

B Indian maths tutors to teach UK pupils

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Maths graduates in Punjab are being taught the British syllabus so they can give private lessons by phone and via the web.

Graduates based in India are being trained to give maths tuition to British children over the telephone and online, at all hours of the day and night.

A tutoring agency has hired 100 tutors in Punjab and coached them in the primary school curriculum and GCSE and A-level syllabuses, so that they can teach schoolchildren of all ages. The company – London-based BrightSpark Education – says the tutors will be available 24 hours a day and seven days a week. They will be paid £7 an hour. The minimum wage in Punjab is £2.52. **5**

The agency says parents can cut costs by hiring an Indian-based home tutor, rather than one who lives in the UK. It is charging £12 per lesson, less than half the amount parents would normally pay for one-to-one private tuition. **10**

The firm is encouraging state schools to get on board, too. So far, one has signed up – Ashmount primary school in Islington, London. It is using the tutors for an hour a week to supplement maths classes for 30 of its pupils. **15**

The move – thought to be the first of its kind – is unpopular with at least one teaching union, which said it should be discouraged at all costs. Chris Keates, general secretary of the Nasuwt union, called the idea "wrong on so many levels".

It is another example of a UK company choosing to employ a cheaper overseas workforce. Last month, it was revealed that nine Primary Care Trusts were outsourcing part of their patient record services to India. **20**

Maths teachers are in chronic short supply in this country. Maths graduates are offered a golden handshake of £5,000 when they enrol on postgraduate teacher training courses.

In 2009, some 5,980 students graduated in maths in the UK. In India, 690,000 students graduate with degrees in science and maths each year. **25**

The tutors use an interactive whiteboard to conduct lessons. They communicate with pupils through a headset. Pupils can see the tutor's face on their screen.

The agency takes bookings from parents and teachers, and timetables when the tuition will take place. Each session is recorded so that students, parents and teachers can replay it.

Tom Hooper, managing director of BrightSpark Education, said he had turned to India because it was so difficult to find maths graduates in the UK who wanted to be fulltime tutors. While the tutors would be available at all hours, he expected the majority of lessons to take place in the early evening. **30**

Ashmount's head teacher, Pana McGee, said the school used the tutors as though they were "another assistant in the classroom". **35**

"We would have paid an assistant at least £30,000, so that's how much can be saved in a year," she said. "The teaching resources that are used and the quality of teaching are excellent."

Hooper said that while nothing could replace face-to-face tuition, children, particularly those at primary school, were "very happy and confident learning online and with a headset".

"It's true that there isn't the emotional bond you might get with a teacher who is there in the room with you, but you also get an unintimidating environment if you are learning online." **40**

But Keates said this was not the route that schools should be taking. "Why aren't teachers making sure that they teach these pupils themselves, rather than going for remote learning

from India?" she said. "I am concerned about the precedent this is setting. What next – do without maths teachers? What about the follow-up lessons for the pupils, and the interaction with teachers?"

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The agency has checked the backgrounds of the tutors to ensure they are cleared to work with children.

A Get ready to present this document.

- 1 General topic?
- 2 Where does it take place?
- 3 Aim of the scheme?
- 4 Who is involved?
- 5 How does it work?
- 6 Pupils' point of view?
- 7 Tutors' point of view?
- 8 Teachers' union point of view?
- 9 Entrepreneur's point of view?
- 9 Head's point of view?
- 10 Your own point of view?

B Explain the vocabulary.