

# Parents' Guide to Employing a Tutor

Tutoring is becoming increasingly popular in Britain, and there is a multitude of agencies and individuals offering tuition services to children of all ages. By employing a tutor, you are trusting an individual – probably a stranger – with your child's safety and progress, and you are also committing yourself to considerable expense, so it is important that you choose wisely. If you are considering private tuition for your child, these are some things you need to think about.

## Why Use a Tutor?

Parents usually consider private tuition for one of three reasons:

- The child is falling behind where they should be in a particular area of the curriculum.
- The child needs preparing and coaching for a particular exam such as an entrance exam or public exam.
- The child shows exceptional ability in a subject and would benefit from more focused tuition.

Whatever the reason for considering private tuition, it is highly advisable that you discuss this with your child's teacher at the outset. It could be that the school can offer the support needed for no additional expense. Also, a good tutor will probably want to consult with the teacher to find out as much as they can about the child before starting.

## Where to Find a Tutor

There are three main ways to find a tutor:

- a specialist agency
- private tutors' advertisements
- word of mouth

All three are perfectly acceptable means to find the right tutor. What you should be looking for is a qualified teacher with a full DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check and sufficient experience of teaching your child's age group and (for secondary school pupils) the relevant subject.

If choosing to use an agency, you should ensure you ask questions about the tutor's qualifications and experience, which the agency should have checked along with the tutor's DBS. A good agency will try very hard to match the right tutor to a child, in terms of approach and personality as well as qualifications. This is important as the child will need to be on board with the process too and this will be much easier if they like their tutor! Beware of agencies that ask for an introductory fee and carefully read the small print on any documentation you are asked to sign.

If finding an independent tutor, you should ask for original copies of qualifications and DBS paperwork. You should also expect to be provided with the details of at least two referees that you can contact direct for references. Trust your gut instinct as well, and look at how the tutor interacts with your child on first meeting them. The same applies when finding a tutor by word-of-mouth, but bear in mind that what works for your friend's child may not work for yours.

# Questions to Ask a Potential Tutor

A good tutor will not mind if you want to ask lots of questions, and they may well have questions for you as they seek to find out as much as possible about your child, their needs and interests, and the way they like to learn. When considering a tutor, you may wish to ask the following questions:

- Can you call the tutor between sessions to discuss any issues? If the answer is 'yes', do check what times are best!
- Does the tutor set homework, and how much support do they expect parents to provide? Tutors will expect parents to be supportive of the tuition process as this benefits the child.
- Is the tutor willing to liaise with your child's school to find out and pass on information?
- If tuition is to be at the tutor's home, are they willing to let you visit to check it is suitable for your child? This may be important if, for example, your child has allergies and the tutor has pets.

## How Much Does Private Tuition Cost?

This varies depending on where you live, what type of tuition you are looking for and the age of your child, but typically a qualified teacher will be paid a similar rate to that earned in schools – this starts at £25 per hour for primary age tuition but can range up to as much as £50 per hour or more. This payment does not just cover the time the tutor is with your child; it also covers printing and resource costs, and travel expenses if appropriate. Bear in mind that if you hire an independent tutor, tuition will usually take place at the tutor's home, whereas agency tutors will usually work in your home. Some agencies and private tutors may offer group sessions, which could reduce the expense but mean that your child will not have one-to-one support.

## Building a Good Relationship with Your Child's Tutor

If you have a positive working relationship with the tutor, this will be of huge benefit to your child.

- Once you have committed to a weekly time, don't cancel unless there are exceptional circumstances since this sends a negative message to your child about how much you value the sessions, as well as being inconvenient for the tutor.
- If tuition is to take place in your home, make sure you are able to provide a quiet, calm space. If it is to take place at the tutor's home, be punctual in both delivering and collecting your child.
- Communicate fully with the tutor and be supportive of the tuition process, including expecting your child to behave correctly during sessions and to complete any work set.
- Expect regular progress reports but – especially with younger children – don't try to discuss progress in front of the child. Instead, you could ask the tutor for a regular update, either written or verbal (perhaps over the phone).