

Exam Stress? Read Expert Tips on Finding a Tutor

By **Independent School Parent**



Above, ask to see a potential tutor's qualifications

Parents should do their homework when it comes to finding a tutor, says Stephen Spriggs, Managing Director at William Clarence Education

Whether your child needs help with a particular subject or is preparing to sit entrance exams, a home tutor can help them to achieve their goals. As children vie for places at top independent schools, it's no surprise that the private tuition business is booming. So what are the essentials to look for when introducing a tutor into your home and into your child's life?

1. Qualifications

Private tutors should be educated to degree standard and if they're teaching A-Level or above, they should hold a degree in that subject. You don't want to find the mentor you employed to teach maths to your 12-year-old is out of their depth when polynomial long divisions crop up a few years down the line. Ask to see evidence of their qualifications. There is nothing to stop someone with a handful of GCSEs masquerading as an expert!

2. Inside knowledge

If you're preparing for entrance exams to a particular school, try to hire someone who is familiar with that establishment – a tutor who is a former pupil, or one who has already coached pupils through the same exams. Ask parents for recommendations, or perhaps have your child coached with another.

3. A good reputation

Anyone can set up as a private tutor, so do check references. Ask for a copy of their DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) or CRB (Criminal Record Bureau) certificates to establish that they don't have a criminal record. Remember, the document is only a snapshot in time, so check it regularly.

Ask about their child-safety procedures and code of conduct. If you're met with a blank face, run. Recruiting via an agency can reduce the risk of a poor appointment. Remember to research the market rates for the academic level of tutoring you need.

4. Flexibility

Whether you want a tutor for two hours a day or two hours a week, you need to find the person who can fit into your lifestyle. Understand that you are employing a person, not just a service, and they, too, have commitments. They are also entitled to holidays, and some leeway on both sides will go a long way to nurturing the relationship.

5. A mentor, not a miracle worker

Think of private tutoring as a long-term commitment – be it for a term or an entire schooling career. Employing someone a fortnight before an exam results in a lot of panic and a waste of money. Good tutoring isn't a cramming service or an intense hothouse of relentless lecturing to tired youngsters. Be wary of tutors who offer round-the-clock lessons to your child.

Also, if problems do arise, try to iron them out by speaking honestly to the tutor or the agency. Finding the right person can enhance your child's learning, boost their self-esteem, ease family pressure and help them pass those all-important exams – so do your homework!

Stephen Spriggs is Managing Director at William Clarence Education in London.

Independent School Parent

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