepted in principle
	<b>3</b> Establish practices and procedures to pilot statewide learning interventions so that the Department of Education understands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• program operation and performance for different school types and student groups</li> <li>• expected benefits of the program and the school support needed to achieve these benefits across the state (see Section 3).</li> </ul>	Accepted

# What we found

This section summarises our key findings. The chapters detail our complete findings, including supporting evidence.

When reaching our conclusions, we consulted with the audited agency and considered its views. The agency's full response is in Appendix A.

**Why we did this audit** The Tutor Learning Initiative (the initiative) is receiving total funding of over \$1.2 billion over 5 years. This is a significant investment to improve learning outcomes for students who need it most.

It is important to understand if the initiative is achieving this to make sure all Victorian students get the help they need to learn at their best.

Over 1,500 government schools and over 600 low-fee non-government schools have participated in the initiative each year since 2021. In this audit we looked at government schools.

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**The initiative's objective** In October 2020, the Victorian Government announced the initiative to support students whose learning had been most disrupted by the COVID-19 response.

The initiative gives funding to schools for tutors to work with students and address their particular learning needs. It began in 2021 and the government has funded it until the end of 2025.

From 2023, the Department of Education (the department) shifted the initiative's focus to support students whose literacy and numeracy skills were below the expected level for their year.

The initiative is an additional support to help students who are behind in their learning to catch up and continue learning with their peers in the classroom.

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**Effective tutoring** The initiative funds a model of tutoring called small group learning, where a tutor works with groups of 2 to 5 students with similar learning needs. The tutor, who must be a qualified teacher, generally works with students in regular sessions for 6 to 20 weeks.

Tutoring sessions addresses gaps in students' knowledge or skills. Once these gaps are closed, students continue learning in the classroom with quality teaching that is adapted to their needs.

Research in Australia and overseas shows that tutoring can be highly effective to help students catch up with their learning.

<b>Tutoring is effective when it is ...</b>	<b>This means that students ...</b>
timely	receive support when they need it most.
targeted	learn the skills they need most.
appropriate to school context	learn in a tutoring environment that is integrated with the way their school runs.
appropriate to student need	learn with approaches designed to meet their particular skills gaps.

---



**Our key findings** Our findings fall into 3 key areas:

1	Overall, the initiative did not have a significant impact on students' learning results compared to similar non-tutored students.
2	Many schools' tutoring practices were not fully effective in ways that are targeted and appropriate to school context and student need.
3	The department can do more to improve schools' delivery of the initiative. It has the information to do this but is not using it to drive improvement.

## Key finding 1: The initiative did not have a significant impact on students' learning results compared to similar non-tutored students

**Expectations of learning gain** The initiative is intended for students who begin the year behind their peers to receive tutoring and to:

- catch up with their learning
- continue learning in the classroom with their peers.

To do this, tutored students need to learn faster than they would have without tutoring and faster than their classroom peers who are not receiving tutoring.

For the initiative to be effective overall, we expect tutored students who receive tutoring should have greater learning gains than similar students who did not.

This means they will have learnt at a faster rate than their non-tutored peers and are more likely to catch up to their expected level.

**No significant effect**

Students who received tutoring in 2023 did not show greater learning gains than similar students who did not receive tutoring.

We looked at results for students who received tutoring compared to students who did not. We used test data from the department to measure how much students learnt in 2023 by comparing their 2022 and 2023 test scores.

When we compared similar students from each group, we found that students who received tutoring learnt less than those who did not receive tutoring.

Among disadvantaged students, there was no difference in learning gains between tutored and non-tutored students. There was also no significant difference in learning gains between tutored students in metropolitan, regional or rural Victoria.

## Key finding 2: Many schools' tutoring practices in 2023 were not fully effective

**Many schools did not have fully effective tutoring practices**

We analysed schools' delivery of the initiative against the continuous improvement tool the department uses. This tool describes the elements of effective tutoring and uses a 4-point maturity scale to measure schools' tutoring practices.

After having offered tutoring throughout 2021 and 2022, fewer than one-third of all government schools in 2023 had fully effective tutoring practices that were targeted, appropriate to school context and appropriate to student need.

We found primary schools generally had more effective tutoring than other school types.

Our audit focuses on schools' tutoring practices in 2023. This is because in previous years, staff and student absences (because of COVID-19 and influenza) affected schools' tutoring programs. Schools were also delivering most of their learning remotely in 2021.

**Tutoring was timely despite workforce shortages**

We found schools have generally provided tutoring in a timely way for each school term.

The department's recruitment support has been effective, particularly for schools facing challenges such as secondary and rural schools. The department also provided rural schools with additional support through its Virtual Tutor Program.

Survey data from school principals shows that teacher workforce shortages have meant schools could not always meet tutoring demand. This is particularly the case for secondary schools and primary–secondary schools.

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### **Key finding 3: The department can do more to improve schools' delivery of the initiative**

**The department monitors schools' delivery**

The department:

- monitors schools' delivery of the initiative
- regularly collects data from school leaders about the initiative
- evaluated the initiative in 2021 and 2022
- uses assessment data to understand students' learning gains.

The department provides support and guidance to schools and has adapted this support based on its evaluation findings.

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**The department's current support is not enough to drive improvement**

We examined the proportion of schools whose tutoring practices were rated as fully or partially effective in achieving student learning growth.

We found that between 2021 and 2023, the department's support and guidance had not been enough to drive sustained and significant improvement in schools' practices.

The department has also not used its monitoring data to drive improvement in schools' tutoring practices. It has evaluation findings about the initiative's impact on student learning outcomes. But it has not used these findings to generate system-wide improvements.

For the initiative to improve learning outcomes for students, the department must make a sustained effort to understand what works, why it works and how to support all schools to be fully effective.

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# 1.

## Impact of the initiative

Overall, the initiative did not sufficiently improve students' learning results compared to similar non-tutored students.

### Understanding improvements in students' learning

**Expected learning benefits** The department wants students who receive tutoring to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to help them succeed in the general classroom.

All students learn and increase their skills over the school year. But not all students begin the year at the same level.

If all students learn at similar rates, those who are behind at the start of the year will still be behind at the end. And they may move further behind as the class moves on.

The initiative offers tutoring to these students to help them catch up to their expected level. To do this, they need to learn faster than they would have without tutoring and faster than their non-tutored classroom peers.

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**Measuring learning benefits** Teachers measure students' learning in different ways throughout the school year. The type of assessment a teacher uses depend on the student's age, stage of learning and other factors, such as whether English is an additional language for the student or if they have a disability.

But using different tests makes it difficult to compare students' learning and measure how they benefit from tutoring.

To address this, the department made 2 tests available to all government schools. They are the:

- Progressive Achievement Test – Reading (PAT Reading)
- Progressive Achievement Test – Mathematics (PAT Maths).

The department encourages schools to use these tests at the beginning and end of the school year for years 3 to 10. It collects the test data and can analyse students' learning gains.

While these tests do not cover all students receiving tutoring, they do make it possible to measure learning gain for most students participating in the initiative in each year.

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**Our analysis** We used PAT Reading and PAT Maths data for 2021 to 2023 to understand students' learning gains.

The results we discuss in this report are for students who received tutoring in 2023. This is because by then, schools have had 2 full years to implement and refine their tutoring models and meet students' needs. We note that schools' delivery in 2021 and 2022 was affected by COVID-19 and influenza.

We assessed how much students who received tutoring had learnt during the year. We did this in 3 ways using unmatched and matched analysis.

<b>Unmatched analysis</b>	We compared the learning gains for all tutored students with all non-tutored students.
<b>Matched analysis</b>	We grouped tutored students with non-tutored students with similar test scores and characteristics, such as disadvantage and where they lived.  We compared the learning gains of tutored and non-tutored students who had the same test scores at the end of 2022.

For the initiative to be effective overall, we would expect students who received tutoring to have greater learning gains than similar students who did not. This would mean they will have learnt more quickly than their peers and be more likely to catch up to their expected literacy and numeracy levels.

This means we relied on matched analysis to assess the impact of tutoring on students.

**Further information**

For in-depth information about the methodologies we used and students' learning gains, see Appendix E and Appendix F.

## The initiative did not substantially improve students' learning results

**Tutoring had no strong impact on students' learning results**

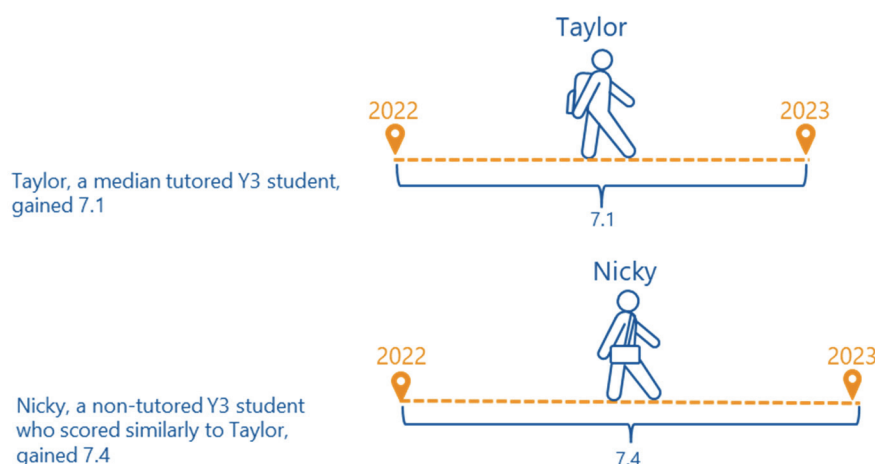
Students who received tutoring in 2023 did not show more learning gains than similar students who did not receive tutoring. This means tutored students remained behind their classroom peers at the end of 2023.

Figure 1 shows the case of year 3 reading. The reading score of a median tutored year 3 student increased by 7.1 over 2023. In this illustration we call this student Taylor.

A median year 3 student who had a similar reading score at the end of 2022 but did not receive tutoring gained 7.4 over the same period. We call this student Nicky.

If the initiative was effective, Taylor's learning gain should be more than Nicky's – not the other way around.

Figure 1: Reading learning gains in year 3 for median tutored and non-tutored students with similar prior scores



Note: This example reflects the highest level of learning gain for tutored students VAGO observed across all year levels and learning focus.  
Source: VAGO, using department data.

Other comparisons show no significant impact

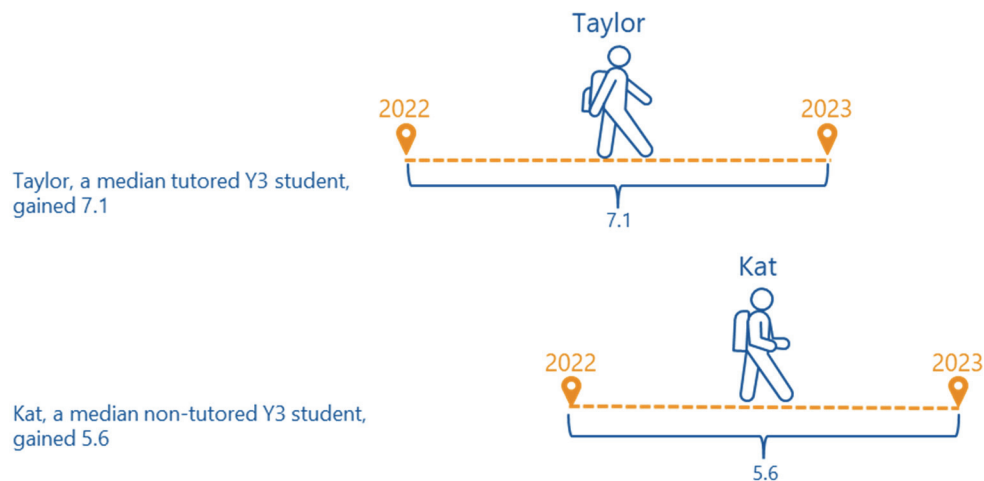
Another approach is to compare the scores of the median student who received tutoring in 2023 with the median student who did not, without considering their prior scores at the end of 2022.

Figure 2 shows this comparison, again using the case of year 3 reading.

We call the median student who did not receive tutoring Kat. Kat's learning gain over 2023 was 5.6, compared to the median tutored student Taylor's learning gain of 7.1.

This comparison seems to show that tutoring was effective. But it does not consider the fact that Kat's score at the end of 2022 was higher than Taylor's.

Figure 2: Reading learning gains in year 3 for median tutored and non-tutored students



Source: VAGO, using department data.

We used the comparison between similarly skilled students to assess the initiative's effectiveness (Taylor compared to Nicky, as shown in Figure 1). This is because we wanted to accurately quantify the initiative's effect by removing the impacts of prior scores.

Within the limitations of the data, we attempted to address this by creating a comparable group who did not participate in the initiative.

But whichever comparison we use, Taylor remains behind his peers at the end of 2023.

The initiative has not achieved its intended outcome, which is for tutored students to improve their literacy and numeracy skills to succeed in the general classroom.

The learning gains shown in figures 1 and 2 are based on the year 3 reading results. According to the available data (years 3 to 10), year 3 students had the highest learning gains of all year levels in both reading and maths, for tutored and non-tutored students. From year 3 onward, students' learning generally slowed whether they received tutoring or not.

For a detailed breakdown of students' learning gains in all year levels in reading and maths, see Appendix F, figures F1 and F2.

Effect on students with different characteristics

We looked at whether the initiative was more effective for some groups of students than others.

Disadvantaged students who received tutoring did not have more learning gain than disadvantaged students who did not receive tutoring.

There was also no significant difference in learning gains between tutored students in metropolitan, regional or rural Victoria.

For a detailed breakdown of learning gains for disadvantaged students in all year levels, see Appendix F, figures F3 and F4.

## Limitations to analysis

Both this audit and the department's analysis have limitations that may influence estimates of the initiative's impact. These limitations (see Figure 3) affect how certain we can be about the effect of tutoring on each student who participated in the initiative.

Figure 3: Limitations in data that may affect results

Limitation	Impact on understanding students' learning gain
Unknown or unmeasured factors	It is not possible to know or accurately measure all the factors that affected each student's learning.
Limited data on the type of tutoring students received	The department's data shows if a student participated in tutoring. But it does not show if the student attended one or all tutoring sessions, or which tutoring method was used.
Support from other programs	Students may have participated in other programs to support their learning, whether at school or at home. If they have, we could not attribute their learning gain only to the initiative.

Source: VAGO.

Our analysis still provides a reliable understanding of how effective the initiative is overall.

But there is not enough data to fully understand how and where the initiative is working well and which tutoring model works best for different students' learning needs.

## The initiative improved student engagement but it did not improve school attendance

### Expected engagement benefits

The department intends for students participating in the initiative to engage more with education. It measures this through:

- school leader and tutor reports of student learning engagement
- school attendance data.

Through regular surveys, school leaders and tutors have told the department that they see students becoming more engaged in their learning because of the initiative.

### No effect on student attendance

We analysed student absence and demographic data to estimate the effect of tutoring on student absences.

Our baseline measure was the total number of absence days for all students in 2022. We looked at the same data for 2023 and checked whether there was a difference between tutored and non-tutored students.

We did not find any consistent, discernible effect the initiative had on tutored students' absence days in 2023.

# 2.

## Implementing the initiative

In 2023, most schools delivered tutoring in a timely way but did not have fully effective tutoring practices. Primary schools were more likely to be better at delivering the initiative than secondary schools.

### The department supports schools to deliver the initiative

What effective tutoring looks like

Effective tutoring has 4 key requirements.

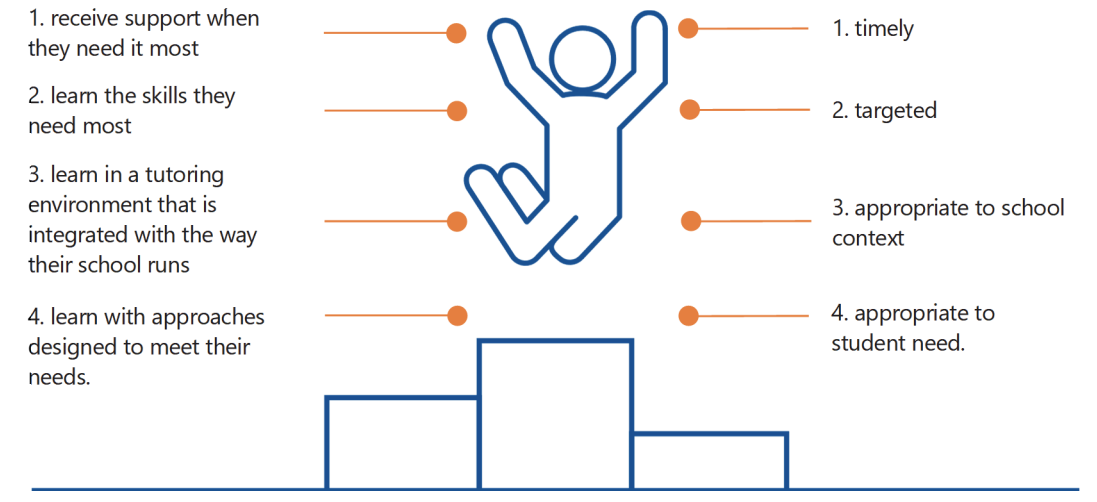
In this audit, we looked at 4 elements of the initiative's implementation

#### Students need to ...

1. receive support when they need it most
2. learn the skills they need most
3. learn in a tutoring environment that is integrated with the way their school runs
4. learn with approaches designed to meet their needs.

#### Tutoring needs to be ...

1. timely
2. targeted
3. appropriate to school context
4. appropriate to student need.



### Support for schools' tutoring models

The department is responsible for establishing, managing, monitoring and reporting on the initiative.

Schools are responsible for delivering the initiative to their students within the department's guidelines. They have the flexibility to design a model that works best for their school setting and students' needs.

The department supports schools through:

- policy and guidance
- staffing resources
- funding
- professional practice guides.

This support includes information about:

- tutor arrangements
- student selection
- program design
- assessment
- monitoring requirements.

Schools have access to department staff who help schools design and deliver the initiative.

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### Further information

For in-depth background information, see Appendix D.

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## How schools delivered the initiative in 2023

### Framework for monitoring schools' delivery

The department has designed a framework to help schools to reflect on, self-evaluate and track their progress in delivering the initiative. It calls this framework the Tutor Learning Initiative Implementation Continua (the framework).

This framework describes what effective tutoring practice looks like across 6 dimensions.

This information, together with the department's Tutor Practice Guide, helps schools design and deliver a tutoring model for their school community.

The department uses the framework to rate schools' progress in each of its dimensions on a 4-point scale:

- emerging
- evolving
- embedding
- excelling.

School leaders, teachers and tutors may work with department staff to reflect on the schools' tutoring model and how it supports student's learning. They then identify where and how to improve the tutoring. Appendix G includes the framework's tutoring dimensions and 4-point scale.

---

### We assessed schools' delivery based on the framework's data

Department staff record the dimension ratings of schools twice per year. The department collects this data in its School Evaluation and Evidence Database.



This means schools and the department have the data they need to understand areas of effective practice and areas for improvement. The department does not set benchmarks for schools' performance against the framework.

We used this data to understand how well schools delivered the initiative in 2023 based on 3 elements of effective tutoring practice.

<b>We assess if tutoring is ...</b>	<b>To achieve this, schools need to ...</b>	<b>This is aligned with the framework dimension(s) ...</b>
targeted	select students for the right type of tutoring	student selection and focus area
appropriate to school context	lead effective tutoring practice across the whole school	school leadership
appropriate to student need	design a tutoring model that responds to students' learning needs and monitors their learning growth	tutoring model and dosage collaboration, curriculum and practice monitoring learning growth student voice.

For the fourth element of timely access to tutoring, we tested schools' ability to offer tutoring by week 6 of each term.

#### Use of the framework's rating scale

In this audit, we based our analysis of the effectiveness of schools' tutoring practices on the framework's rating scale.

We used schools' ratings in semester 1, 2023 as a snapshot of how they are delivering the initiative.

<b>For each dimension, we consider a school to have ...</b>	<b>If the dimension is rated as ...</b>	<b>Based on the department's instruction that ...</b>
fully effective practices	excelling	'excelling' is associated with sustained learning gain for most students and the school uses a well-developed Response to Intervention model to support students into and out of the initiative.
partially effective practices	embedding	'embedding' is associated with some learning gain for some students and there is some evidence the school uses a Response to Intervention model.
insufficient practice	emerging or evolving	'emerging' and 'evolving' are not associated with student learning gain or that the school uses a Response to Intervention model.

#### **Response to Intervention model**

In the Response to Intervention model, each tutoring session addresses gaps in students' knowledge or skills. Once these gaps are closed, students continue learning in the classroom with quality teaching practice that is adapted to their needs.

The Response to Intervention model also requires schools to offer students support from a range of learning or behaviour programs at a level that best responds to their individual needs.

#### Expectations of schools' delivery by 2023

For students to get the learning support they need, as many schools as possible should be practicing effective tutoring.

When schools excel across all or most dimensions, the department and other schools can learn about what worked well in different circumstances. Schools rated as 'embedding' can use the framework to identify what they can change to better help more students.

We do not expect to see all schools rated as 'excelling'. But we do expect most schools to be rated as either 'excelling' or 'embedding'. In 2023, this was achieved on all dimensions of tutoring except for one.

We keep these categories separate because there is significant variation in performance across the dimensions. This is particularly the case for the critical elements of tutoring model and dosage, collaboration curriculum and practice, and monitoring learning growth.

There is a material difference between 'excelling' and 'embedding' with regards to the impact on students' learning. For this reason, this report distinguishes between the 2.

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### Constraints on schools' delivery

This audit focuses on schools' delivery of the initiative in 2023. This is because in previous years, staff and student absences (because of COVID-19 and influenza) affected schools' tutoring programs. Schools were also delivering most of their learning remotely in 2021.

The department told us schools had significant staff shortages throughout 2023. This likely affected how schools delivered the initiative.

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### Many schools' tutoring practices in 2023 were not fully effective

Nearly all schools delivered timely tutoring in 2023, despite workforce shortages. But fewer than one-third of all schools had fully effective tutoring practices that were:

- targeted
- appropriate to school context
- appropriate to student need.

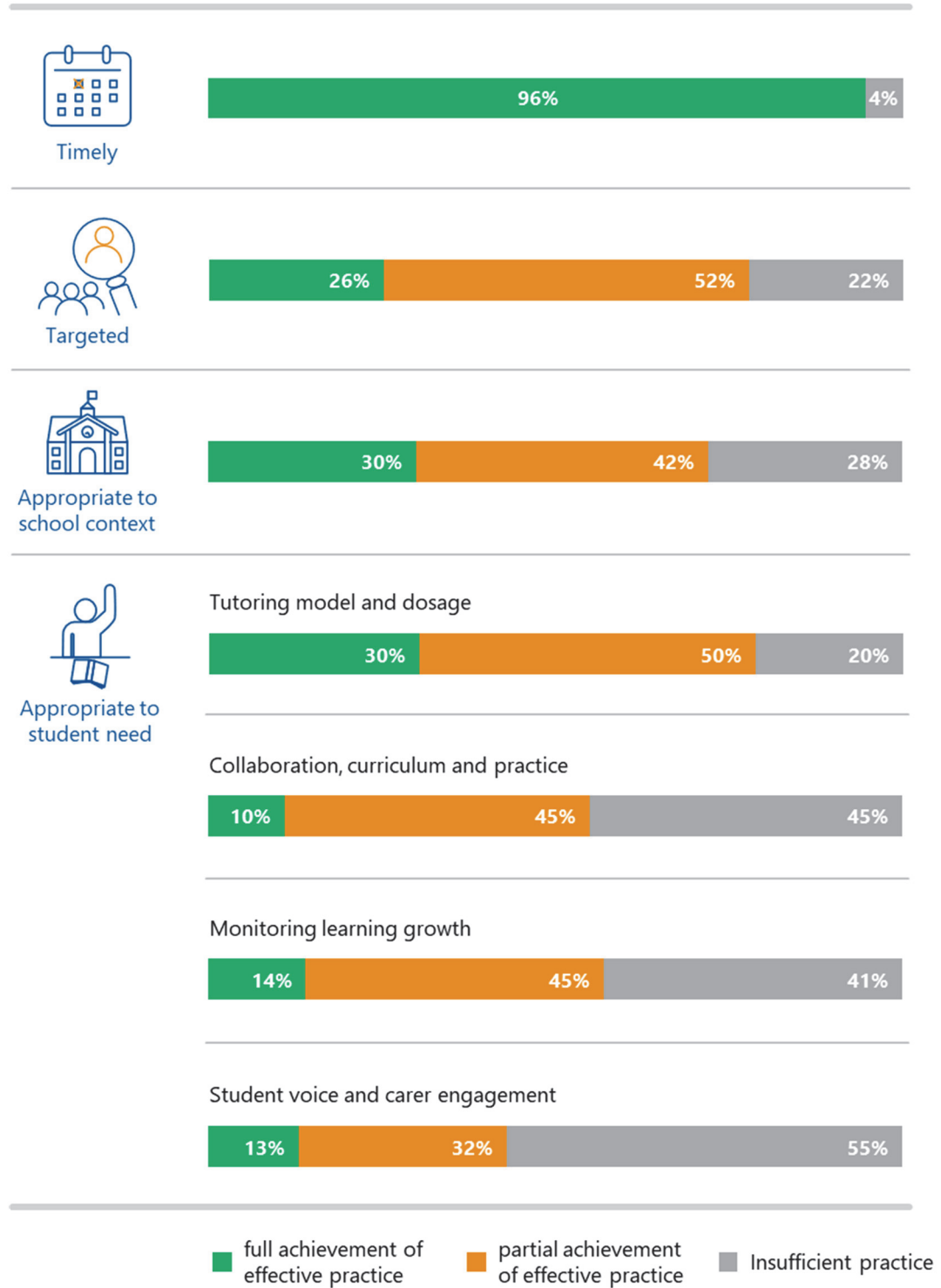
The department expected schools to embed tutoring as an effective, ongoing learning support. But the tutoring model and dosage dimension results suggest that many schools may not have capacity to do this.

Figure 4 shows our analysis of schools' ratings from semester 1, 2023.

Figure 4: Schools' delivery of the initiative in 2023

**Aspects of initiative delivery**

**Overall school delivery status**



Source: VAGO, using department data.

**Tutoring was timely despite workforce shortage**

Tutoring needs to be timely for students who fall behind in their learning to catch up. We found that schools consistently deliver tutoring in a timely way. The department's support for recruitment is effective.

Over 95 per cent of schools offered tutoring by week 6 of each term in 2022 and 2023, across all types of schools and all parts of Victoria. This was despite a teacher and tutor shortage across Victoria and Australia.

Surveys of school principals show the workforce was not necessarily enough to meet tutoring demand.

This is especially the case for secondary schools and primary–secondary schools. Much higher proportions of these schools reported workforce shortages as a major issue compared to primary schools.

<b>In the term 2, 2023 survey ...</b>	<b>Of principals from ...</b>	
50 per cent	secondary schools	reported tutor supply as one of the largest barriers to delivering the initiative.
57 per cent	primary–secondary schools	
14 per cent	primary schools	

Lower tutor availability likely affects the tutoring models and dosage schools choose. For example, it may mean they choose less effective models.

### Tutoring was not well targeted

The 'targeted' element of effective tutoring relates to student selection and learning focus. This is essential to the initiative because the department expects schools to target those most in need of support and to choose the right focus for them.

In 2023, targeted tutoring:

<b>Was ...</b>	<b>By ...</b>
fully effective	25 per cent of schools.
partially effective	52 per cent of schools.
insufficient	23 per cent of schools.

School type plays a role in this element of tutoring. For example, a higher proportion of primary schools (29 per cent) were fully effective in this element of the initiative than other school types (17 per cent for secondary schools and 18 per cent for primary–secondary schools).

### Schools did not always integrate tutoring

The 'appropriate to school context' element of tutoring relates to integrating tutoring. This is tutoring that establishes and links teaching practices within the school so:

- tutoring leads to student learning gain
- staff are proactive and plan for successful practice
- improvement is ongoing.

In 2023, integrated tutoring:

<b>Was ...</b>	<b>By ...</b>
fully effective	30 per cent of schools.
partially effective	42 per cent of schools.
insufficient	28 per cent of schools.

We found 34 per cent of primary schools were fully effective in integrating tutoring. This is compared to 19 per cent of secondary schools and 18 per cent primary–secondary schools.

Primary schools also outperformed other school types in being partially effective in this tutoring element.

**Tutoring did not always support students' learning needs**

The appropriate to student need element of tutoring relates to designing a tutoring program that responds to students' learning needs. This includes:

- tutoring model and dosage
- collaboration, curriculum and practice
- monitoring learning growth
- student voice and carer engagement.

Overall, in 2023, primary schools were more likely than other school types to have fully effective tutoring practices that meet student need.

We found 35 per cent of primary schools had fully effective practices for tutoring model and dosage. But fewer were fully effective against collaboration, curriculum and practice (12 per cent) and monitoring learning growth (17 per cent).

Very few secondary schools had fully effective practices that met student need. For tutoring model and dosage, only 12 per cent of secondary schools had fully effective practices. The proportion is even lower for the other dimensions, with only 6 per cent fully delivering against collaboration, curriculum and practice, and monitoring learning growth.

For both primary and secondary schools, only 13 per cent had fully effective practices for the student voice element.

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**Key barriers identified by principals**

The department gives principal check-in surveys to all government schools. The surveys ask principals to choose up to 5 challenges they consider the largest barriers to the initiative.

In 2023, 41 per cent of principals said one of the largest barriers was student attendance. This is where students are present at school but do not attend tutoring. This affected regional centre schools (48 per cent) slightly more than urban schools (38 per cent) and rural schools (43 per cent).

Student absence also presented significant challenges. In 2023, 31 per cent of responding principals cited student absence (not due to COVID-19) was one of the largest barriers. And 11 per cent said student absence related to COVID-19.

Absence related to COVID-19 affected rural schools (19 per cent) more than urban schools (7 per cent) and regional centre schools (11 per cent).

In 2023, 7 per cent of principals said student engagement was a barrier. It affected secondary schools (20 per cent) more than primary schools (3 per cent) and primary–secondary schools (11 per cent).

---

# 3.

## Improving the initiative

The department is not improving schools' delivery of the initiative. It has the tools and information to do this, but schools have not substantially improved since 2021.

### The department monitors schools' delivery of the initiative

#### Support for continuous improvement

The department intends for its support and guidance to continuously improve schools' delivery of the initiative. It designed the framework for department staff and schools to reflect on tutoring models and identify where schools can improve their tutoring practices.

Between semester 2, 2021 and the end of 2023, department staff have worked with schools to assess and record their improvement progress in the department's School Evaluation and Evidence Database. We have used this data to understand how schools' delivery of the initiative has changed since 2021.

#### The department has taken some steps to respond to schools' needs

In 2021 and 2022, the department conducted evaluations that included schools' experiences of the initiative. These evaluations showed that school leaders, teachers and tutors highly valued the initiative and wanted it to continue. They also identified opportunities for the department to refine its support and guidance to make the initiative more effective.

The department adapted its support and guidance after each evaluation.

In response to ...	The department...
schools finding it difficult to design an effective tutoring model, especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>schools facing acute workforce challenges</li><li>secondary schools</li><li>schools with limited existing approaches to measure student progress</li></ul>	published learnings about 'what works' when implementing the initiative in 2022 to support school leaders and tutors.
tutor staffing challenges reducing delivery in some schools	set up a Virtual Tutor Program in 2022. This involved making 6 Virtual Tutor Learning Specialists available to support schools struggling with tutor recruitment.
significant differences in how schools selected students for the initiative	more clearly described its intended tutoring participants. In 2023, it emphasised that students being at or below expected levels in literacy and numeracy should be the main factor schools consider when choosing initiative participants.

## Schools' delivery of the initiative has not significantly improved

### Delivery of the initiative is not improving

We examined the proportion of schools rated as having fully or partially effective tutoring practices.

We found that between 2021 and 2023, the department's support and guidance had not been enough to drive sustained and significant improvement in schools' practices.

When we examined the data, we found that most of the performance improvement occurred between late 2021 and early 2022. But there has been little change in performance since.

### Improvement rate varies by school type

Primary schools are more likely to have improved since 2021 and secondary schools are more likely to have declined.




Figure 5 shows the changes in schools' performance between 2021 and 2023 and how this varies across primary, secondary and primary–secondary schools.

Primary schools have improved across all dimensions. Their rates of improvement are not higher than 9 per cent. Primary–secondary schools have improved somewhat against most of the elements.

Secondary schools' performance has declined against all dimensions, except student voice and carer engagement.

Across all school types, there was no significant increase in schools that had partially effective practices. We did find there was an increase in all schools having partially effective practices for student voice and carer engagement.

Figure 5: Change in proportion of schools fully delivering the initiative from 2021 to 2023 by school type

Dimension	Primary schools	Secondary schools	Primary–secondary schools	
 Targeted	8%	–4%	0%	
 Appropriate to school context	9%	–6%	7%	
 Appropriate to student needs	tutoring model and dosage	8%	–6%	9%
	collaboration, curriculum and planning	4%	–3%	2%
	monitoring learning growth	8%	–8%	0%
	student voice and carer engagement	3%	4%	2%

Source: VAGO, using department data.

## The department can do more to drive improvement

### The department collects and uses data about the initiative

The department has the staff, tools and data it can use to make the initiative more effective.

The framework is a useful tool to understand schools' progress in improving their practices and identify schools that need more support.

The department has a database to record implementation maturity over time.

The department collects data on schools' experiences of the initiative through regular surveys of school leaders. It collects test data from schools and undertakes complex analysis to understand student learning outcomes.

The department has also commissioned or conducted evaluations of the initiative in its first 2 years. These evaluations brought together all this data to identify and understand how schools were implementing the initiative and its effect on student learning.

This means the department has a sound framework to continuously improve schools' delivery of the initiative.

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### Changes to support and guidance have not improved delivery

The department improved its support and guidance in response to the initiative's first evaluation. This appears to be associated with improvement in schools' practices from late 2021 to mid-2022.

But when the initiative's second evaluation found it was not significantly increasing learning for most students, the department made only minor modifications in 2023.

We also found that changes the department made to its student selection guidance did not alter schools' approaches.

The department emphasised that schools should prioritise students with literacy and numeracy below expected levels. But the proportion of these students receiving tutoring did not change between 2022 and 2023.

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### Schools need more delivery support

The department needs to give schools more specific and specialised support for them to deliver the initiative as planned.

The department intends that schools deliver the initiative within a Response to Intervention model. By definition, tutoring is an intervention that addresses learning needs the general classroom cannot fully meet.

It is apparent from our analysis that, for most schools, this kind of intervention is not business as usual.

It is an additional and particular type of teaching that requires expertise in all elements, from selecting students and designing a tutoring model, to monitoring students' learning growth and integrating that learning with the general classroom.

For the initiative to succeed and improve student learning outcomes, the department must make a sustained effort to understand what works, why it works and how to support all schools to fully deliver the initiative.

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### Moving from monitoring to accountability

The department needs to hold schools accountable for improving their delivery of the initiative.

The department has a responsibility to improve the school system's performance so large-scale intervention programs achieve their objectives.

The department has accountability measures in place for schools' funding and recruitment for the initiative. It collects and analyses dimension implementation data. But it has not used this to drive improvement within schools.



It has evaluated the effect of the initiative on student learning outcomes. But it has not used these findings to significantly change its support for schools.

We understand the department rolled out the initiative quickly in response to students' learning support needs during the COVID-19 response and that schools were still affected in 2022. However, the initiative has been in place for 3 years with a total commitment of over \$1.2 billion and it does not show evidence of sustained improvement over time, either in schools' practices or student learning outcomes.

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### Trialling and improving system-wide programs

The department should reconsider the way it evaluates and improves system-wide interventions. It needs to use relevant and evidence-based measures for success focused on students' learning and apply these throughout the life of the program. The department needs to understand how different factors influence the impact of these programs on students. These factors include:

- school type
- students' prior achievement and engagement
- other interventions
- school leadership
- data literacy
- classroom teaching
- cultural and socioeconomic contexts.

The department has demonstrated it can plan and stage system-wide interventions so it understands early effects and takes steps to continuously improve implementation. It is doing this with its rollout of Disability Inclusion, which we examined in 2023.

The department has other options available for early understanding of its programs' effectiveness. This includes randomised control trials or pilot programs, which would allow the department to try interventions in particular circumstances, measure their effects, assess their benefits and consider how to effectively scale them up for the whole of Victoria.

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# Appendices

[Appendix A: Submissions and comments](#)

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[Appendix B: Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary](#)

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[Appendix C: Audit scope and method](#)

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[Appendix D: Audit background](#)

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[Appendix E: Methodologies for comparing student learning growth](#)

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[Appendix F: Comparison of learning gains](#)

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[Appendix G: Implementation framework](#)

# Appendix A:

## Submissions and comments

We have consulted with the Department of Education, and we considered its views when reaching our audit conclusions. As required by the *Audit Act 1994*, we gave a draft copy of this report to the department and asked for its submission and comments.

Responsibility for the accuracy, fairness and balance of those comments rests solely with the agency head.

### Responses received

Agency	Page
Department of Education	A-2

## Response provided by the Secretary, Department of Education



### Department of Education

Secretary

2 Treasury Place  
East Melbourne Victoria 3002  
Telephone +61 3 9637 2000

COR24139782

Mr Andrew Greaves  
Auditor-General  
Victorian Auditor-General's Office

Dear Mr Greaves

#### **Proposed report on Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative**

Thank you for providing the proposed report on *Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative*.

The Department of Education is committed to supporting students who need additional support with the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy and welcomes recommendations that might lead to further improvements for the Tutor Learning Initiative (TLI) and student achievement.

I am pleased that the report acknowledges the research in Australia and overseas that shows tutoring can be highly effective in improving literacy and numeracy and I welcome the following findings:

- Nearly all schools delivered timely tutoring in 2023, despite workforce shortages. In this context I note that the department's recruitment support was found to have been effective, particularly for schools facing challenges, such as secondary and rural schools.
- The department has a comprehensive suite of monitoring tools for the initiative, and that the implementation framework is a sound tool for understanding schools' progress in delivering the initiative and identifying those that need more support.
- That the department had adapted its guidance and support after each evaluation, including publication of learnings about 'what works' in TLI implementation, establishment of a Virtual Tutor Program, and enhancing guidance regarding student selection.

I note that the overall mean learning growth of participating students was greater than the mean learning growth of non-tutored students, but also the Report's findings that when a matched cohort analysis is used this does not hold.

I also note that TLI has improved student engagement, and school leaders and tutors have observed students becoming more engaged in their learning because of the initiative.

Further, school leaders, teachers, tutors and students have provided strong positive feedback in relation to the program with students reporting improvement in their learning as a result of the program.

Your details will be dealt with in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973* and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*. Should you have any queries or wish to gain access to your personal information held by this department please contact our Privacy Officer at the above address



**Response provided by the Secretary, Department of Education – continued**

I would note that the department has continued to refine implementation of the initiative in 2024, including revising the funding model to better target funding to student need. The department has also increased its support for schools to identify students assessed as “Needs Additional Support” in 2023 NAPLAN to ensure they are able to readily identify those students requiring TLI support.

Whilst the evidence from principals, students and tutors demonstrates the successful implementation and delivery of TLI during an extremely difficult period for school education, the department accepts that further work can be undertaken to improve the effective delivery of the initiative. In particular, the department will consider ways to gather more detailed data on implementation practices to be able to provide more precise advice to schools on the practices that are proving most effective in different settings.

Please find enclosed the department’s action plan to address the recommendations in the proposed report.

Should you wish to discuss the department’s response, please contact Shamiso Mtenje, Executive Director, Assurance, Knowledge, and Executive Services on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely



**Jenny Atta**  
Secretary  
31 / 05 / 2024

*Encl.: Department’s action plan*

Your details will be dealt with in accordance with the *Public Records Act 1973* and the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014*. Should you have any queries or wish to gain access to your personal information held by this department please contact our Privacy Officer at the above address



Department of Education: Action plan to address recommendations: Tutor Learning Initiative

#	Recommendations: That DE:	Response	#	The Department will:	By:
1	Collect and analyse data on schools' tutoring model and dosage so the department understands and promotes the models and dosage that are effective for different school types and student groups.	Accept	1	Analyse data regarding schools' tutoring model and dosage by different school types and student groups and promote this to schools to inform schools' delivery of TLI in 2025.	31 December 2024
			2	Prepare and publish case studies regarding schools' tutoring models and dosage by different school types and student groups and promote this to schools to inform schools' delivery of TLI in 2025.	31 December 2024
2	Establish measurable goals for schools' performance in the Tutor Learning Initiative with processes to drive sustained improvement.	Accept in principle	1	Require government schools to set a goal to decrease the number of students assessed as "Needs Additional Support" in reading and numeracy in NAPLAN within their 2025 Annual Implementation Plan.  The department has a comprehensive framework for schools to establish measurable goals for improving students' literacy and numeracy outcomes, through the development of 4-yearly <a href="#">School Strategic Plans</a> , cascading to <a href="#">Annual Implementation Plans (AIP)</a> , and as such this action will be considered partially implemented.	31 March 2025
3	Establish practices and procedures to pilot state-wide learning interventions so that the department understands: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• program operation and performance for different school types and student groups</li> <li>• expected benefits of the program and the school support needed to achieve these benefits across the state.</li> </ul>	Accept	1	Develop guidance to inform the establishment of state-wide learning interventions, including the role of pilots in adapting delivery to suit different school types and student groups, as well as defining expected program benefits and the supports required.	30 July 2025

# Appendix B: Abbreviations, acronyms and glossary

**Abbreviations** We use the following abbreviations in this report:

## Abbreviation

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the department	Department of Education
the initiative	Tutor Learning Initiative
the framework	Tutor Learning Initiative Implementation Continua

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**Acronyms** We use the following acronyms in this report:

## Acronym

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IEP	Individual Education Plan
PAT	Progressive Achievement Test
PAT Maths	Progressive Achievement Test – Mathematics
PAT Reading	Progressive Achievement Test – Reading
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office

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**Glossary** This glossary includes an explanation of the types of engagements we perform:

## Term

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Reasonable assurance	We achieve reasonable assurance by obtaining and verifying direct evidence from a variety of internal and external sources about an agency's performance. This enables us to express an opinion or draw a conclusion against an audit objective with a high level of assurance. We call these audit engagements. See our <a href="#">assurance services fact sheet</a> for more information.
Limited assurance	We obtain less assurance when we rely primarily on an agency's representations and other evidence generated by that agency. However, we aim to have enough confidence in our conclusion for it to be meaningful. We call these types of engagements assurance reviews and typically express our opinions in negative terms. For example, that nothing has come to our attention to indicate there is a problem. See our <a href="#">assurance services fact sheet</a> for more information.

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# Appendix C:

## Audit scope and method

### Scope of this audit

#### Who we examined

We examined the following agencies:

Agency	Their key responsibilities
Department of Education	Delivers, monitors and reports on the implementation of funded programs. In relation to the initiative, provides policy, guidance and support to schools

#### Our audit objective

To determine whether the Department of Education's Tutor Learning Initiative has improved learning and engagement outcomes for participating students.

#### What we examined

We examined whether:

- the department's program support and guidance is sufficient for all schools to deliver the initiative so that it is:
  - timely
  - targeted
  - appropriate to school context
  - appropriate to student need
- the department's funding model is aligned with the initiative's objectives for student participation
- students participating in the initiative demonstrate learning growth and an improvement in school attendance.



## Conducting this audit

### Assessing performance

To form our conclusion against our objective we used the following lines of inquiry and associated evaluation criteria:

Line of inquiry	Criteria
1. The department's program support and funding means that schools implement the initiative as intended.	1.1 The department's program support and guidance is sufficient for all schools to deliver the initiative so that it is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• timely</li><li>• targeted</li><li>• appropriate to school context</li><li>• appropriate to student need.</li></ul>
	1.2 The department's funding model is aligned with the initiative's objectives for student participation.
2. Students participating in the initiative improved their learning and engagement outcomes.	2.1 Students participating in the initiative demonstrate learning growth according to the assessment tools in place.
	2.2 Students participating in the initiative improve their school attendance during and after their participation in the initiative.

### Our methods

As part of the audit we:

- performed a suite of tests on the framework data to assess whether the initiative's implementation of the initiative was:
  - timely
  - targeted
  - appropriate to school context
  - appropriate to student need
- examined workforce data
- examined data collected from the principal check-in survey from term 4, 2021 to term 2, 2023
- examined funding data, budget bids and program information for the period 2020–2023
- analysed the Progressive Achievement Test (reading and maths) achievement.

Refer to Appendix E for a detailed description of our data analysis.

### Compliance

We conducted our audit in accordance with the *Audit Act 1994* and ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements* to obtain reasonable assurance to provide a basis for our conclusion.

We complied with the independence and other relevant ethical requirements related to assurance engagements.

We also provided a copy of the report to the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance.

### Cost and time

The full cost of the audit and preparation of this report was \$480,000.

The duration of the audit was 9 months from initiation to tabling.

# Appendix D: Audit background

The department is responsible for establishing, managing, monitoring and reporting on the initiative. It provides schools with policy, guidance and support to deliver the initiative. It does this through its Policy and Advisory Library and support for staff recruitment, funding and professional practice.

## The department's support and guidance to schools

### Policy and guidance

The department's policy and guidance informs schools about the intent and approach for the initiative. It includes information and requirements for delivering the initiative.

<b>The department's guidance on ...</b>	<b>Includes ...</b>
tutor arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• information about a tutor's role in the initiative</li><li>• eligibility criteria for employing tutors</li><li>• guidance on how schools can employ tutors.</li></ul>
student selection	criteria and assessment advice for selecting students to receive initiative support.
program design	guidance on designing an initiative program, including in-class and out-of-class models and the frequency of tutoring session.
assessment	advice on using a range of assessment tools to monitor student learning growth.
monitoring requirements	guidance on monitoring requirements, including coding of tutors on the department's central systems and tagging students on CASES21, the department's internal school reporting system.

The department published *Tutor Learning Initiative – What works? Implementation insights for 2022*. It draws on material from school case studies, principal focus groups and surveys, and its external evaluation. This is available on the department's Policy and Advisory Library.

### Tutor recruitment support and requirements

The department supports schools to recruit tutors through its online job advertising and recruitment portal.

Government schools can use this portal throughout the school year to identify and shortlist suitable tutors from a register.

Tutors must be one of the following:

- a teacher currently registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT)
  - a teacher with VIT Permission to Teach (employed as an education support (ES) class employee)
  - a pre-service teacher (employed as an ES class employee) working under the supervision of a registered teacher
  - a speech therapist or occupational therapist (employed as an ES class employee) tutoring in specific identified student needs
  - a retired teacher who has re-registered with the VIT – retired teachers may contact the VIT for support.
- 

### Professional practice

The department provides further guidance on designing tutoring programs in its *Tutor Practice Guide*. This includes advice on the instructional model within schools and tutoring and the use of explicit teaching practices.

The practice guide also describes the 4 elements of the tutoring cycle:

- evaluate and diagnose
- prioritise and set goals
- develop and plan
- implement and monitor.

The practice guide lists and, where possible, links to the main sources of evidence for student learning interventions and the role of small group learning. It provides an initiative group learning plan template for tutors.

School leaders and tutors have access to the department's suite of professional learning webinars and resources on:

- effective literacy and numeracy teaching practice
- small group learning
- incorporating student voice.

The department brings these resources together in its online initiative hub.

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## Program funding 2021–2023

**Funding formula** The department's funding for the initiative is universal in government schools. For non-government schools, the initiative is based on private income per student not exceeding \$7,500.

Exceptions apply for certain school types, such as camp schools. The funding formula for government and non-government schools relies on total school enrolment and levels of disadvantage.

The funding allocation for government schools is based on a model of students receiving:

- 2 to 3 45-minute sessions each week
- in groups of no more than 5 students
- for 26 weeks.

The department advises schools that they can allocate this funding to meet their specific contexts and student needs they have identified over time.

### Funding per student

Government schools receive a base level allocation of \$25,000 and additional loadings based on student enrolments and levels of disadvantage.

The department calculates a per-student rate for primary and secondary students. The rate is higher for students identified as experiencing social disadvantage.

Figure D1: Initiative funding formula for government schools 2023

Student type	Base funding per student enrolment	Loading per social disadvantage student enrolment
Primary	\$157.98	\$424.96
Secondary	\$178.77	\$480.88

Source: The department.

For non-government schools, the funding floor is \$6,250 per school and the per-student rate is \$543.31.

## Program design, implementation and monitoring

### Guidance for schools' program design

The department's guidance notes that research indicates tutoring is most effective when students receive:

- 45-minute small group learning sessions 3 times per week
- for 6 to 20 weeks
- in tutoring cycles of 5 to 8 weeks.

Schools may consider student needs such as age, learning difficulties and local circumstances when setting up their tutoring timetable.

According to the department's guidance, schools should:

- measure student attainment using a standardised assessment tool at the start and end of the tutor learning
- record student participation in the initiative through the department's CASES21 reporting system
- complete implementation surveys.

### Assessing and monitoring students

The department advises tutors and schools to monitor student learning growth with regular assessments and update tracking documentation such as student individual education plans and initiative group learning plans.

The department has bought a statewide licence so schools can assess students using the Australian Council of Education Research's Progressive Achievement Test (PAT).

The department strongly encourages schools to use the PAT Reading and PAT Maths for year 3 to 10 students to measure student achievement at the beginning and end of their participation in the initiative.

For students in Foundation and years 1 and 2, the department 'strongly encourages' schools to use the English Online Interview and the Mathematics Online Interview. The department advises schools on the relevant modules and timing of these.

The department advises that schools may also use other standardised assessment tools, including:

- the Digital Assessment Library, English and Mathematics assessments for years 2 to 10
  - Abilities Based Learning and Education Support for students with disabilities and additional needs
  - the Reading and Vocabulary Assessment Tool for students with English as an additional language.
- 

### Monitoring schools' implementation

The department has student achievement managers in its regional offices to assist in the delivery and monitoring of initiative implementation.

Student achievement managers work with schools to monitor their delivery of the initiative against the framework. The department recommends this occurs twice yearly and collects data on schools' progress against the framework.

The department advised us that from 2024, it will refer to student achievement managers as education improvement leaders. Every government school has an education improvement leader that assists in relation to the initiative.

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# Appendix E:

## Methodologies for comparing student learning growth

We analysed student Progressive Achievement Test (PAT) scores and demographic data to estimate the impact of receiving tutoring on student achievement. We performed a type of matched analysis, using propensity score weighted regression of PAT gain on students' participation in the initiative.

### Matched analysis

**Overview** Propensity score analysis is a technique that attempts to estimate the effect of a treatment (in this case, the initiative) by accounting for potentially confounding covariates that predict receiving the treatment.

#### **Achievement analysis**

We performed propensity weighted regression analysis of PAT gain (the difference of 2023 and 2022 scores) on tutoring participation and 2022 PAT score. We split by year level (years 3 to 10) and domain (reading and maths).

#### **Absence analysis**

Similarly, we performed propensity weighted regression analysis of the increase in student absences (the difference between 2023 and 2022 absences) on tutoring participation and 2022 absences. We broke this down by year level.

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**Data** We used 2022 and 2023 term 4 PAT scores and yearly absences for students between years 3 and 10 in 2023. For each student, we took their semester 2, 2022 teacher judgement data. We sourced demographic data for each student from the 2023 August census.

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#### **Outline of steps Step 1: propensities**

Using the above datasets, we chose a variety of covariates that may influence participation in tutoring. This included individual demographic factors as well as school-level variables.

For each year level and domain, we performed a logistic regression of tutoring participation on:

- disadvantage status
- Aboriginal status
- English as an Additional Language status
- disability status
- 2022 PAT scale score
- indicator if student was below the expected level in teacher judgement in that domain.

## Step 2: weighted least squares regression

We estimated the average treatment effect of tutored students. To do this, we assigned each student a weight based on their propensity of being selected for tutoring.

We assigned tutored students a weight of 1, and non-tutored students a weight of  $p_i/(1-p_i)$ . We clipped weights to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percent quantiles within each year level and domain to remove the effect of extreme weights.

We performed the following regressions with errors clustered by school:

- $PAT\_GAIN_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TLI_i + \beta_2 SCORE_{2022}_i$ ;
- $DIFFERENCE\_ABSENCES_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 TLI_i + \beta_2 2022\_ABSENCES_i$ .

We took  $\beta_1$  to be the treatment effect of tutoring.

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## Sensitivity analysis

We tested a variety of combinations of covariates in the propensity regression.

We also tested various functional forms of the regression equation, such as difference score and residual change.

We performed our analysis with an overall tutoring flag and separate literacy and numeracy tutoring flags.

In addition to the average treatment effect on the tutored group, we also estimated the average treatment effect for the whole population.

Throughout all sensitivity analysis, our analysis arrived at similar results and conclusions.

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# Appendix F:

## Comparison of learning gains

To evaluate the impact of the initiative on student achievement, we compared the learning gains of tutored students who had median prior scores ('typical tutored students') with those of non-tutored students who had similar prior scores.

By comparing tutored and non-tutored students who had similar prior scores, we could isolate and analyse the impact of the initiative on students' learning growth.

While this approach is distinct from the methodology outlined in Appendix E, it confirmed our conclusions from using that method.

### Prior-score matched analysis

#### Comparison between tutored and non-tutored students at the same baseline

As stated in section 1, students who received tutoring generally did not show a higher learning gain than similar students who did not receive tutoring.

Figure F1 shows the learning gains of tutored and non-tutored students at same baselines in reading. Figure F2 shows the gains in maths.

The reading learning gains of non-tutored students were higher than those of tutored students for all year levels from year 3 to year 9.

The maths learning gains of non-tutored students were higher than those of tutored students for all year levels from year 3 to year 10.

#### Interpreting the tables in Appendix F

The baseline scores for each year level are the median scores achieved by tutored students.

Here we use the learning gains for year 3 in reading, as shown in Figure F1. For example:

A typical tutored student achieved 96.0 at the end of 2022 (their baseline score).

If a tutored and non-tutored student both achieved 96.0 at the end of 2022, a typical tutored student would gain 7.1 by the end of 2023. But their non-tutored peer would gain 7.4.



Figure F1: Learning gains in reading of tutored and non-tutored students with the same baselines

Year level	Baseline score	Gain of tutored students	Gain of non-tutored students
Year 3	96.0	7.1	7.4
Year 4	108.0	4.0	4.7
Year 5	117.0	1.3	1.9
Year 6	121.5	1.8	2.3
Year 7	124.6	-1.3	0.3
Year 8	124.7	-0.1	0.9
Year 9	128.0	-0.4	0.5
Year 10	131.9	0.2	0.1

Source: VAGO, using department data.

Figure F2: Learning gains in maths of tutored and non-tutored students with the same baselines

Year level	Baseline score	Gain of tutored students	Gain of non-tutored students
Year 3	103.1	4.7	6.6
Year 4	110.0	4.1	5.0
Year 5	116.9	3.2	4.4
Year 6	120.9	3.4	4.0
Year 7	123.1	1.3	2.2
Year 8	125.3	1.3	2.0
Year 9	129.0	0.7	1.5
Year 10	132.3	0.9	1.3

Source: VAGO, using department data.

**Baseline comparison for disadvantaged students**

As stated in Section 1, we found that disadvantaged students who received tutoring did not have greater learning growth than disadvantaged students who did not receive tutoring.

Figure F3 and F4 provide detailed breakdown of the learning gain comparisons between tutored and non-tutored disadvantaged students in all year levels in reading and maths, respectively. Again, we made comparison between tutored and non-tutored students who had the same baseline scores at the end of 2022.

As shown in Figure F3, in the reading subject, learning gains of non-tutored disadvantaged students are higher than those of tutored disadvantaged students in all year levels from year 3 except for year 6 and year 10.

The maths learning gains of non-tutored students were also higher than those of tutored students, but for all year levels from year 3 to year 10, except year 7, as shown in Figure F4.

Figure F3: Learning gains in reading of tutored and non-tutored students at same baselines: disadvantaged students

Year level	Baseline score	Gain of tutored students	Gain of non-tutored students
Year 3	92.5	7.0	7.1
Year 4	102.5	5.2	5.3
Year 5	112.9	1.3	1.7
Year 6	117.5	2.1	2.1
Year 7	122.4	-2.1	-0.9
Year 8	121.3	-0.5	0.8
Year 9	125.1	-0.5	0.4
Year 10	128.0	0.7	0.3

Source: VAGO, using department data.

Figure F4: Learning gains in maths of tutored and non-tutored students at same baselines: disadvantaged students

Year level	Baseline score	Gain of tutored students	Gain of non-tutored students
Year 3	99.9	3.8	5.5
Year 4	107.1	3.6	4.4
Year 5	113.4	2.7	3.5
Year 6	117.0	3.5	3.8
Year 7	121.6	0.7	0.7
Year 8	121.6	1.0	1.8
Year 9	125.9	-0.4	1.1
Year 10	128.9	0.6	1.1

Source: VAGO, using department data.

## Unmatched means analysis

**Comparison between tutored and non-tutored students without considering baseline scores**

The department used unmatched means analysis in its evaluation of the initiative. This method does not consider students' baseline scores.

Figures F5 and F6 show the mean learning gains of tutored and non-tutored students in reading and maths, respectively.

**Why VAGO did not rely on unmatched analysis**

We did not rely on this type of analysis because we consider that it is not a fair comparison between tutored and non-tutored students and it does not show whether or not tutoring was effective.

Unlike matched analysis, unmatched analysis does not account for difference between tutored and non-tutored cohorts. This is important because:

- students with lower prior scores generally have higher learning gains than students with higher prior scores due to random effects known as regression to the mean
- tutored students generally have lower prior scores than non-tutored students, as tutored students are not an unbiased selection of students.

As a result of this, differences in learning gain between tutored and non-tutored students may be due to the different cohorts, rather than the tutoring itself.

Tutored students having higher unmatched mean learning gain than non-tutored students does not mean the tutoring was effective.

Figure F5: Unmatched mean learning gains in reading of tutored and non-tutored students\*

Year level	Gain of tutored students	Gain of non-tutored students
Year 3	10.5*	9.2*
Year 4	8.2*	6.6*
Year 5	5.0*	3.6*
Year 6	4.3*	3.7*
Year 7	0.6*	0.9*
Year 8	2.0*	1.7*
Year 9	1.3*	1.3*
Year 10	2.2*	1.2*

Note: \*VAGO does not consider this to be a reliable indicator of the initiative's effectiveness.  
Source: VAGO, using department data.

Figure F6: Unmatched mean learning gains in maths of tutored and non-tutored students\*

Year level	Gain of tutored students	Gain of non-tutored students
Year 3	7.5*	7.5*
Year 4	6.5*	6.0*
Year 5	5.1*	5.1*
Year 6	5.2*	5.1*
Year 7	2.1*	2.6*
Year 8	2.9*	2.8*
Year 9	1.6*	1.8*
Year 10	2.1*	2.1*

Note: \*VAGO does not consider this to be a reliable indicator of the initiative's effectiveness.  
Source: VAGO, using department data.

# Appendix G: Implementation framework

The framework is designed to support schools to reflect, self-evaluate and track their progress towards initiative implementation. The framework includes 6 dimensions describing the initiative policy parameters and related guidance. Each dimension is unpacked across 4 levels of proficiency to support schools to self-assess and set developmental goals.

## The department's guidance for using the framework

The framework can be used to guide collective discussions between student achievement managers and school leaders, classroom teachers and tutors to:

- self-evaluate their current implementation of the initiative and small group learning practice and understand what improved practice looks like
- engage in reflection, inquiry and conversations about improving initiative implementation
- sustain the acquired initiative implementation learnings into 2022 to support sustainable small group learning.

Figure G1: Assessment criteria for the framework dimensions

Dimensions and related guidance	Emerging	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
<p><b>Tutoring model and dosage</b></p> <p>Research indicates that tutoring is most effective in accelerating learning gain with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 45-minute sessions, 2 to 4 times a week,</li> <li>• duration between 6 to 20 weeks</li> <li>• up to 5 students of similar learning attainment levels.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Please note: Implementation may differ between schools based on funding, context, student preference, age, learning needs and staffing profile.</i></p>	<p>The tutoring model and dosage is not yet aligned with recommendations and may be impacting learning gain achievement.</p>	<p>The tutoring model and dosage aligns with 2 of the recommendations, but learning gain is still not evident.</p>	<p>The tutoring model and dosage aligns with all the recommendations and some learning gain is evident.</p>	<p>The tutoring model and dosage demonstrated sustained evidence of learning growth, consistently for most students.</p>

Dimensions and related guidance	Emerging	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
<p><b>Student selection and focus area(s)</b></p> <p>Students needing tutoring support are identified based on multiple sources of evidence, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>teacher judgement and classroom observations</li> <li>existing classroom assessments</li> <li>standardised assessments</li> <li>where applicable, existing Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to identify current and expected learning attainment levels (where applicable).</li> </ul>	<p>Selection of students is based on the latest achievement level.</p> <p>Focus area(s) align with the needs of the cohort of identified students.</p>	<p>Selection of students and focus area(s) informed by triangulation of student learning and engagement data.</p> <p>Students transition out of small group learning, but Tier 1 support not evident.</p>	<p>Selection of students and focus area(s) informed by triangulation of student achievement, learning growth and engagement data.</p> <p>Students can transition back into Tier 1 teaching with scaffolded support between tutor and classroom teacher.</p>	<p>Data is used to continuously reflect and adjust areas of student focus and meet students at their point of need.</p> <p>The school has developed a plan for students to transition in and out of small group learning based on emerging learning needs.</p>
<p><i>*Please note: The focus area(s) of tutoring should meet students at their point of need</i></p>				
<p><b>Collaboration, curriculum planning and pedagogical practice suitable for small group learning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tutor and classroom teacher/s identify suitable evidence-based interventions for the targeted curriculum area.</li> <li>Tutors and classroom teachers then determine how the impact of this intervention on student learning will be assessed.</li> <li>Tutors and classroom teachers set challenging student learning goals from the Victorian Curriculum.</li> <li>Where applicable, schools may decide to develop an IEP for students receiving initiative support.</li> </ul>	<p>Tutors use pedagogical knowledge and the Victorian Curriculum to design learning programs.</p> <p>Tutors individually plan their lessons based on the Victorian Curriculum.</p>	<p>Tutors and classroom teachers collaborate to design learning programs and individual learning goals based on the Victorian Curriculum.</p>	<p>Where applicable, tutors and teachers co-design learning programs and IEPs with students, ensuring that they align closely with Tier 1 classroom learning.</p> <p>Leaders establish formal processes so that tutors and classroom teachers collaboratively plan, assess and report on student learning growth.</p>	<p>Tutors and teachers collectively examine the effectiveness of their pedagogy and practice using student and peer feedback as well as assessment data to continuously improve.</p> <p>Leaders develop teacher self-efficacy and whole-school collaborative practices to ensure student learning gain is maintained once students transition out of the program.</p>
<p><b>Monitoring learning growth</b></p> <p>Schools should monitor student learning gains during short (5 to 8 week) cycles utilising a range of classroom-based assessment strategies, in conjunction with existing or developing teacher moderation processes. These assessment strategies can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>student self-reflection and goal setting, including recording their own progress against identified learning goals (dependent on student and context)</li> <li>moderation of assessment of student work samples</li> <li>recording and analysing observations of student verbal responses or student problem solving with the</li> </ul>	<p>Tutors use observational data to note student learning growth.</p> <p>School leaders identify targets for improved achievement or engagement outcomes.</p>	<p>Tutors collect and analyse achievement and engagement data, and monitor growth to determine whether students should stay or leave the program at the end of the term or semester.</p> <p>School leaders can present evidence of initiative student achievement and improved levels of engagement.</p>	<p>Tutors collect and analyse achievement and engagement data to monitor student growth in inquiry/improvement cycles.</p> <p>School leaders have oversight of monitoring student achievement and engagement levels. They incorporate the initiative into the whole-school assessment schedule and will use this as evidence</p>	<p>Tutors and teachers use 5 to 8-week inquiry/improvement cycles to moderate and analyse achievement and engagement data to adapt student learning goals in IEPs (where applicable) and the curriculum.</p> <p>School leaders plan to use current and previously collected evidence of learning growth to monitor initiative</p>

Dimensions and related guidance	Emerging	Evolving	Embedding	Excelling
class using assessment rubrics formative assessment tasks undertaken during tutoring sessions.			of progress towards the 2022 Priority Goals in their Annual Implementation Plans.	students for 6 to 12 months beyond the initiative to ensure learning gain is maintained.
<p><b>School leadership</b></p> <p>School leaders are responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>determining the most appropriate model of tutoring for their school and students, with support from regional staff and guided by the evidence, resources and professional learning developed by the department</li> <li>recruiting tutors (in line with tutor recruitment requirements) and ensuring that funding is spent during the 2022 calendar year supporting staff to undertake professional learning.</li> </ul>	School leaders recruit tutors and endorse the initiative allocation of resources based on immediate needs and define implementation roles and responsibilities, including making staff aware of available professional learning.	School leaders recruit tutors based on students' needs, allocate resources appropriately to support the initiative as a stand-alone program, ensure staff understand and action their roles and responsibilities, and support access and time for professional learning.	School leaders monitor the tutor workforce at regular intervals to ensure tutoring is meeting students at their point of need, incorporate the initiative into their whole-school approach to school improvement, including collaboration between school leadership, classroom teachers and tutors to monitor progress, and further support tutors (e.g. coaching).	School leaders appoint tutors that have expertise in the school's identified small group learning focus area(s), are embedding practices from small group learning that are maximising student learning gain. Staff are proactive in their roles and are planning how successful practices from the initiative can be sustained and embedded in whole-school plans, including ongoing improvement and impact.
<p><b>Student voice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-develop learning goals with each student to best support their learning needs.</li> <li>For identified students with an IEP, teachers and tutors should work in partnership with students to develop individual goals based on the age and learning needs of the student.</li> <li>Schools are engaging with relevant regional and school-based staff that support the engagement of CALD and Koorie families in learning* as necessary.</li> </ul> <p><i>*This could include Koorie Education Support Officers and Multicultural Education Aides.</i></p>	Students are informed of being selected to participate in the initiative.	Tutors develop learning goals with students, where students demonstrate little involvement.	Tutors co-develop learning goals with students, where students demonstrate strong involvement. Tutors provide opportunities for students to be involved in discussions about their progress against these learning goals.	In consultation with students and their classroom teacher/s, tutors collaborate and make decisions about student learning goals, regularly monitor student learning progress and provide ongoing opportunities for students to actively participate in their learning.

Source: the department's guidance for the Tutor Learning Initiative implementation framework.

# Auditor-General's reports tabled during 2023–24

<b>Report title</b>	<b>Tabled</b>
<i>Cybersecurity: Cloud Computing Products (2023–24: 1)</i>	August 2023
<i>Responses to Performance Engagement Recommendations: Annual Status Update 2023 (2023–24: 2)</i>	August 2023
<i>Eloque: the Joint Venture Between DoT and Xerox (2023–24: 3)</i>	October 2023
<i>Domestic Building Oversight Part 1: Regulation (2023–24: 4)</i>	November 2023
<i>Employee Health and Wellbeing in Victorian Public Hospitals (2023–24: 5)</i>	November 2023
<i>Reducing the Illegal Disposal of Asbestos (2023–24: 6)</i>	November 2023
<i>Auditor-General's Report on the Annual Financial Report of the State of Victoria: 2022–23 (2023–24: 7)</i>	November 2023
<i>Contractors and Consultants in the Victorian Public Service: Spending (2023–24: 8)</i>	November 2023
<i>Major Projects Performance Reporting 2023 (2023–24: 9)</i>	November 2023
<i>Fair Presentation of Service Delivery Performance 2023 (2023–24: 10)</i>	November 2023
<i>Reducing the Harm Caused by Drugs on Victorian Roads (2023–24: 11)</i>	December 2023
<i>Results of 2022–23 Audits: Local Government (2023–24: 12)</i>	March 2024
<i>Withdrawal from 2026 Commonwealth Games (2023–24: 13)</i>	March 2024
<i>Follow-up of Management of the Student Resource Package (2023–24: 14)</i>	May 2024
<i>Literacy and Numeracy Achievement Outcomes for Victorian Students (2023–24: 15)</i>	May 2024
<i>Guardianship and Decision-making for Vulnerable Adults (2023–24: 16)</i>	May 2024
<i>Domestic Building Oversight Part 2: Dispute Resolution (2023–24: 17)</i>	June 2024
<i>Planning Social Housing (2023–24: 18)</i>	June 2024
<i>Effectiveness of the Tutor Learning Initiative (2023–24: 19)</i>	June 2024

All reports are available for download in PDF and HTML format on our website at <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au>

# Our role and contact details

## The Auditor-General's role

For information about the Auditor-General's role and VAGO's work, please see our online fact sheet [About VAGO](#).

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## Our assurance services

Our online fact sheet [Our assurance services](#) details the nature and levels of assurance that we provide to Parliament and public sector agencies through our work program.

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