# RECOVERY WITHOUT BURDEN:
A MANIFESTO

whizz
EDUCATION

Whizz Education believes that every child deserves a learning experience that caters to their individual needs and pace of learning. Anyone who shares that belief will also share a profound sense of injustice that the global pandemic has wrought havoc on students' learning, with **underserved communities hit the hardest. Our research shows that the first lockdown alone resulted in knowledge drops for 46% of students in the UK, who exhibited an average loss of eight months' worth of previously earned knowledge during that period.** By February half-term 2021, **the total loss in face-to-face schooling time will amount to around half a normal school year for children right across the UK.** While some students will have made up some ground from remote learning, few will be exempt from learning loss. Disadvantaged students, in particular, are likely to have regressed from the level they had achieved before the pandemic. As children return to school, learning losses in excess of a year is a reality we cannot ignore.

46% OF STUDENTS IN THE UK EXPERIENCED LEARNING LOSS, EXHIBITING AN AVERAGE KNOWLEDGE DECLINE OF EIGHT MONTHS

BY FEBRUARY HALF-TERM 2021 THE TOTAL LOSS IN FACE-TO-FACE SCHOOLING TIME WILL AMOUNT TO AROUND HALF A NORMAL SCHOOL YEAR FOR CHILDREN RIGHT ACROSS THE UK.

50%
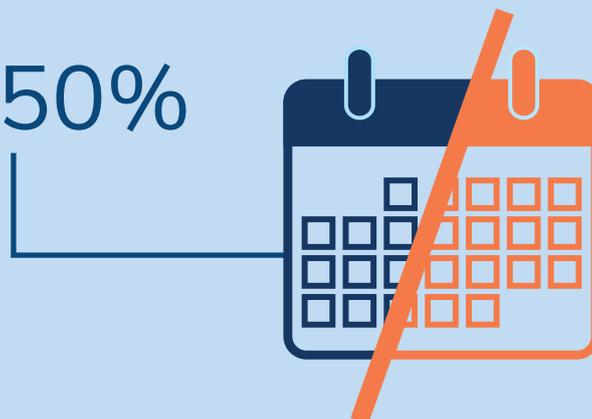
VIRTUAL TUTORING IS THE ONLY CATCHUP STRATEGY THAT IS SCALABLE AND PROVEN

The Department for Education, in establishing the National Tutoring Programme, has embraced the efficacy of one-to-one tutoring as an **unrivalled means of supporting student catchup.** There is a missed opportunity, however, in neglecting the proven pedigree of virtual tutoring. A virtual tutor is an automated online system that simulates the most effective instructional behaviours of a human tutor. For the express goals of recovering and acquiring core knowledge, **virtual tutors have been shown to be as effective as human tutors, and far more scalable**. Whizz's research shows that **an hour a week of virtual tutoring drives an average eighteen-month learning gain in the first year alone;** gains that have been observed in the UK and worldwide over fifteen years, and that are crucial in the face of staggering knowledge losses.

Over 2020-21, £350+ million of public funds will be spent on the provision of subsidised human tutoring organised by the NTP, despite the fact that virtual tutors demonstrably achieve equivalent educational outcomes at a tiny fraction of the cost. **The rates payable by schools for just 15 hours of 1:1 human tutoring from NTP subsidised tutors average £180 (also of necessity coming from public funds) so the typical total cost per pupil including the NTP subsidy is generally £700 or more.** It is clear why the NTP's 2020-21 budget is expected to facilitate tutoring for just 250,000 children when there are believed to be more than 1.4 million school children in England alone entitled to free school meals. By comparison, virtual tutoring costs approximately £30 per child per subject per annum when deployed at individual school level and would be substantially less if adopted at scale, reducing to around £10 per child, as part of a long-term national strategy, as repeatable processes bring more stability and efficiency to implementation over time.

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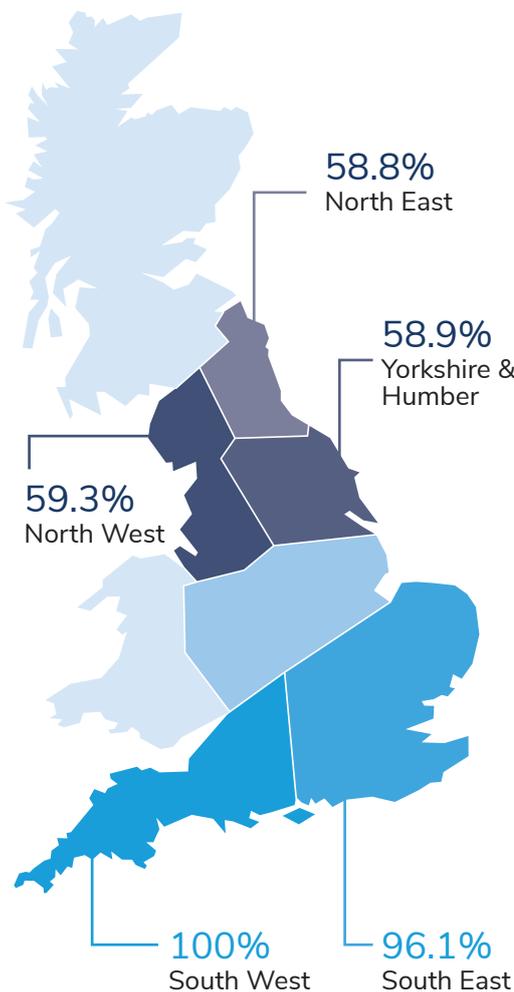
OUR CALL FOR NATIONAL-SCALE ROLLOUT OF VIRTUAL TUTORING IS PREDICATED ON THREE FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES:

1 ACCESS FOR ALL

2 CAPACITY BUILDING

3 REALTIME ACCOUNTABILITY

1 ACCESS FOR ALL

NTP: % SCHOOLS REACHED IN ENGLAND

58.8%
North East

58.9%
Yorkshire &
Humber

59.3%
North West

100%
South West

96.1%
South East

ALLOW STUDENTS TO LEARN ANY TIME, ANYWHERE

The pandemic has brought into stark focus the alarming disparities in home learning. Schools will remain the centerground for students' education but every student should ideally have access to internet-enabled devices at home as a contingency for school closures, and to complement the learning happening in class. **Access is by no means sufficient for quality learning but it is absolutely necessary. As of 28 February, 2021, the Government has, during the 2020-21 academic year, delivered or dispatched approximately 1.14 million laptops and tablets and 70,000 routers to schools and local authorities in England for onward provision mainly to disadvantaged students in years 3 to 11, including over 600,000 since the beginning of 2021. Rollout has been patchy, with hundreds of thousands of students still lacking access to online learning a year into the pandemic.** With challenges to home learning such as lack of space being difficult for policy to address, the Government has little choice but to focus on provision of devices to schools, and hope locally school administrators can identify the best means of improving access for the most disadvantaged. This is not a one-time investment: laptop provision must be backed up by recurring investment in repairs and upgrades to hardware, software and connectivity to ensure all students can access learning online, at any time and any place.

The NTP brings these lessons home. The initiative experienced challenges in reaching communities most in need. While the NTP has reached 100 per cent of its target number of schools in the south-west of England and 96.1 per cent in the south-east, **uptake was just 58.8 per cent in the north-east, 58.9 per cent in Yorkshire and the Humber and 59.3 per cent in the north-west.** The NTP even anticipated regional disparities, noting that schools in the south 'may have more familiarity with using tutoring'. No initiative can be allowed to exacerbate inequalities in access to much-needed learning resources.

2 CAPACITY BUILDING

EMPOWER TEACHERS WITH INTEGRATED SOLUTIONS

The wellbeing of students, parents and teachers must never be pitted against learning. Recovery strategies must not impose further pressures on a system already at breaking point. They must reinforce the existing efforts of schools and teachers, who have been nothing short of heroic during the pandemic and need solutions that align to their current provision. They do not need ill-conceived gimmicks that create new burdens without sustainable impact.

For teachers, the efficiencies of virtual tutoring, and the flexibility with which it can be implemented as part of their practice, has been proven to reduce workload. These systems offset the burden of differentiated planning, instruction and assessment and serve as the perfect complement - a virtual assistant - to teachers. For students, highly engaging and interactive digital content that is pitched at their specific level means that catchup and progression can be an uplifting experience that brings joy to learning. Since continuous assessment is embedded throughout the tutoring process, measuring and recovering learning loss need not be a 'high-stakes' affair that induces anxiety.

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3 REAL-TIME ACCOUNTABILITY

MONITOR, EVALUATE AND COURSE CORRECT AT EVERY TURN

Any approach to catchup must be informed by up-to-date evidence of impact. The learning data generated by virtual tutoring platforms, as a by-product of students' learning, enables real-time monitoring and evaluation of large-scale implementations by teachers, head teachers and programme administrators. Whizz has developed the frameworks to empower key stakeholders - from policymakers to teachers and parents - to leverage data-rich insights and apply course corrections as gaps in implementation and learning are revealed. **Continuous course correction is the most robust and accountable mechanism available to justify large-scale EdTech investment, and it has proven to double the learning rates of students in some of the most marginalised communities worldwide.** It must now be allowed the space to do likewise in the UK.

EMBRACING INNOVATION:
LONG-TERM MINDSET, NO SILVER BULLETS

Our response to COVID-19 must not only mitigate immediate threats to students' learning, but also embed resilience in our education system to prepare for future shocks, and to build back better for students, parents and teachers. **The UNESCO Institute of Statistics projects that recovery efforts will take several years**, and even while proactive intervention strategies can halve that period, a long-term commitment is needed to support students impacted by the pandemic.

The complexities of learning and teaching also necessitate a multi-pronged, interdisciplinary effort that seizes upon the best of education innovation. Learning outcomes are maximised when stakeholders are engaged from governance to chalkface - when policymakers are involved, teachers are empowered and students are motivated.

Virtual tutoring is not merely a band-aid for learning; it must form an integral part of education's 'new normal' and serve as a safety net for ensuring all students, irrespective of their background, enjoy uninterrupted access to quality education.

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