

The



Smart

Kid



Bunmi Adekeye - Editor

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First Hand How-to Tips

Last month The Smart Kid (TSK) introduced the *how-to tips* providing practical, first hand experience to our readers. The feedback received to date indicates that this section was well received.

In this edition the *how-to tips* cover the eleven-plus exams.

We hope you find them insightful yet again.

In this Edition

At the beginning of last month, secondary schools across England notified candidates of the outcome of their admission applications and The Smart Kid has received with joy a lot of good news stories about children who have passed the eleven plus (11-Plus) exams and/or gained admission into the schools of their choice.

We would therefore like to seize this opportunity to congratulate the children of our readers, not forgetting the parents too! Please keep the good news coming, it is indeed very heart-warming

to hear your success stories.

Our recent survey of readers showed that one of the burning topics you would like covered by the Smart Kid newsletter is how to prepare children for the 11-Plus exams.

In response to this request, and to gain a current perspective, TSK contacted Nick Nunayon, who runs the *Building your Children's Future* seminars and who in 2008, put his daughter through the 11-Plus exams. In this edition of your informative newsletter, you will

find an articulation of Nick's thoughts about the matter plus an excerpt of his experience in the how-to tips section.

We also feature the excellent work of **Success4All**, a social enterprise that serves the community by organising out-of-school educational activities in the north east of England.

Included in this newsletter is also the remarkable achievement of Paula B Sofowora, who won the BFIIN award in 2009.

The Eleven Plus Exams

Although every child is entitled to the best education, the best education is not available for every child. At least in the UK, supply is less than demand, making it highly competitive to get into the best schools and universities. Apart from the shortage of places though, ignorance continues to rob many parents of the opportunity to give the best education to their children and unfortunately some believe that the best schools are reserved for children from a certain social class. There are a number of reasons for some to draw this conclusion however as will be explored in

the rest of this article, this is an erroneous idea which has proven to be untrue time and again, where the right steps have been taken.

Academic Attainment Levels

Generally speaking, independent/private secondary schools and state selective schools (also known as grammar schools) tend to yield the best academic results. Although a good number of comprehensive schools also attain high performance levels, in relative terms, the attainment levels are higher in selective schools.

Admission Criteria

Quite often, the best comprehensive schools operate very strict admission criteria based on factors such as catchment area or religious organisation membership. As these schools tend to be situated in the more affluent areas, such admission conditions automatically put inner city children who do not live in a 'high brow' post code area or have an affiliation with such religious organisations at a disadvantage.

All hope is however not lost for the gifted inner city child

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The Eleven Plus Exams continued...

with a good academic foundation as the main admission criteria of the state selective schools is often based on academic merit typically via a number of testing systems such as 11-Plus or CAT exams.

Setting the Right Path

Although not the only determining factor, the impact that a child's primary education and eleven plus performance has on the secondary school he or she ends up attending cannot be ignored; and in turn, the secondary school attended will to a large extent, determine the GCSE and A level performance and ultimately the quality of the university he or

she will attend. It is hence very important for parents to set the priorities of their children's education right from onset.

Key Ingredients for Success

There is the school of thought that sitting an eleven plus exam is too stressful for a child hence some parents are afraid to put their children forward for these exams. However all it requires is adequate preparation which includes using the **right materials**. The age-old cliché states that *practice makes perfect* however I would hasten to add that it is the **correct practice that makes perfect**.

Correct practice involves

using the **right materials** and working with **right tutor**. Eleven plus exam preparation is not part of the state primary school curriculum therefore it is the responsibility of the parent to prepare the child, not the school. Most would employ the services of a private tutor for this and rightly so too.

Finally it should also be noted that it whilst there are a lot of excellent private tutors out there, not all the private tutors have eleven plus knowledge and experience and some parents are better skilled at teaching their children than some private tutors.

By Nick Nunayon

TSK: We heard you have a remarkable story about how your daughter passed the eleven plus exams, please tell us your story.

NN: We did not know anything about eleven plus (as we were not living in any of the areas with selective schools) until about six weeks to the eleven plus tests in Bexley, Kent and Medway. I was blessed to hear about eleven plus while watching a programme on one of the Christian TV channels. I researched about it and called the councils responsible for the tests. I think our daughter was destined to attend a grammar school as she would have missed out on at least the

Bexley and Kent exams if I hadn't seen the TV programme just in time.

I prepared our daughter for the tests within three weeks, with the right materials and God crowned our effort with success in the Bexley, Kent and Medway tests. We give God the glory. She did so well, that 3 grammar schools, one in each of the councils, ignored the catchment and siblings criteria and each offered her a place.

TSK: Now, that sounds like a major feat, in all the years we've been running Smart Kid we've not heard of someone preparing for the 11-Plus in only 3 weeks.

How did you pull it off?

NN: We used to live in Brixton and we still have our address on the admission letter of each of this school. We did not lie or use anybody's address but our Brixton address. It was possible within three weeks because we have always been rigorously involved in our children's academic education. We do not normally follow the school programme in our home as the school programmes are designed for children to achieve average results. In primary school, an average result equates to level 4 in the SATS and in secondary school, it is 5 Cs in GCSE. In our home, our children follow a rigorous

education system right from nursery; they are always ahead at least with one year's work so it was easy for me to prepare her for eleven plus within three weeks.

TSK: So was easy for her?

NN: No, it was hard but she had the last laugh. We were **living in Brixton** but Rochester Grammar in **Medway**, Wilmington Grammar School in **Kent** and Townley Grammar School in **Bexley** offered her places. She ended up in Townley as it is closer to London than other schools.

TSK: We know you have since started running the Building your Children's Future seminars to help par-

Preparing your child for the 11-Plus Exams continued...

ents particularly those living in the inner city. Can you share with us some of the tips you often give to parents preparing their child for the 11-Plus exams?

NN: Parents need to be aware of the following:

Find out about the admission requirement of the schools especially the catchment areas. Are you within the catchment area? If not, what steps can you take?

It is better to start preparing your children early, ideally from Year 3. A few people I know prepared their children for a minimum of two years, that is when they

were in Year 4 as most of the 11 plus exam are now taken in the September that they start Year 6.

You have to prepare them mentally. Build up their self confidence. Let them know the reasons why they need to go to a good secondary school and university. Let them see themselves in that school. If you have friends that their children attend those schools, let your children talk to them about schools. Also where possible, let them visit the grammar school.

Your children could attend Saturday/supplementary schools or you can engage a

private tutor who knows the academic requirement and rigours of the 11 plus test. After I advised some parents, they discovered that their paid private tutors did not know anything about the 11 plus exams so they changed approach and engaged others with the know-how. Most private tutors charge about £15-£30 per hour.

Your child needs to engage in consistent and continuous practice of the 11-Plus questions; these cover what they have been doing from year three. Although it varies from one school to the other, 11-Plus tests typically cover Maths, English, Verbal Rea-

soning and Non-Verbal Reasoning.

And finally, do not forget your God; He has the solution to every problem.

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Extending School Services with Success4All

Caroline Afolabi introduces the work of Success4All, a social enterprise in the north east of England, where university students provide mentoring and study skills support to underprivileged children, young people and their families.

Young people learning from each other is the ethos that underpins **Success4All**, a social enterprise that provides out-of-school educational and volunteering opportunities for children and young people in the north east of England.

Founded in 2006 by Caroline Afolabi and Theodora Adegbie, the initial motivation was to help children

from ethnic minorities succeed in their studies in a venue where they would feel comfortable and at home, such as a local community centre, and with university students as tutors and mentors.

From the founder directors' own personal and professional experiences, there was a compelling need for this.

Some parents were not able to offer their children sufficient support in their studies, perhaps stemming from a lack of familiarity with the British education system or because of limited knowledge of the English language. Many of the family

homes did not have sufficient space to allow children dedicated study areas or access to IT resources. In other homes, there was simply not a peaceful environment to facilitate study or too many distractions with younger children and extended family sharing the space.

As we started working in partnership with Walker Technology College, a secondary school and sixth form for young people aged 11 to 18 years, we discovered the same conditions were true for local children living in underprivileged areas.

continued overleaf...

The next Building your Children's Future seminar is on 24 April 2010 from 3pm to 6pm at Drama Hall Kingsdale Foundation Alleyn Park West Dulwich London SE21 8SB



Previous issues of this free newsletter can be found at www.thesmartkid.org

The BFIIN Award Winner

Paula B Sofowora, a British-born Nigerian living in the UK, has scooped a BFIIN (British Female Inventors and Innovators Award) for her book, *Discover Nigeria*. **Discover Nigeria** – Amlap’s flagship publication – is intended to help readers explore West Africa’s most populous country and one of the world’s next emerging markets. One of Paula’s key aims was that the book would present aspects of

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.

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Nigeria’s culture, lifestyle and achievements that aren’t often shown in the media. Some of the world’s greatest entertainers, mathematicians, business owners, fashion designers and politicians are of Nigerian descent, and this should encourage new generations of Nigerians born in and outside Nigeria to reflect on their roots with pride and spirit.

“... many young Nigerians, who might have grown up to become high flyers, just merge into the background of society instead of realising their true potential.” The book is also an eye-opening journey of discovery for non-Nigerians. Paula appreciates that no country is without its challenges. However, with *Discover Nigeria*, and future books in the *Discover* series, she wants to reveal the true story and spirit of African countries.

About the book

Discover Nigeria provides information on all aspects of Nigeria, from history and geography to family life, ethnic groups, sports and cuisine. It also includes quizzes on famous Nigerians around the world, such as musicians Seal, Fela Kuti and Sade, mathematician Phillip Emeagwali and Hollywood actors Sophie Okonedo and Chiwetel Ejiofor. The book encourages readers to share and talk about the similarities and differences between Nigeria and other countries they know. It is a useful resource to support the **National Curriculum in Citizenship, Geography, History and Religious Education at Key Stages 2 and 3**. It is also an attractive “coffee-table” book for all the family.

Extending School Services with Success4All continued...

It was not the case, however, that every child needed assistance with homework or even wanted extra tuition. Often, they just needed someone to help motivate them to ‘get started’ – to do the homework or to have a conversation about, for example, the stars and the solar system, or to help them explore a topic that interested them in greater detail, and they accepted it

more readily from a student volunteer who was closer to their own age and to whom they could relate more readily, rather than an adult, whether that be a parent or a teacher.

Over the last four years, Success4All has been offering extended school services, in the form of study support, language clubs, summer schools, workshops and vol-

unteering opportunities for young people, schools and communities within Newcastle upon Tyne and its surrounding areas.

The organisation liaises with schools in and around Newcastle to provide extended school services in addition to learning support for pupils and their parents or carers, and with local universities to recruit volunteers to

run projects and coordinate clubs.

- *Caroline Afolabi*

Caroline Afolabi is a Director at Success4All.

For further information, contact:
info@success4all.org.uk or
visit the organisation’s website: www.success4all.org.uk

Volume 2, Issue 2

02 April 2010

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