

The



Smart

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HELP! I WAS NEVER A BRIGHT STUDENT MYSELF

Is all hope lost if you were only an average or below average student yourself?

Maybe maths was a nightmare for you in school, how will you now assist your children with their homework?

What if your own spellings have never been anything to write home about?

Perhaps you had learning difficulties but have never admitted this to anyone but now you have a child and feel inadequate.

If any of the above questions are swirling around in your mind do not lose hope, you are not alone. What is most important is the desire and commitment you have to see your child succeed. Consider this carefully, if all children needed academically gifted parents to be successful academically then a lot of people in the developing nations of the world would be failures at school since a substantial number of their parents cannot read or write. Rather even though they are sometimes illiterate what you find is that the parents have a passion for their children to get to heights they could never

reach and therefore provide a lot of moral support and encouragement.

Use your child's education as an opportunity to educate yourself. Start when they are quite young and in primary school and you'll be surprised how less complex those maths sums are, once you become interested. Helping your child revise for their spelling tests will improve your own spellings as well. If you never knew anything about the history of Britain this will be your opportunity to learn interesting facts, browse through their books and ask them questions and so on...

Remember where there is a will there is a way; start when they are young, be consistent and you will see improvements not only in your child's education but you will be the better for it as well.

Moreover you have an advantage over those parents in the developing nations described above as you have several tools at your disposal to help your child. Below is a list of some helpful tools:

- Supplementary schools and private tutors can help

your child with Maths, English and/or Science

- Public libraries, where it is free to borrow reference material, books and do research on the internet
- Books on CD or tape to help with literary skills
- The internet has lots of free encyclopaedias and educational material
- There are several bookshops where you can buy additional material to help your child with their studies
- The BBC has educational programmes for young children both on TV and on the internet

- Websites that help children with their French, German, Spanish and other modern foreign language skills

- In addition there are lots of free numeracy and literacy classes for adults in the UK funded by the government and sometimes run by voluntary organisations – you may find these useful personally

For information about private tutors and supplementary centres in your area contact
info@thesmartkid.org

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SHARING BOOKS WITH YOUR BABY AND TODDLER

Your child is never too young to be read to.

From around three months old babies can be introduced to board books, which contain simple, large colourful pictures. Board books are perfect as they can touch and dribble over them without damage. Looking at books with young children should be a frequent activity and it is important, at this stage, to keep sessions short. In this way, books will become a natural part of their world; it is also a great opportunity for parent/child bonding.

Nursery rhyme books play an important role in developing children's awareness of sounds within words. Frequent reciting of rhymes heightens children's awareness of rhyming words and develops memory skills.

Types of books

Stories that contain repetition and themes such as "*The Three Billy Goats Gruff*", "*Goldilocks and the Three Bears*" and "*The Gingerbread Man*" are good examples of traditional stories which beg children to join in with the repetition of the text.

Find out what kind of books your child enjoys; is it animals, sports or cars? Surprise them with books or comics about their favourite interests or activities. I have a lot to thank *Thomas the Tank Engine and His Friends* story books for.

If you or the child likes a particular story, read it again and again. Repetition helps children to understand and remember the language they hear. It's a great feeling when

during the hundredth reading, your child pre-empts the next sentence.

- by Yemisi Gibbons

Repetition is the mother of skill-
Anthony Robbins

To contribute an article to the next issue of *The Smart Kid*, send your email to info@thesmartkid.org

INDEPENDENT SECONDARY SCHOOLS

If you are considering independent sector education you may find the following article useful.

You apply directly to each secondary school and although they are independent of each other the rules are fairly similar. Typically your child will sit an entrance test for which you pay a fee.

In some cases you will pay an additional fee if you want

your child to sit the scholarship test. This may be money well spent if you have a very bright child who has the potential to be awarded a scholarship.

Mrs G is a single parent who thought the cost of private secondary education was completely out of her reach but her son did exceptionally well in the entrance exams such that he was awarded a 75% scholarship.

Some independent schools also award means tested bursaries. If your child is academically gifted but you cannot afford to pay the fees for economic reasons a means testing may be conducted to determine whether or not you can get a rebate. There is never any harm in trying.

Remember you can apply to as many independent schools as you wish and this does not have any bearing on your state school applications at all.



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IN SEARCH OF THE PERFECT SCHOOL (2)

...continued from issue 2

The following may also be considered when searching for that 'perfect' school:

By all means attend the open evenings but beware of the 'sales pitch'. The open evening is a marketing event so it doesn't necessarily give you the most accurate picture of what goes on in the school. To get the best out of the evening ask as many questions as you possibly can at the open evenings.

Areas of questioning should include discipline, pastoral care, unauthorised absence figures, careers counselling, regularity of tests/exams, frequency and contents of formal reports to parents and teachers' expectations of their pupils.

Avoid asking Yes/No questions e.g. if you asked "do you have a drug/bullying problem in this school" the answer will probably be NO. Rather ask what their drug/bullying policy is and then ask when last

they found it necessary to apply the policy. Depending on the response you get you could choose to interrogate further such as asking how many times the policy has been applied in the past year.

Ask direct questions like what is the average turnout at parents' evenings. If the answer is not close to a hundred percent, it's a bad sign as the school is probably lacking parental support and that will reflect in the attitude and standards of the pupils.

Another thing to establish is the school's approach to a child who is having difficulty with a subject. If the answer is that the child will attend the 'subject clinic' to improve his/her standards then by implication the child will not be written off instead remedial action will be taken. Another answer could be that the child will be sent to the lower set/stream in that subject. This may seem like a logical and practical solution but could that imply that their expectations of that child have

been lowered? Whatever the answer is, do probe further to find out if the parents will be notified that this has happened.

Finally the *Good Schools Guide* www.goodschoolsguide.co.uk is quite a useful resource.

There is a lot of free, independent information on their website. Use their search engine to find details about a particular school and it gives you an overview including a 5 year history of their results, unauthorised absence levels etc. The guide covers both state and independent schools. A payment is required for some of the information on their site but then that depends on individual requirements.

The tips given above are by no means exhaustive so this topic is likely to be revisited in the future as we gather more information and make new discoveries. For now, we wish you all the very best as you pursue that dream of getting the best schools for your children.



**Thoughts
become
Actions**

**Actions
become
Habits**

**Habits map
your Destiny**

**What
thoughts do
you have
about that
precious child
you've been
blessed with?**

READERS' CORNER

Find below some of the feedback we have received from readers like you. Do keep on providing feedback so we can continue to address the issues you want to read about.

...one of the very useful and prac-

tical things I saw at a glance was the definitions of the different types of school. I have to admit it took me ages to unravel that and understand the difference between the different types. The clear and concise way you have presented it will I'm sure mean others do not

have to go around in as many circles as I did!

- Fumi P

Well done...this makes great reading and I will pass it on.

- Wole O

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SPECIALIST SCHOOLS



The Specialist Schools Programme helps schools, in partnership with private sector sponsors and supported by additional Government funding, to establish distinctive identities through their chosen specialisms and achieve their targets to raise standards. Specialist schools have a special focus on their chosen subject area but must meet the National Curriculum requirements and deliver a broad and balanced education to all pupils.

Any maintained secondary school in England can apply to be designated as a specialist school in one of ten specialist areas: arts, business and enterprise, engineering, humanities, language, mathematics and computing, music, science, sports and technology. Schools can also combine any two specialisms.

See below for more information about some of the specialisms.

Language



Language colleges play a key role in supporting the National Languages Strategy, which aims to transform the country's capability in languages, encouraging languages for life and languages for all. They raise participation rates in modern foreign languages and enhance language learning opportunities for their pupils and for their local learning community.

The Smart Kid is an organisation formed to empower 21st century parents in the UK by sharing vital information and motivating them to take positive action for their children. We expect that the parents who contact us will go on to share the information with their peers, friends and family thus empowering one another. These gradual but consistent efforts will produce a shift in the culture and value system in the UK. Our vision is that previously untapped ability, lying dormant in a sizeable proportion of the population, will be discovered thus creating a more productive society where the best opportunities are no longer restricted to the realm of a select few. Thanks for taking the time to read this and we hope you share our dream for all children in the UK.

Mathematics and

Computing



Mathematics and computing colleges will develop a visible mathematics and computing selection of courses at all key stages to cater for individual needs within school and provide a range of opportunities for adult learners. This range includes the imaginative use of ICT, curriculum enrichment activities and involvement in national initiatives and competitions to raise standards of teaching, learning and attainment in the specialist subject.

Music



Music colleges will be inclusive by promoting enjoyment of many different musical forms and encouraging all students to participate in a wide variety of music making. They will identify ways in which standards of achievement and teaching can be raised using ICT as a means of enhancing learning in music and other subjects. They will encourage their students to develop a lifelong passion for, and appreciation of, music not only as composers and performers but also as audiences, technicians and critics.

Science



A science college will provide a centre of excellence in scientific, technological, enterprising and vocational education. It will

be an active contributor to local and national developments within science and mathematics and will encourage young people to pursue science and mathematics beyond 16, providing them with appropriate learning pathways so that they develop the skills needed to be active citizens within an increasingly scientific world and to progress into employment, further training and higher education according to their individual abilities, aptitudes and ambitions.

Sports



The sports colleges will be regional focal points for promoting excellence in physical education and community sport, extending links between families of schools, sports bodies and communities; sharing resources; developing and spreading good practice; and helping to provide a structure through which young people can progress to careers in sport and physical education. They will extend provision and facilities to benefit all students of all sporting abilities, whilst also giving those with the greatest potential the opportunity to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.

Source: DfES

Note: Specialist Schools are not to be confused with Special Schools.

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