



The battle within

The Director of Mavor Associates asks: should we fight tutoring?

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Tutoring is here to stay. A report published in September 2016 by the Sutton Trust, a charity for social mobility, values the tutoring industry in the UK at up to £2 billion

and growing. At the heart of any debate on tutoring and its impact on children is how parents, schools, and the tutoring industry approach it.

Entry to independent London schools is increasingly competitive. Exam preparation for key admission points is essential. This works best with open communication and a sense of shared responsibility between parent, child, school and, where appropriate, a tutor.

A high-quality curriculum in an independent school does prepare children for their next step on their educational path. Using an experienced tutor to share the responsibility of educating a child is a growing trend among parents, however. It does have many advantages: a team approach is effective in supporting areas of weakness, and it may simply not be possible for parents to sit down with their children

when the need is there. Increasingly, both parents work long hours making one-on-one time difficult. Even where parents can spend time with their children after school, English may not be the language spoken at home. The children may have joined the school from a different country and curriculum. Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Specific Learning Disabilities (SPLD) in children require one-on-one time. Finally, for many parents, additional work with their child outside of the classroom turns into a battle of wills.

A good tutor can be a springboard for a child. They can draw out the strengths and weaknesses, and focus on developing the former and addressing the latter. They can make learning fun and boost confidence. They can keep lines of communication open with a child's teacher and focus on problem areas that assist with classroom learning.

A bad tutor can damage a child's life irreparably. They can confuse children with different teaching methods, bore them, crush creativity and swallow a child's true nature. They can offend

teachers and mismanage the expectations of both parents and children. At worst, they can set a child up to fail by pushing them into the wrong sort of school where they cannot keep up with tough academic standards.

Parents, teachers and tutors need to discuss practically speaking how to share the responsibility of getting the best out of a child. Parents must seek advice from their class teacher and Head and heed it. Schools must think carefully about

whether to use teachers after school and during the holidays given the limitations on their time.

An independent voice with teaching experience can provide impartial and

practical advice about how best to structure a learning plan for a child. If a way can be found for teachers, parents and tutors to work transparently and sensibly together, then tutoring can be a welcome additional resource to enhance a child's learning experience.

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