

A lesson from India: Primary pupils given maths tuition... by teachers 4,000 miles away

By [Laura Craik](#)

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A primary school has hived off maths tuition to graduates in India because they are cheaper to hire than home-grown teachers.

Pupils at the North London school are taught online by tutors 4,000 miles away.

The company behind the service expects more schools to follow suit as the public spending squeeze takes hold.



Breaking with tradition: As public sector spending cuts take hold, a school in North London is turning its back on tradition and looking to India to provide maths tuition for pupils

Moving back-office work or customer service centres to the subcontinent is commonplace in the private sector.

But this is believed to be the first time it has happened in teaching.

Education experts expressed concerns over different cultural conventions in certain subjects.

At Ashmount Primary in Islington, half of ten and 11-year-old pupils are given one-to-one tuition in maths on top of normal lessons.



Each is given a headset and logs on to a website where they can interact with the tutor while following their instructions on the screen. It costs the school £12 per hour per pupil. Tutors in London often charge £40 an hour.

Ashmount assistant head teacher Rebecca Stacey said: 'We quickly realised it was having a positive impact so now half of our Year Six pupils are using it,' she told the Times Educational Supplement. The school plans to extend the service to Years Four and Five, she said.

'It provides one-to-one help which would otherwise be too expensive to facilitate. Each of our pupils who have used it have improved and become more confident in their ability.'

The service, BrightSpark Education, was set up by UK-based entrepreneur and former tutor Tom Hooper.

The company employs more than 100 tutors, all maths graduates with teaching experience, based in the Punjab university town of Ludhiana.

Each tutor undergoes security checks and is trained in the English maths curriculum.

The sessions are supervised by the teacher. Mr Hooper said: 'It just seemed to make sense to provide live learning online.'



The future of learning? Call centres in India are commonplace alternatives for back-office work, but education experts expect that long-distance tutoring will also take off due to its affordability

Dylan Wiliam, director of the Institute of Education at London University, agrees that such services could become commonplace, but benefits depend on how good the tutors' English is.

'They will also need to understand cultural conventions. For example, long division is laid out differently in different countries,' he said.

'As with many things in education, it's not a silly idea, but as we've discovered in recent years, a lot of things that appeared to be good at the time turn out to be useless, or worse.'

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