

# THE TUTORS' ASSOCIATION

## TUTORS CONFERENCE MAGAZINE *Variety, Choice and Value in Tuition*

### IN THIS ISSUE...

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Health



Volunteer Tuition  
and Prison Education



Educational  
Theory



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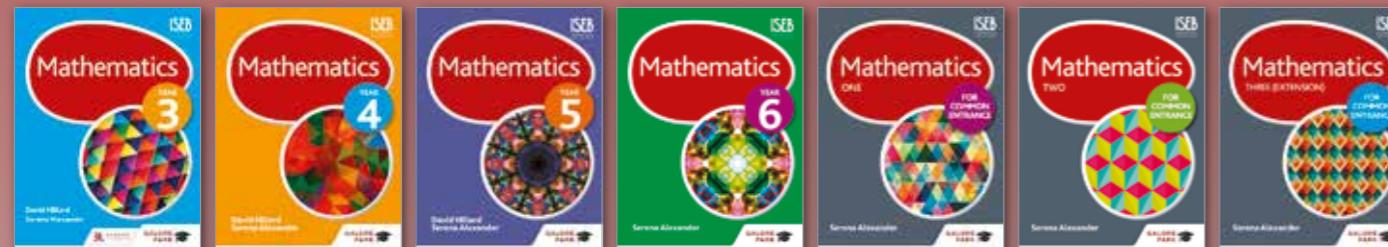
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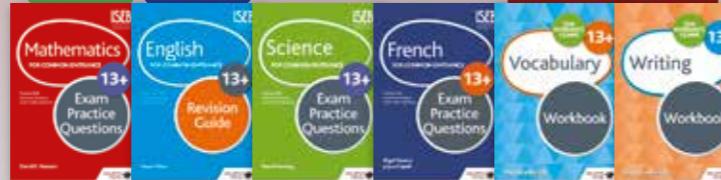


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## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

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### Welcome to the first ever Tutors' Association Magazine.

The Association continues to grow year on year and this publication is one of the ways that exemplify this. October 2018 not only marks the date of our third conference, but also the Association's fifth year since its inception. The Association now boasts more than 800 Members and with an extended reach of an estimated 30,000 tutors through our corporate members, we can legitimately now claim to be a significant voice within the educational landscape.

Our Conference last year was, by any standards, a great success. The feat of showcasing the diversity of our sector and attracting over 200 delegates is something of which everyone involved with it should feel immensely proud. As a consequence, the size of this year's conference at the Barbican on 16th October will be bigger, and the programme even more ambitious.

It will be an opportunity not just to learn, develop and network, but to celebrate our profession as well.

Alongside the annual conference, the Association continues to offer an ever-expanding range of events, services and resources to our members. Our Summit in April provided a tangible example of our members coming together as a community of professionals to enhance our skills.

Our regular monthly webinars have proved immensely popular, allowing members to exchange ideas and insights on a wide variety of aspects of tutoring. Members themselves, through articles they contribute – including many of those in this issue – continue to share reflections on their work and do, I firmly believe, show a truer picture of the tutoring landscape than many of the more lurid articles that sometimes feature in the public discourse do.

This aspect of broadening the narrative in the public debate about tutoring is something the Association is passionate about, and we are steadily seeing a more positive, realistic shift in how our profession is being perceived and reported.

The message is that tutoring can be a dynamic and effective force not just for change but for good – and not only in the field of education, but for society as a whole. I would encourage us all to look for opportunities to contribute to this process.

Adam Muckle FTA  
President

# EXPERTS' VIEWS ON MENTAL HEALTH

Edited by Peter Tait



*As an introduction to the National Conference panel on mental health led by Peter Tait, we invited each of the guest panellists – Alan Beggs, Natalie Harling, Nicky Horn, Daniel Licence and Dr Kathryn Weston – to give a perspective on their own specialist areas of mental health, positive psychology, self-awareness and resilience and some background of what they will bring to the debate.*



*Dr Kathryn Weston is one of the leading motivational speakers in the UK today on parenting and parental engagement in children's learning.*

[www.drkathyweston.com](http://www.drkathyweston.com)

**What, from your research, are the three main concerns or challenges that parents are facing supporting their children's education today?**

The research evidence is unequivocal; if parents engage with their children's learning, they can significantly boost their levels of attainment in school. Moreover, if parents take an active interest in their children's lives by showing they care and actively support their child's particular passions and interests, children are more likely to do better throughout their education.

Engaging in lots of 'family talk' and physical activity goes a significant way towards building children's resilience, yet all too often, parents are unaware of their role in shaping children's academic or emotional outcomes and outsource far too many aspects of their parenting job. Teachers (and tutors) are now expected to do the heavy lifting when it comes to raising children's academic scores and in preserving children's mental health.

What parents need to realise is that children are far more likely to reach their potential when everyone plays their part. Teachers and tutors can hone a very able child's academic ability with skilled, tailored support, but need parental support and commitment to enable children to reach their potential. Today's parents are extremely busy yet even a small amount of time spent with their child, talking about learning, their progress and allowing children to share what they have found interesting, exciting and/or tricky in their learning can reap enormous benefits. Parents often don't have the confidence to talk to children about subjects that they may be studying in school, but actually what really matters is that they encourage children to talk about their learning. Family time allows children to recharge, feel validated by those that love them most in the world and to be 'heard'. Talking about learning helps develop a positive 'home learning environment' which has been linked to shaping children's lifelong attitudes towards learning and future achievements.



*Alan Beggs is a Chartered Psychologist and founder member of the BPS Special Group in Coaching Psychology and an eminent sports psychologist.*

**What are the three main qualities to focus on in developing a psychology of high performance in ourselves and our students?**

When you talk to Olympic performers, they seem to have an inner glow of supreme powerlessness.

They just know that they are going to come home with some silverware and don't have a shred of doubt that they can be champions.

They have what is known as a 'can-do' mind-set, characteristic of those who not only know that when the chips are down, but who are able to deliver what they have trained for, to stay focused and engaged with what they must do to succeed; to feel self-confident, to keep going, and bounce back resilience – and are able to fire-fight if conditions demand it.

#### **Knowing how to do it**

Your child will get all the skills and knowledge they need from you and their school. This is the equivalent of fitness training in sport. But don't forget that there are various distractions including social media, television and friends as well as school and exams. You are going to have to work out how to balance up all these competing claims on their time so as to ensure they keep a healthy perspective.

#### **Knowing you've got what it takes**

Historically, the psychological dimension in sport was totally neglected. Unfortunately, the harsh reality is that in any meaningful competition, performers are carefully matched in terms of fitness and skill. The consequence is that psychological factors play a major role in separating winners and also-rans, not only in elite sport, but also in elite education. The good news is that sport and positive psychologists have recognised that appropriate mental skills training can make a huge difference for people engaged in any competition.

An ability to stay focused and engaged, resilience, and having stress management tools when needed are just as important for a child facing the challenge of the 11 Plus as for an Olympic athlete.



Dan Licence is a Mental Health Adviser for Osborne Cawkwell and a Mental Health First Aid Instructor for Mental Health First Aid England.

**What are the three things to look out for if you suspect that you, your students, friends or family members, are facing a mental health issue? What can you do to help?**

The key thing to look out for are changes in behaviour especially if they suddenly start acting in a way that is contradictory to their usual disposition – a good indication that all is not well.

Three major signs to look out for are:

- 1) Suddenly seeming tired all the time; persistent fatigue
- 2) Isolating themselves; not wanting to see friends
- 3) Loss of interest in activities or hobbies previously enjoyed

It's fairly normal to experience these things at some point in your life (especially in adolescence), but what differentiates a mental health issue from "normal" human emotion is if these symptoms persist for longer than two weeks. If so, it's important to take the following action as soon as possible.

#### **1) Ask them**

How you approach someone will directly impact the extent to which they will confide in you. A relaxed approach tends to yield better results, so try to establish a rapport with them first before addressing anything mental health related.

If you do suspect something is wrong, try to resist the urge to label it straight away. Instead, ask questions:

**"You seem a bit tired today"**

**"I feel like you've been a bit distant lately"**

**"Is everything ok?"**

People often internalise their emotions (especially men!) so try to read between the lines and make your own assessment.

#### **2) Recommend they pay a visit to their GP**

The next step is to get them to book an appointment with their GP, where they will receive an assessment and treatment based on the results

#### **3) Be there for them**

Finally, and most importantly, be a friend; reminding yourself that it's just an illness, and continuing to provide love and support, is essential for a speedy recovery.



Natalie Harling is a senior member of the Outward Bound Trust senior management team.

[www.outwardbound.org.uk/about-us](http://www.outwardbound.org.uk/about-us)

**What are the three main qualities of doing an Outward Bound and outdoor learning? What are the advantages of such extra-curricula education?**

I'm often asked by teachers and parents what the advantages are to getting involved with extracurricular education like Outward Bound and our outdoor educational programmes. The answers can be found in the national conversation around the value of outdoor learning and the rise of youth mental health problems, childhood obesity and the deleterious effects of social media.

Outdoor learning is frequently cited as a short-term fix rather than a long term preventative solution that benefits everyone. Because the stronger, more resilient and fearless our young people are, the better prepared they will be for life's challenges. So how does outdoor learning equip young people with these qualities? At Outward Bound it's very simple; we use mountains, mentors and mates.

The mountains are where the magic happens. They act as both real and metaphorical obstacles to be conquered. Because if you can reach the top of Ben Nevis in the driving rain why can't you hit your predicted GCSE grades too? Facing down mountains helps participants realise what they're capable of.

Our mentors are our wonderful instructors, just like any tutor they are more than just teachers. They're a font of all knowledge, a coach, and a friend to each participant, inspiring and motivating them to leave their comfort zones. They help instil a mind over matter mindset and encourage participants to find, set and achieve their life goals.

However, it's fostering friendship and communication skills that is such a crucial part of our programmes. Having a broad group of mates, from different social backgrounds, genders and ethnicities is what sets people up for the most powerful learning. That's why equipping young people with compassion and real-life social networking skills, that go way beyond just likes and shares. And that's why I believe extracurricular education like Outward Bound is so advantageous to young people.



Nicky Horn, Associate at Sport and Beyond. Teacher and Tutor of 20 years' experience in secondary education, Assistant Head of Middle School at Ampleforth College.

**What three things can we and our students do to become more self-aware, independent and develop a growth mindset?**

In terms of educating students in creativity and independence, the mainstream education system in the United Kingdom falls behind that of many other countries.

As tutors we are in a powerful position to educate and influence students in ways other than basic academic skills and discipline.

First, we need to understand the person and to do this we need to ask questions to ascertain what they bring to the work place.

- What are you good at in school?
- What are your strengths?

- How do I use these strengths?
- What can you do to help others?

Having started to understand the student and their needs, we then move into the focus stage and listen to the student.

If they say "I can't do this" or "I am no good" we would take them back to prior learning. In the case of maths I would ask -

- What have you learnt in the last five years in maths?
- Can you do your times tables ?
- What is the Pythagoras theorem ?

Too often students measure themselves to their peers and not to their own progress.

If we can enable them to believe they have progressed in the past, then what is stopping them from thinking they can progress in the future? This is a basis of growth mindset and if we can enable them to take pride in their effort, and give them the confidence to tackle work that they previously struggled with, then we are developing growth mindset.

By understanding themselves and by focusing on developing a belief in growth mindset, we are helping the student take more control of their destiny, become more independent and take responsibility. As tutors we have the freedom a class room teacher may not have to create that pathway for our tutees, to enable them to excel.

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# WHY SHOULD PRIVATE TUTORS CARE ABOUT EDUCATIONAL THEORY?

By John Nichols

**Educational theory and research can help tutors to understand why good teaching practice is effective, as well as identifying ways it could be improved. Understanding models of cognition such as 'Schema Theory' and 'Cognitive Load Theory' can give tutors an insight into how best to help students succeed.**

Historically, private tutors have been less exposed than teachers to the ever-changing world of educational theory and research. In some ways, this has been a good thing: not all educational research has been equally valuable. In some cases what is taught is out of date, misunderstood or, at worst, completely false. Private tutors have tended to focus more on practical hints and tips, derived from their personal experiences either as a student or as a tutor. Many tutors have used common sense and intuition to decide on what would be best for their students - to good effect.

However, tutors can benefit substantially from an understanding of the theory and evidence underpinning how students learn, which they are more likely to have missed if they've never been a teacher. Some tuition agencies now recognise the benefits of tutors understanding educational theory - such as increased confidence - and provide relevant training.

Here we will focus on one educational theory, 'Schema Theory', and the way in which its practical application can impact positively on student attainment and success - which is, of course, what tutors are paid to do.

## What is Schema Theory?

In simple terms, Schema Theory is an explanation of how we learn and remember information: it suggests that memory is really the connection of related pieces of information. We can refer to all of the information we know about a given subject as a 'schema'.

Figure 1 models the process required for an English-speaking person learning the Chinese word for 'house'. Although their pre-existing schema contains facts relevant to their previous knowledge and experience of houses, it does not contain much knowledge relevant to the Chinese language.

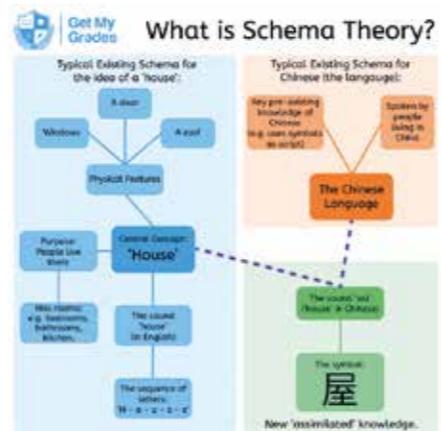


Fig 1

We can connect - or assimilate - new information into our existing schemata, in order to learn new information (such as the Chinese word for a house). This model of learning fits well with the famous maxim in neuroscience: 'neurons that fire together, wire together'; it seems entirely plausible that memory is created by connecting related information (encoded by neurons, or combinations of neurons) together.

## Applying Schema Theory to Tuition - The 'Testing Effect'

Using assessment as part of the teaching process - sometimes called

'Assessment for Learning' - is just one effective practice we can explain and improve using Schema Theory. The simple effort of trying to remember information is known to strengthen connections in the brain (most likely by a process neuroscientists call 'Long-Term Potentiation'). Even if you don't get the correct answer, the feedback you are given allows you to reinforce or, perhaps, to create the appropriate connections.

Testing has a use that goes beyond the purely diagnostic: good questions help students learn more. Research clearly demonstrates that testing, questioning and other forms of assessment have a positive impact on the retention of knowledge. Low-stakes assessment should be the backbone of most tutorials and lessons. Explaining difficult ideas and giving students clear examples helps them to develop schemata. However, these forms of content delivery should be punctuated with questions throughout. Not all questions are 'good', though, and a question that is appropriate in one context may not be in another.

Bad questions are either pitched at a completely inappropriate level, with far too much or too little 'cognitive load'. This is why understanding Cognitive Load Theory can be helpful. Alternatively, questions can be too easy to guess - either because some options given are clearly silly or because the tutor inadvertently gives clues. To illustrate how badly questions can be delivered, take the case of 'Clever Hans'; the horse in early 1900s Germany that could 'perform arithmetic' by tapping out

his hoof to give the answer - using the reaction of his audience to spot when he'd got to the right value! The horse clearly had a skill but it was picking up human social cues, not arithmetic! We need to be confident that a question identifies any gaps or misconceptions in the relevant knowledge or skill being assessed.



Clever Hans answered maths questions using audience cues

**Not all questions are equal...**

**Good Question**  
An airliner flies from London, UK, to Istanbul in Turkey. It takes 5 hours to cover the distance of 2,500 km. What is the average speed of the airliner?  
 2,500 km/h  
 0.002 km/h  
 500 km/h  
 12,500 km/h

The options identify specific misconceptions and it only assesses the student's ability to use the equation speed = distance / time.

**Bad Question**  
An aircraft travels 3,500 km in 7 hours. What is its speed?  
 35 mph  
 500 km/h  
 35,000,000 km/h  
 5 m/s

Most of the options are silly or can be too ruled out simply because the units are incorrect.

The question in the orange box is of poor quality; it is assessing a student's common sense as much as anything else as, of the options given, only one is moderately sensible. If a student got it right, it would not be very informative to a tutor (nor a useful learning experience for the student).

If questions involve unfamiliar examples or different applications of a central concept, they add to the student's understanding of the concept itself - their 'schema'. The different applications and examples enrich a student's understanding of a concept. Examples help students understand the rules, principles, processes, skills and facts that make up the concept.

## The Value of a Theoretical Underpinning

In one article it is impossible to explain in any meaningful level of detail the extent to which educational theory can influence teaching practice. For example, this article has used numerous examples of 'priming' to make readers aware of other areas of educational theory because people are generally more receptive to learning about things they've previously encountered.

Educational theory can be very helpful for tutors. When properly understood, it gives a firm grounding to good practice and helps identify and improve on ineffective or inefficient techniques. A strong understanding of basic educational theory helps tutors to consciously adjust their teaching practice in order to achieve the maximum benefit for their students. Student success leads to happy clients and a profitable and sustainable tuition business!



## AUTHOR'S BIO

John Nichols is a former Teach First teacher, a private tutor and a co-founder of the EdTech Company, 'Get My Grades'. John has a particular interest in educational theory, neurobiology and EdTech.

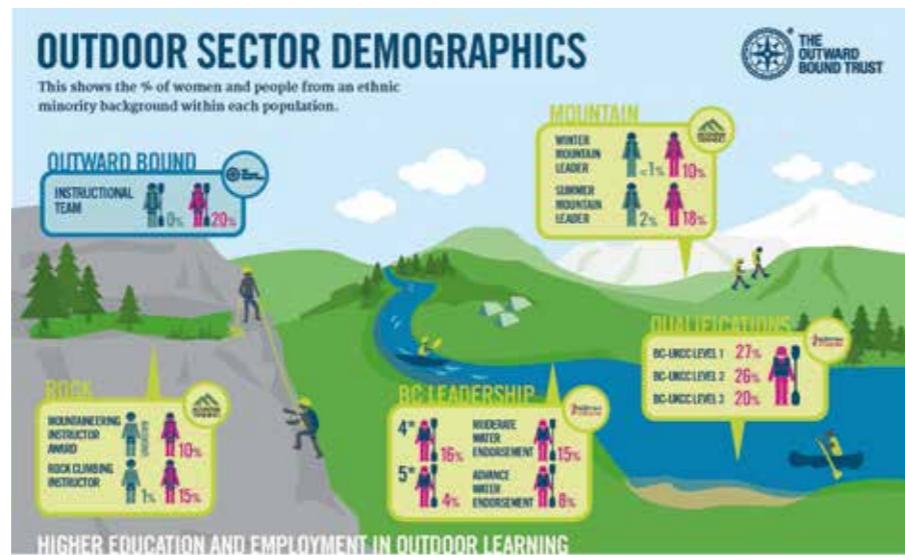
# DIVERSITY IN THE OUTDOORS

by The Outward Bond Trust

**Earlier this year we started a project to explore our diversity: taking the first steps in creating an Outward Bound instructional team that more closely represents the backgrounds of the young people we work with. We've invited our project manager Kate O'Brien to share an update on her findings to date.**

Over the last nine months I have consulted internally across The Trust, and externally amongst national governing bodies, higher education and other employers as well as engaging with research from within the corporate, public, charity and education sectors. What has become clear is that this is definitely not about creating divisions between groups of people, but enhancing understanding among individuals who all have different lived experience of the world. There are some obvious under-representations in our workforce at Outward Bound and in the outdoor sector more broadly, which if understood and considered may offer further benefit and impact to the many young people from diverse backgrounds who experience our programmes.

We have collected information available regarding the current make up of relevant parts of the outdoor sector:



Behind the picture lies some interesting research as to the reasons why representation from these two groups is lower within the outdoor sector. Is this simply preference, or are there other factors at play?

## People from an ethnic minority background in the outdoors

In many ways grouping together "people from an ethnic minority background" into an under-represented group in the outdoors offers a challenging start point in itself. Because of course within this grouping there is a huge diversity of traditions, religious beliefs, language, not to mention gender, social class and education.

People may be first, second, third (or more) generations new to this country. Depending on where they live they may be in a minority or majority within their immediate community settings.

These multiple factors play a huge part in people's participation and engagement with society more broadly, but also with the outdoors. Studies show that often members of a dominant group (in-group) tend to see individual differences within their group, however often will clump together members of minority groups (out-group), viewing them as all very similar, which leaves thinking vulnerable to stereotyping and generalisation.

Around 14% of the population of England and Wales are from black, Asian, minority ethnic backgrounds, in Scotland this is 4%. The figure is higher for the under 16 population, and is increasing steadily. The most ethnically diverse place is London, and we know that the majority of people from an ethnic minority background in the UK live in urban areas. Approximately 15% of young people who visit Outward Bound centres come from an ethnic minority background.

Research shows that the majority group who participate in the types of outdoor activities which contribute to developing the skills and motivation required to work in outdoor education are white, male, middle class and living in affluent areas. People from an ethnic minority background visit outdoor spaces less, and when they do it tends to be within 1-2 miles

from home, taking part in more urban outdoor activity such as park visits and street sports.

Recent Sport England research identifies the six themes of language, awareness, safety, culture, confidence and perception of middle class stigma as barriers to participation in outdoor activities for people from an ethnic minority background. A diversity review commissioned by DEFRA goes into more depth highlighting several key factors in understanding these lower levels of participation. One of the key findings from this report is that although the people interviewed valued the natural environment, they often had negative perceptions of the social environment, expecting to feel excluded and conspicuous in what they perceived to be an exclusively English place. The report goes on to highlight that under-representation is largely linked to people's experiences in the UK, rather than negative attitudes linked to ethnicity, culture or religion. A sense of acceptance (or non-acceptance) in wider society can have a disproportionate affect on people from an ethnic minority background's leisure time. When people feel that they cannot engage with the mainstream culture as their authentic selves they tend to limit contact with dominant groups and places where feeling like an outsider is amplified, and may raise concerns around safety. Some cultural differences in perception of outdoor activities were also identified, for example some participants identified activities such as walking with hardship and a lack of wealth, having to walk being an enforced necessity due to not being able to afford a car,

rather than a pleasurable leisure choice. Practical concerns were also identified such as travel distances to wild places, sleeping and eating provisions to cater for different cultural preferences.

## Women in the outdoors

UK society is 51% female. Yet we know that there are less women and girls participating in the types of outdoor activities likely to lead to the interest, skill and motivation to pursue a career in this area. Recent research shows that 13-15 year old girls are the least active population in the UK. This lower representation persists into adulthood and into the qualification pathways for outdoor careers.

It is worth digging a bit deeper if we are to make progress and act in a way which contributes to genuine change which will benefit future generations of young people. There were five themes which stood out as being reflected in the extensive body of academic research in this area, as well as highlighted by current Outward Bound employees throughout this piece of work.



## AUTHOR'S BIO

Kate O'Brien is a Project Manager at The Outward Bound Trust, working on one of Outward Bound's three strategic areas of experimentation: Taking the first steps toward creating a more diverse workforce. She has worked in the field of personal development for over 15 years and completed a Masters in Applied Positive Psychology.

## 1 Males and females are treated differently

From the moment a child is born he or she is treated differently dependent upon biological sex. The recent BBC documentary, *No More Boys and Girls: Can Our Kids Go Gender Free?*, highlights much of this gendered socialisation process and the powerful impact it has within society. Within the outdoor sector, research carried out by Sport England shows that in 2018 young girls still consider that they are not welcome in outdoor play spaces and families have concerns particularly in allowing their daughters to play and explore outside. By the time young people come to make choices about how they want to spend their leisure time, what types of behaviours feel safe, or what career path to choose, they have already experienced a lifetime of messages and conditioning creating a different start point for young men and young women. Many women carry the baggage of living in a society which is structured by a series of binary oppositions in which one side can be feminised and associated with an inferior realm of life. Consider sayings such as "crying like a girl" or "man up", which are still heard. Language can often appear trivial with the impact being invisible to people who live on the side of life which benefits from being deemed superior. Or perhaps the impact is different, a need to appear strong, not show weakness through emotional vulnerability.

Society's ideas about masculinity and femininity have implications for both genders in developing the ability to become well rounded outdoor

professionals capable of leading authentic adventures and facilitating quality personal development.

### 2. Values and motivation

Within outdoor education it has been shown that there is a valuing of physical and technical skills over interpersonal skills. But intriguingly women are expected to use interpersonal skills more than men, and men expected to use more physical skills. Multiple studies over the past 30 years also show that men and women have some differing motivations in pursuing a career in outdoor education, recent internal research mirrors this. Female staff at Outward Bound are three times more likely to cite personal development through the outdoors as a primary motivator for working in the sector, while male staff are more likely to cite the high level of adventure or expeditions as a primary motivator. This is not to say that male staff don't value or aren't motivated by personal development or that female staff don't value or aren't motivated by adventure. But what it does suggest is that if you have a room full of male staff, it will be more likely that more of those people will be intrinsically motivated by the adventure elements of the role and if you have a room of female staff it is more likely that more of those people will be intrinsically motivated by the personal development aspects of the role. Valuing physicality and technical competence more highly within the leadership, structures and subculture of many outdoor education settings is more likely to be congruent with male values and motivations.

This may impact on some women's experiences of the working environment and how they feel able to contribute and progress within it.

### 3. Measuring up - in whose world?

Historically outdoor education has focussed on traditional masculinised physicality to represent competency. The perception that the outdoors and adventure require qualities associated with being a particular type of male (including traits such as strength, toughness and physical mastery) has meant that many women (and likely men who fall outside of this type) have struggled to find validity in their experiences. Spending lots of time in male dominated environments, can lead some women to ask unhelpful questions of themselves - "how can I be good enough?", rather than, "how can I learn to do this in a way which is appropriate for me, and successfully achieves the objective?" This questioning of competence can lead to a longer journey for people who don't fit in with the traditionally masculinised notion of adventure and leadership, with women often taking 10 years longer than men to realise how good they actually are.

### 4. Women are inadvertently complicit in the gender imbalance

One of the interesting areas which stood out from the research is perhaps slightly counter-intuitive but an incredibly important piece of the gender asymmetry puzzle, is that women often hold themselves back from opportunity or progression. This can be subtle, by wanting to distribute credit or nurture others sense of self

efficacy, rather than shout about achievements. But also, in not wanting to step forward for leadership roles, technical assessments or roles requiring the limelight eg publication or promotion.

### 5. Practicalities

For many women having a family is a strong driver. It has long been known that a career in the outdoors is not particularly compatible with being a primary care giver and this is a significant factor in women choosing to leave. Many women spoke of the difficulties they faced with this, how dedicated they were to their career and professional development, but that family would come first.

All of the above factors (as well as others) can be inextricably linked together contributing to the picture we see representing training, progression and employment within the outdoor sector.

### Does it matter?

OK, so we know that there are less women and people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the outdoor sector. But why does that matter? Some will argue that it doesn't matter who is leading the adventure as long as they are a good instructor. However, there is growing evidence to suggest that role models do make a difference to how young people view themselves and their sense of what is possible in their own future. Many outdoor organisations, like The Outward Bound Trust, exist to have a positive impact on the development of individuals lives.

Research within the social sector makes the pertinent point that:

**"A charity is not there to serve its own purposes but to help drive social change and positive impact. That task is harder if the organisation itself is exclusive."**

There is also growing evidence to support the impact that bias (conscious or unconscious) can have on leadership. Despite best intentions and a belief in equality in its broadest sense, people can, and do, sometimes respond unhelpfully to others who are different. Or act unconsciously in a way which perpetuates the status quo and unintentionally benefits some, and not others. This becomes more likely when we surround ourselves by people who are similar to us, in friendships... communities... workplaces. This becomes our world, our normal. We exist in a bubble and perhaps find it hard to imagine that things could be different. Better, for everybody.

### Changing world

There are some fantastic initiatives happening within our sector already. The RYA are investing in developing sailing initiatives to engage more people from an urban and ethnic minority background. Lindley Educational Trust and Shadwell Basin Outdoor Centre are both doing fantastic, progressive work in diverse urban communities. Mountain Training have devoted significant time to considering how their training structures can attract and support candidates from different

backgrounds. The National Training centre, Glenmore Lodge, now offer female specific programmes and also hold the annual Women In Adventure conference. Online there are numerous popular and successful sources of female inspiration and groups offering support and a different way of being in the outdoors.

Now we have a better understanding of our start point, both within Outward Bound and within some of the key parts of the sector, we will begin to take some actions. We hope that we can learn from, build on and create strong partnerships with some of the above examples, as we embark on taking the first steps to attracting and retaining a workforce which is more representative of the backgrounds of the young people we work with.

If you would like to find out more about this piece of work, please don't hesitate to contact [katherine.obrien@outwardbound.org.uk](mailto:katherine.obrien@outwardbound.org.uk)

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## Programme

09:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:15	President's Address - Adam Muckle
10:15-10:45	Opening Keynote: 'How can tutors be prepared for the future?' - Jill Hodges
10:45-11:15	Presentation: 'The new curriculum, new horizons, new opportunities' - Dr Adam Boddison
11:15-11:45	BREAK
<b>Breakout Session 1</b>	
11:45-12:25	Workshop: How to grow your business - Ana Ambika Pindoria & Kam Pindoria Interactive Workshop: The best resources for Tutoring - Emily Milne Presentation: Language Tuition - Lucinda Williams
<b>Breakout Session 2</b>	
12:35-13:05	Workshop: Supporting Students with international university applications - David Hawkins Interactive Workshop: Current Trends in the Delivery of Education: Research, Neuroscience and Edtech - John Nichols Presentation: Working as a disabled Tutor - Vanessa Thompsett
13:05-14:00	LUNCH
<b>Breakout Session 3</b>	
14:00-14:40	Q&A: Mental Health - A Panel about Mental health, positive psychology, self awareness and resilience Led By Peter Tait. Panellists: Alan Beggs, Natalie Harling, Nicky Horn, Daniel Licence and Dr Kathryn Weston
<b>Breakout Session 4</b>	
14:50-15:30	Workshop: How to grow your business - Ana Ambika Pindoria & Kam Pindoria Workshop: Developing Excellent Primary Tutoring Practices - Dr Stephen Curran
15:30-16:00	BREAK
16:00-16:30	Closing Keynote: 'Prison Education' - Kirstine Szifris
16:30-17:00	'Prison Education: A Student's Perspective' - Katy Oglethorpe
17:00-17:15	Close - Adam Muckle
17:30-20:00	Drinks Reception Hosted by Affiliate member Get My Grades

# STUDYING WITH CONVICTION: EDUCATION FOR PEOPLE IN PRISON

By Kirstine Szifris and Katy Oglethorpe

**"With philosophy you can bring out your own ideas and then, through the group you can rework it, remodel it, change it, look at it, to get to somewhere. So it's your part in building that and, I suppose, it's more empowering in that sense because you are doing it yourself."**

Michael  
Prison Learner



Kirstine Szifris



Katy Oglethorpe

Every prison in England and Wales has a dedicated education department. Prison educators provide education to some of the most marginalised people in society, under some of the most difficult circumstances. But what is the role of the prison educator? Is it rehabilitation? Or should prison educators take a more holistic approach, perhaps aligning themselves with the adult education sector? Should the curriculum focus on basic skills or offer a broader range? How can self-directed study be facilitated and high level learning be encouraged?

Education of people in prison provides an important opportunity for individuals to engage in learning. Since 2002, there has been a focus on basic skills and employment related qualifications with functional skills in English and Maths taking centre stage. Alongside this, a range of organisations offer alternative styles of education looking to encourage people in prisons to find passions, develop skills and find the motivation to reshape identities. We hope this article will give you a brief insight into the world of prison education and some information about the work that goes on.

## The current state of play

Responsibility for prison education lies with the Ministry of Justice. This means education focuses rehabilitation by emphasising employability and skills for the job market.

However, educational opportunities can be powerful tools in helping individual prisoners regardless of whether they aim to be 'rehabilitative'.

In recent years, prison education has had some significant attention. In 2015, the Government published the Coates Review which offered a comprehensive overhaul of prison education system. Led by Dame Sally Coates, the review argued for more autonomy for Governors, a wider range of educational offers, and more opportunity to progress onto Level 3 qualifications. This came on the back of changes in educational funding which meant the Government would no longer fund Level 3 courses.

To understand the types of education on offer in prisons, it's important to understand that there are significant differences between prisons. From small dedicated therapeutic communities, to large local prisons serving the courts; from high security to open prisons, the young people's estate, and ones holding only foreign nationals or only women (who make up around 5% of the total population), the prison estate serves a range of people and a range of purposes. How, then, can an education provider cater to the different needs of such diverse populations? Not only that, the statistics around prior educational achievement differs. On the one hand, research shows literacy levels in prisons can be very low - only around a third of prisoners have literacy L1 compared to 85% of the general population - but on the other a fifth of prisoners have Level 3 qualifications and above.

Beyond policy initiatives, defining 'education activities' in the first place can prove complex. As I mentioned, there is a dedicated education department in every prison. The 'bread and butter' of prison education is currently Functional Skills in English and Maths but educational departments can offer a range of opportunities beyond this. In particular, most prisons offer arts-based programmes with one prison I visited recently having a kiln for a pottery class.

Most prisons will offer courses in vocational programmes such as cookery, industrial cleaning, or horticulture with prisoners putting their skills to use in the canteens, gardens and cleaning corridors. Programmes such as personal and social education or business studies are also common with a few prisons looking to expand their Level

3 courses to provide access programmes in the social sciences and humanities. Gym culture is central to the lives of many of the men in prisons. Prison officers run the gym space and offer courses in personal training and fitness. Alongside formal education, there can be reading groups run by the library, philosophy courses run by third-sector organisations, and university courses run by external providers.

However, I do not wish to imply that educational opportunities abound in prisons. In general, on any given day around 10% of a prison population will be engaged in prison education. Being allocated to a course will depend on a range of factors - space on the course, previous behaviour, English and Maths qualifications. Despite some men having many years to serve, funding structures mean providers have to

limit the number of learning hours for each individual. Once allocated to a course, lockdowns and disturbances can disrupt learning, access to materials can be difficult, transfers can mean restarting courses in new prisons and communicating with external providers such as the Open University being disrupted.

## Prisoners' Education Trust

**"I loved the experience of distance learning. It made me feel like I wasn't in prison anymore. You know how sometimes you walk into a library and you feel a change of atmosphere? It's almost like that in your own cell."**

**Suddenly you're interested, you're engaged, you're using your brain, you're talking to a tutor. All of those things are extremely positive and self-motivating. It transforms you."** – Ben, mechanic and former prison learner



The idea behind Prisoners' Education Trust - or PET - was born on a commuter train in South West London - in a discussion between a prison officer and barrister who worked at what remains Western Europe's largest prison - HMP Wandsworth. The pair deplored the prison's poor educational offer - the limited, low-level curriculum that they saw as preventing people from reaching their full potential.

They decided to apply for funding so the men could study for distance learning qualifications in their cells, doing the same courses as their peers in the community. With that, PET was born. Thirty years later we are providing courses in every prison in England and Wales, funding almost 3,000 people a year to study subjects ranging from book-keeping to beekeeping; plumbing to philosophy – including GCSEs, A Levels and the first parts of degrees.

Prisoners applying to PET are asked to write a letter explaining their motivation, endorsed by a member of staff. Reasons repeat themselves: to find employment after release; to support a child or make a parent proud; to pass the time in a system where they are increasingly likely to spend 23 hours locked in their cell; to counter the negative effect their environment has on their mental health; to explore talents and find hope.

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garden." Here, said Adam, was a guy "literally pulled from the final stages of despair, beginning with something as simple as the hope found in an A4 prospectus".

Our funding can be transformative: government research has shown that doing one of our courses means someone is more likely to find work after release, and less likely to return to prison. People we have funded have gone on to become academics, business owners, youth workers and mechanics. What they've learned in prison has given them the tools and aspirations to build a future away from crime, allowing them to support themselves and their families, and become assets to their communities. Adam, who took a fitness qualification through PET, came into the office this year.

Now a personal trainer, Adam told the story of another prisoner who he'd convinced to take up distance learning as a route out of depression.

"I spoke to him about his dreams as a boy and he let slip how much he'd loved gardening and how he'd always wanted to work outdoors. With a little gentle persuasion, he enrolled on a horticulture course and got involved with the prison gardens." Here, said Adam, was a guy "literally pulled from the final stages of despair, beginning with something as simple as the hope found in an A4 prospectus".

As Adam's story demonstrates, human connection is often what propels people to learn. As PET sets out to make a bigger difference to more prisoners, we are looking to work more on-the-ground, setting up study groups, training peer mentors, and bringing tutors from the community to support prison-based students. As prisons tentatively step into the digital age, with the arrival of in-cell tablets and restricted internet access, PET will be able to embrace the power of technology in the courses we provide. Anywhere but a prison, it is unthinkable to imagine studying - or teaching - without even a basic Word processor. Within prison, people complete full Masters degrees without being able to conduct basic research online. Opening up prisons to the modern world is a way to enrich teaching, and ensure those serving sentences are equipped to re-join society after their sentences are over.

## Conclusion

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire," said WB Yeats. Whether in a school or prison, learning will only work if matches the interests, wishes and ambitions of the individual, and it will have the most impact if it ignites a passion that can go on to burn independently. This is why both people in prison - many of whom have a very poor history of mainstream education - should be given the chance to pursue their own aspirations in learning. Meaningful qualifications should not merely be ones that are meaningful for an education provider, but ones that have lasting meaning for an individual, providing the tools to build a path out of crime and towards a positive future.

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# BRINGING EDTECH TO PRIVATE TUITION

## THE EDTECH PLATFORM DESIGNED BY A TUTOR, FOR TUTORS

**Get My Grades is a brand new online platform designed to enable students to 'Learn, Revise, Assess and Track' progress whilst being guided by their tutors or parents. Get My Grades draws on educational theory, research and practical experience to help students learn more effectively.**

For a long time, tutors have been dependent mostly on resources that they've managed to collect from agencies, former clients and other tutors. Past papers, revision guides, textbooks and (more recently) tablets are all typical tutorial resources. EdTech platforms do exist; however, generally speaking, they target schools with a minimum number of users set at around 30 students. Even the platforms that do exist are often limited to multiple choice questions and a limited amount of educational content and often only offer one subject.

However, technology has so much more to offer than glorified multiple choice quizzes and access to a collection of videos. So, we sat down and designed the perfect platform, offering tutors exactly what they want. To start with, we made a list of the things that good teachers and tutors do already:

- Provide educational content to their students that is clear, interesting and with opportunities for students to explore their interests beyond the confines of their course.
- Start students off with easier, shorter and structured questions before building up to longer, more challenging questions. Effective revision is about practice!
- Give students detailed feedback on where they did well, made mistakes and how they can improve.

- Guide students, making it clear what is on their course and what is not, to ensure they focus on the content that will appear on their exams.
- Remember where students have done well and help them improve on their areas of weakness.
- Communicate clearly and easily with parents and students, so that everyone has an accurate and clear understanding of how well a student is doing.

**We thought: "How can we make these jobs easier for tutors? How can we help students learn faster?" Then we set out to build the EdTech platform that we wanted to make a tutor's life easier - which turned out to be a huge challenge!**

Finally, after a lot of work, we've launched the Get My Grades platform.

One thing is especially important to clarify about EdTech: it will not replace tutors, ever. Anyone that says otherwise is talking nonsense. Tutors have existed forever and probably will continue to exist forever as well, so nothing about our project was ever intended to try and replace them. No amount of AI, 'big data', neural networks or snazzy tech is going to ever make tutors irrelevant. EdTech is a tool for tutors to use; the invention of the saw did not make carpenters redundant and the introduction of textbooks into education did not end the requirement for teachers either!

### So, How Will 'Get My Grades' Help Tutors?

Get My Grades was designed to help tutors do a lot of the good things they already do, making it easier to teach, set work and track a student's progress.

Our 'Learn' pages have been designed to stimulate an interest in a concept, making for ideal preparatory reading.

After a lesson, a tutor will probably want to set their student some practice - Get My Grades makes this easy, as we have a bank of tens of thousands of high-quality questions of varying difficulty, based on the sorts of questions found in real exams - not just multiple choice quizzes! Tutors can either allow our algorithms to set students questions of an appropriate level, or pick exactly which questions they'd like the student to be set, sorted by content and difficulty. Once the assignment is set, the software will remind students every time they log on. There's no need for tutors to keep track of what was set, when it is due and whether it has been completed or not - it's all stored in the platform. Parents can see it too.

During their assignment review, the student will be presented with a detailed mark scheme for each question, explaining how it should be assessed and how each mark is awarded. Letting students try to assess their own work helps them understand the requirements - often, the best time to teach someone is when they have just answered a question. Self-assessment helps students develop metacognitive skills and the ability to check and improve their own work effectively.

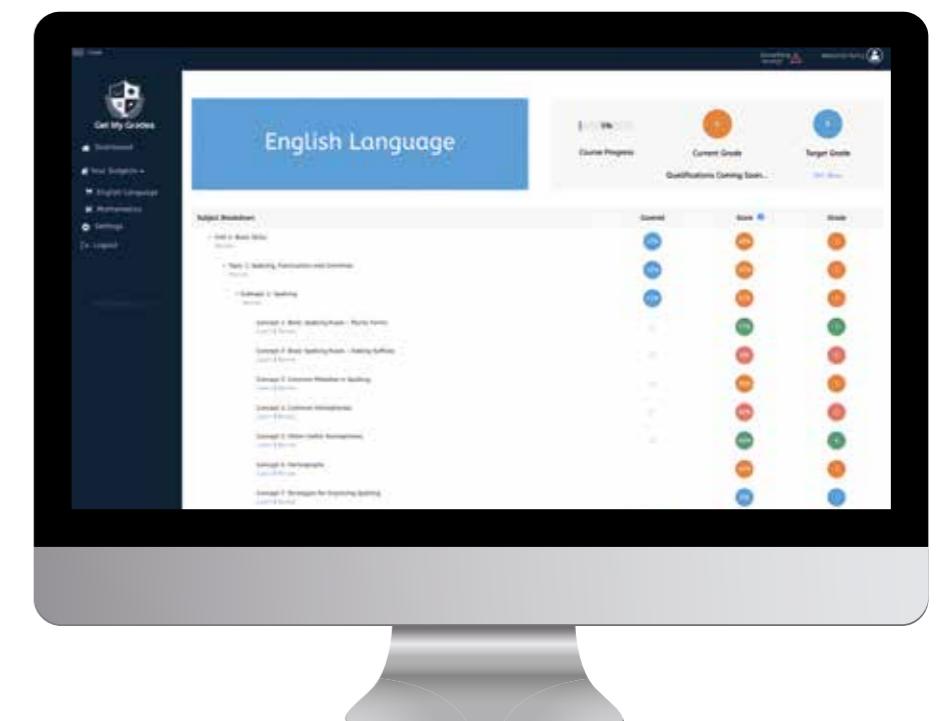
Of course, students are not the experts. This is why tutors can go in and review the assignments, overriding the student's grade for self-assessed questions if necessary and providing feedback, just as they would if an assignment was completed on paper. Except, with Get My Grades you can see not just how the student did but also how long they spent on each question and when they completed the assignment.

When a student has been working for a while, their subject breakdown will prove invaluable - it will show how well a student has scored in every single concept on their course - keeping an incredibly detailed and reliable record of a student's progress.

Tutors can use this to make adjustments to their tutorial programme and inform their planning. As it is available to parents too, it can be used to help keep clients up to date in real time.

It is an inexpensive way of providing up-to-date content on a platform that is based on the latest research.

Visit [www.getmygrades.co.uk](http://www.getmygrades.co.uk) to find out more!



# A TUTORING PROVISION FOR ALL

By Action Tutoring

**Susannah Hardyman,  
CEO of education  
charity Action Tutoring,  
reflects on the  
extensive changes in  
the education system  
and how we can  
ensure all pupils are  
supported, regardless  
of their background or  
circumstances.**

The education world has been rocked by changes over recent years: extensive curriculum updates, a reformed GCSE and SATs grading system and school funding has been tighter than ever. No doubt this is something observed not just by teachers, but by tutors up and down the country too. It's probably not surprising that given a tougher environment, tutoring has remained as popular as ever. The Sutton Trust's annual poll on private tutoring confirmed that 41% of pupils in London have had a tutor, and that nationally the figure remains high at 27%. Having recently returned to work from maternity leave after having my first child, I understand in a new way why so many parents will pay for tutoring: parents really do want the best for their children. If that means paying for a tutor to support them in their learning, that's something that they will do if they have the means.

There's a problem in all this though. Private Tutoring may be expensive and many parents simply may not be able to pay for it. This doesn't mean those parents don't want the best for their children or that those children aren't capable. But there is an embarrassing and substantial attainment gap that still exists in education in this country between disadvantaged pupils and their peers. The recent Education Policy Institute (EPI) Education in England report highlighted that there has been little change in recent years at primary level, with disadvantaged pupils on average leaving school 9.4 months behind their peers. That's nearly an entire school year. At secondary level 2/3 of all pupils achieve national standards versus just 1/3 of disadvantaged pupils and the rate this gap is closing has slowed significantly.

In fact, the EPI report suggests if this pace continues, it will take over 100 years before disadvantaged pupils and their peers are reaching similar outcomes.

At Action Tutoring we know how impactful tutoring can be. We are an education charity that exists to provide this powerful support to disadvantaged pupils at risk of leaving primary or secondary school not at national standards in English and maths. We are able to deliver this help to these pupils through our incredible volunteer tutors. Our particular aim is that young people can leave school with the qualifications that will enable them to progress to further education, employment or training and avoid the cycle of becoming NEET. For parents paying for private tutoring, this is surely their most basic aim, with many using private tutors to push their children to the highest grades that will get them into the top universities.

This year at Action Tutoring we've supported over 2,000 pupils through a network of over 1,000 volunteer tutors across seven cities in England. Our impact and evidence base is ever growing: tutoring works and we're proving that our model works too.

The way we deliver our support is, in many ways, quite different to private tutoring: we work in partnership with schools, our tutors are all volunteers and we have staff members responsible for each group of volunteer tutors, pupils and teachers, who make sure everything runs smoothly. Additionally, we've developed structured resources tailored to the curriculum to help ensure maximum impact and have developed our own baseline and interim assessments, alongside collecting data from schools, so that we can clearly measure and demonstrate our impact.

Since we registered as a charity in 2012, we've been so impressed at how many people have come forward wanting to volunteer to help us in our mission to tackle educational disadvantage. They share our belief that tutoring should be available for those that need it and not just those who can afford it. We have ambitious plans to keep growing and know that there are many more young people who could benefit from our support. If any organisations are interested in supporting us, particularly through volunteers, we would love to hear from you - please do get in touch.

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An Action Tutoring volunteer providing GCSE support in London



An Action Tutoring volunteer tutor supporting on a primary programme



Action Tutoring is looking to engage volunteers from all backgrounds to support with their tutoring programmes.



## AUTHOR'S BIO

Susannah is the founder and CEO of Action Tutoring. Susannah was inspired to start the organisation following experiences working in the charity sector and as a private tutor, recognising the potential to make the benefits of tutoring available to those that might not otherwise afford it.

Susannah has worked in the charity sector since 2007 in roles including research and project management. She has a particular interest in using the potential of volunteers for social change.

# BUILDING RESILIENCE IN LEARNERS

By Victoria Burrill

**Tuition is not a new phenomenon as tutors have often featured in the education of well-known fictional and real-life historical figures of the wealthy classes. The main difference today is that tutors have become more commonplace in helping children from all backgrounds reach their educational potential.**

Life in the independent school environment is competitive. Be it on the sports fields, the exam hall or in the classroom, there is an element of measurable attainment lingering in the background of much of school life. Resilience is a skill that can enable children to navigate this gauntlet whilst maintaining good mental health.

There is no denying that this competition is preparation for life. Working hard, setting goals, acting on feedback, making progress - these are all aspects of adult life that are unavoidable and arguably skills that lead to great success. However, there is a flip side to this situation. Many children simply don't know how to 'fail' well. I put 'fail' in inverted commas deliberately as the word is loaded with implication when I would argue it shouldn't be. Failing is a fundamental step in learning. The world-famous Post-it was invented by someone who tried to invent a new glue and failed to make it sticky enough. Cornflakes were invented when someone accidentally left a pot of grain on the stove and it spoiled. Teaching children to see the potential and the learning opportunities in their mistakes is vital in enabling them to be learners who can, in the words of Kipling, 'meet with Triumph and Disaster, and treat those two impostors just the same.'

Dr Carol Dweck coined the term 'Growth Mindset' and this is a huge part of being resilient. In brief, those with a fixed mindset see their abilities as inherent - they are naturally good at some things and less so at others, so they see no need to try and develop further.

Those with a growth mindset see intelligence as fluid - able to increase and develop through effort and resilience. By talking to children with a growth mindset approach you will help to make them more resilient as they learn that we aren't all naturally be good at everything. Failing doesn't make you weak, it makes you learn. If you label your child with words such as 'clever' or 'smart' they will only see themselves that way. This may make challenge intimidating as the concept of finding something difficult may feel like failure. By developing a growth mindset, you prepare children to embrace challenges, persist in the face of difficulty and understand that it is effort, not innate ability, that leads to success.

Resilience and mental health are closely linked. Being resilient sometimes means stepping back from situations. Mindfulness is a great way to do this. Practicing simple breathing techniques and focusing on the present moment can really help. Regular mindfulness practice helps us all to manage our emotional state and to approach challenges in a more level-headed way. Meditation has been proven to aid concentration as well as encourage the brain not to resort to the 'fight or flight' mechanism which can be very stressful. Bear in mind the mental health effects of a lack of resilience.

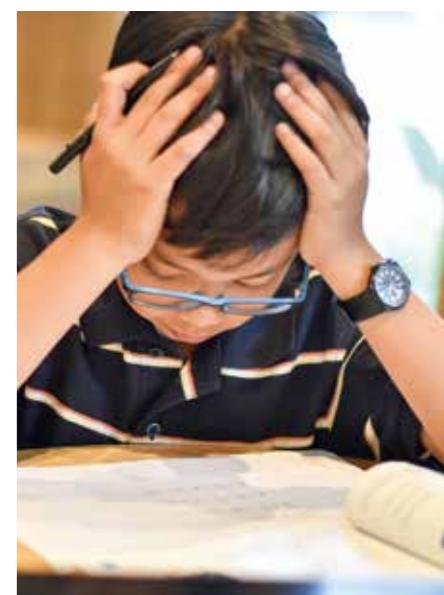
The language you use with children is key in developing resilience. Don't say 'you can't do it', say 'you can't do it yet'. Talk about what went well in an exam and what could be improved, rather than what went wrong. Always praise effort.

When a child finds something hard, remind them that it is normal and encourage them to ask questions to help them understand better. Talk about strategies and processes rather than answers and solutions. Use kindness and humour rather than anger or disappointment. Above all make sure that through your language, it is clear that making a mistake is allowed. We all make mistakes.

Make mistakes in front of children. The way you cope with challenge is the example you set. If you can laugh it off, have another go or ask for help, they will feel comfortable to do the same. If you don't know the answer to a question, admit it and demonstrate how to find out. If you forget something, don't get annoyed or frustrated.

If you spell something wrong, show how you cross it out and correct it.

An important facet of resilience is the ability to persevere. As much as tell a child the answer, don't. Let them work on it themselves, give them a nudge or a suggestion, but allow them to keep going. Offer support but don't do it for them. Allow them to experiment, explore and devise their own process and if it doesn't work, praise the effort and determination. Don't expect perfection, expect persistence.



## AUTHOR'S BIO

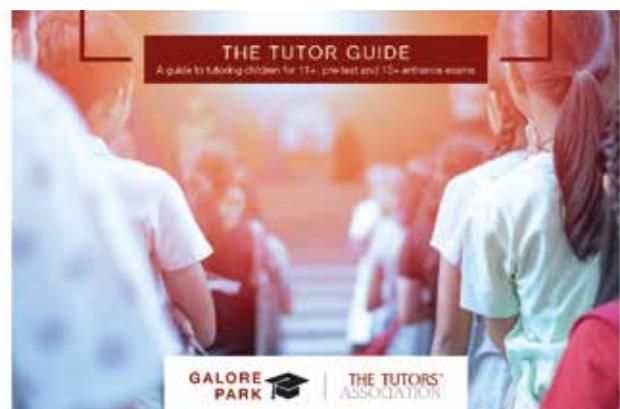
Victoria Burrill is Head of English at a leading London prep school. She is the author of a considerable number of Galore Park's 11+ and 13+ revision guides and textbooks. Her interests include mindfulness in schools, critical thinking and nurturing a love of reading in young people.

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**Jane Tyler - Publishing Director  
Galore Park part of Hodder Education Group**



That's not the only way Galore Park is helping tutors though, we've produced a handy guide on tutoring, in conjunction with The Tutors' Association. The Tutor Guide is a free, easy-to-read

In the past year Galore Park has started to work more closely with The Tutors' Association, to learn how we can help to support tutors - not just by publishing high-quality, reliable teaching and learning resources but with expert blog articles, useful tips and exclusive tutor offers.

We recently launched a Tutor Cashback scheme, designed to reward tutors for recommending our revision materials to parents. Tutors frequently tell us that they find our resources particularly rigorous and comprehensive when using them to prepare students for 11+, Pre-test or 13+ Common Entrance examinations, and enjoy being able to teach with textbooks that have revision books written specifically to accompany them. Recommending Galore Park revision materials to parents ensures that even when you are not with your student, they can still be pushing and testing themselves at home, either with their parents or independently.

The Tutor Cashback scheme benefits both tutor and parent, as parents who buy Galore Park revision resources, based on tutor recommendation (and with their unique code) get 10% off any revision order, and 10% of each sale made against the tutor's code will be deposited into their bank account.

booklet containing useful information for tutors working with pupils applying to, and attending, independent prep and grammar schools. It includes guidance on how to prepare for those all-important first meetings with parents/guardians and suggestions on how to manage relationships with your pupils and their parents. We hope that all tutors will find it a useful source of support and inspiration when working with their students, whether they are new to the profession or a seasoned professional! A digital version of the guide can be downloaded for free from [galorepark.co.uk/tutorguide](http://galorepark.co.uk/tutorguide) and we'll be handing out copies at the National Tutors Conference in October too.

While you're on our website, why not take a look at our dedicated tutor hub, packed with information selected specifically for tutors. We have compiled a list of books, magazines and podcasts that we think would benefit pupils studying for 11+ or 13+ exams and would welcome suggestions (via @Galore\_Park) on titles and material you would recommend.

Our blog is also a great source of information, with numerous articles from experts on education - including The Tutors' Association president, Adam Muckle. Covering every aspect of the journey from 11+, Pre-test to 13+ Common Entrance exams, we aim to give tutors information and guidance on topics such as, the various exam types pupils might face, ways to help pupils who are feeling stressed or anxious about their education, and news on our new publishing or changes in syllabus.

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# THE ROLE AND VALUE OF SUPPLEMENTARY TUITION IN EDUCATION

By Dr Stephen Curran

**Tuition is not a new phenomenon as tutors have often featured in the education of well-known fictional and real-life historical figures of the wealthy classes. The main difference today is that tutors have become more commonplace in helping children from all backgrounds reach their educational potential.**

The increasing use of tutors can lead one to ask, what is the real value of tuition to a child's educational development? Also, what do tutors offer children over and above what state schools already supply? I think the answers lie in the following observations:

First, the pressures of the classroom mean that teachers have little opportunity to work alongside individual children and address the particular problems they might be experiencing with subject material. As a tutor, I find that dealing with these 'pinch points' in both maths and English often enables a child to make great leaps in their ability and understanding. I believe that if a child does not understand something in the classroom they might refrain from asking the teacher to explain it again, to avoid looking foolish in front of their peers. Therefore, it is possible we have classrooms full of many children who pretend to understand, in order to cause as little disruption as possible to the flow of a lesson.

Secondly, there are weaknesses in the primary English and maths curriculums. These documents are the product of many minds and, unfortunately, are a compromise between various approaches and differences of opinion over what should and should not be taught. Having contributed to the new 2014 primary maths curriculum, I can honestly say that in the end no participant in the process was completely happy with the outcome. In my view, it was a case of 'too many cooks spoil the broth'.

I believe the tutor can help fill in important gaps where a topic is either underplayed or does not feature at all in the curriculum. For example, I was pleased to see that the teaching of times tables was lowered to the end of year 4 in the new curriculum. However, I think all children should learn them by the end of year 3. As a tutor, I know that many children are capable of this and it enhances their numeracy and number bonding skills enormously.

Thirdly, there is a general resistance to setting challenging homework, particularly in the primary years. Children are given some homework in most primary schools, but it often amounts to a photocopied sheet that is issued on Friday and due in on Monday. Other forms of homework often involve investigative projects, which are valuable for developing research skills, but as the learning parameters are not as clearly defined, they do not achieve specific learning outcomes.

In my opinion, meaningful homework is essential for the child as the earlier they learn independent study skills the better. It gives a child the opportunity to test and confirm what has been taught by the teacher and to discover where the gaps in their understanding are. If a school is not setting this kind of homework, a tutor certainly can. The direct teach, learn, correct and adjust approach is the best way to learn anything. We all learn by first being shown how to do something, then practising the process, and then making and correcting our own mistakes, until finally mastering the method.

Fourthly, I believe the tutor can play a very important role as a mentor for a child. This tutor-child relationship can be very beneficial for a child as they often begin to emulate the personal qualities of the tutor. Such qualities can include an attitude of dedication and application to the academic process. In my own personal experience, I have seen children grow in confidence and enthusiasm as they discover they can succeed if they keep trying and don't give up.

Fifthly, I think tuition is beneficial for family relationships. Parents can concentrate on all the other aspects of the child's life, without having to help their child with things they haven't understood at school. I can remember as a child arguing and remonstrating with my parents when they couldn't help me with a particular piece of homework. It would have been wonderful to have my own special teacher to ask, and this is exactly the role of the tutor.

It is also reassuring for the parent, as they can more meaningfully engage with their child's education, as the tutor can identify any issues that need to be resolved and how best to go about this. This kind of information can help the parent be more informed when they engage with their child's classroom teacher.

In conclusion, tuition is a powerful tool in the hands of parents and can greatly enhance their child's educational progress. Tuition has a valued place alongside traditional classroom learning, and the two do not need to be mutually exclusive. It combines the best of both worlds to provide the best possible outcome for a child, which should be the ultimate goal of every educator.



## AUTHOR'S BIO

Dr Stephen Curran PhD, MA, BA(Hons), B(Mus), PGCE, Dip.RSA, MCllT, has 30 years' experience in both the secondary and primary sectors. Stephen is the founder of AE Tuition and AE Publications, supporting children through 11+ and SATs exams, and he is also a former advisor to the UK Government.



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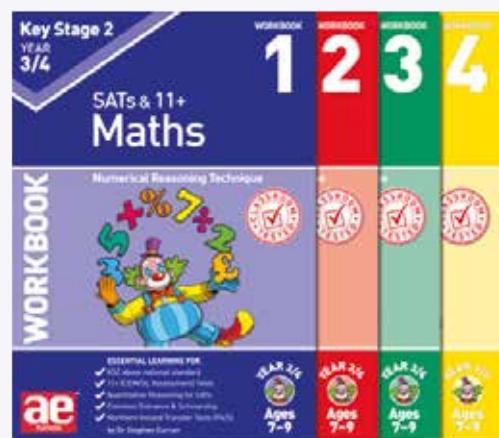


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