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A Parent's Guide: Working with a Secondary Maths Tutor

High quality classroom teaching is the most powerful lever schools have for improving pupil outcomes. However, you might feel that your child may need additional, targeted support with their learning.

This guide provides proactive steps to help you choose a safe tutor, avoid common pitfalls, protect your child's wellbeing, and maintain a healthy, collaborative relationship with the Maths department.

1. Essential Safeguarding Steps for Parents

Because independent tutors face no mandatory oversight, parents must proactively establish strict protective boundaries:

- **Verify background credentials:** Check that the tutor has the credentials suitable to teach the subject at the appropriate level.
- **Establish strict communication channels:** Enforce a policy where all logistics and messages flow directly through you.
- **Set safe physical boundaries:** Conduct all in-person lessons in an open, communal space of the house (such as the kitchen table) with the door open.
- **Monitor online setups:** Place the computer in a shared family room for virtual learning, review the platform's specific privacy settings, and explicitly confirm that no unapproved lesson recordings are being made.

2. Identifying Effective Reasons to Hire a Tutor

Tutoring is most successful when it targets precise learning needs rather than acting as a general safety net.

Recommended Scenarios:

- **Rebuilding student confidence** after a sudden drop in tracking grades.
- **Fixing specific foundational gaps** from previous academic years.
- **Practising exam techniques** and decoding complex, multi-step exam questions.

Scenarios to Avoid:

- **Treating tuition as a substitute for class:** Do not expect a tutor to teach the entire curriculum from scratch because a student is not engaging during regular school hours.
- **Forcing placement changes:** Do not use a tutor to push a student into a "Higher Tier" class if their current mathematical foundations cannot support it. Teachers have

the most current understanding of a student's performance, progress, and readiness, and decisions about tier placement are made by the teacher and the school based on their professional judgement.

3. Guidelines for Success

To get the maximum return on your investment and protect your child's school progress, the following guidelines will be useful:

Guideline 1: Reinforce and Consolidate, rather than Teach Ahead

- **The Guidance:** Ask your tutor to focus on what was taught in school, or to go backward to fix old gaps. Tutors should make use of the resources provided by the school, including student folders/books, green assessment stamps, progression booklets, SharePoint materials, and Missed It Or Revisit (MIOR) resources, to ensure their support is aligned with the curriculum and the student's current learning.
- **Why it matters:** If a tutor teaches a topic weeks before the school teacher does, the student often switches off in class, thinking they already know it. Tutoring shortcuts rarely match the deep, conceptual understanding required in the classroom, leading to severe confusion later.

Guideline 2: Keep the Methods Identical

- **The Guidance:** Instruct your tutor to use the exact formulas, methods, and layouts found in your child's school book, folder, or the school's approved online platforms (such as MathsWatch or CorbettMaths).
- **Why it matters:** There are often multiple ways to solve a maths problem (e.g., different methods for long division, grid methods, or expanding brackets). If a tutor introduces a conflicting method, the student can easily become confused under exam pressure.

Guideline 3: Ensure the Student Drives the Session

- **The Guidance:** Encourage your child to use the specific feedback from their school assessments and target letters, indicated by green stickers/paper to dictate what the tutor covers next.
- **Why it matters:** Tutoring becomes passive and ineffective if the tutor arrives with a generic, pre-prepared worksheet. The most rapid progress happens when the student actively identifies and attacks their own weak points.

4. Vetting and Interview Checklist for Parents

Before committing to a tutor, check their references and ask targeted questions to ensure they understand the modern secondary education landscape.

Questions to Ask a Potential Tutor

- To what extent are you familiar with the current GCSE Mathematics specification for my child's exam board (AQA, Edexcel or OCR)?
- What experience do you have teaching students following this exam board and specification?
- Can you explain how you would align your tutoring to the GCSE specification and ensure all required content is covered?

- How do you keep up to date with changes to GCSE specifications, exam content and assessment requirements?
- How do you balance developing secure conceptual mathematical understanding with preparing students for exam-style questions and mark scheme expectations?
- How do you identify gaps in prior knowledge and decide what to revisit before introducing new topics?
- How do you assess progress and measure whether tutoring is making a difference?
- What strategies do you use to build a student's confidence as well as their mathematical skills?
- How will you communicate progress, strengths and areas for improvement with us as parents?
- If my child is struggling with a topic taught in school, how would you support them without teaching conflicting methods?
- How do you ensure students can apply their mathematical knowledge to unfamiliar and problem-solving questions, rather than simply memorising procedures?
- Can you provide examples of how you have helped students make sustained progress while working alongside their school's teaching?

5. Managing Your Child's Wellbeing

Extra study adds time to an already demanding school week. Balance your child's schedule with these steps:

- **Protect homework time:** Ensure the tutor does not assign excessive extra tasks that prevent your child from completing their official school homework.
- **Preserve extracurricular activities:** Keep regular time slots open for sports, music, and socializing with peers to prevent academic burnout.
- **Reinforce classroom value:** Frame tutoring as a supportive tool rather than a penalty, ensuring your child understands that their daily schoolwork remains the primary priority.

For further official safety guidelines on using out-of-school settings, you can consult the [GOV.UK Guidance for Parents on Out-of-School Settings](#) and the [NSPCC Guide to Finding a Tutor](#).