

An open letter to any parent considering taking a child out of their current school and putting them into tuitions in preparation for another school's admission test.

March 2019

Dear parent,

We all want the very best for our children. I have three of my own and understand just how much we are willing to do to make their lives better than ours. After unconditional love and time, the most valuable thing we can give a child is education and there is so much for us to choose from.

Every year people ask me what their child needs to do to crack the admissions test for Doon, and every year I tell them something like this...

You're asking the wrong question. Our test doesn't need to be cracked and you don't need to be specifically prepared for it. **Anyone** who tells you they can do this, or that you need to do this, is not interested in your child or their education. They just want to relieve you of some money for a service that is worth nothing. We are testing for aptitude in English and Mathematics, not what they know, which means that no preparation is necessary.

The best place for your child to be in the run up to any admissions test is in the school that already knows and understands them. Children learn best when they spend time with adults who have a positive and trusting relationship with them and with whom they can share their passions.

They also learn by making mistakes when working independently at something they love, and the safest place for them to do this is in their current school. These experiences, coupled with the well planned lessons with other children are far more valuable than the shallow, mismatched script of a costly tuition centre. My advice to any parent hoping their child will be admitted to a good, selective school is to save the money and spend the time reading a newspaper with your child, taking them to an art gallery or festival, travelling with them when possible and introducing them to all the people you know. Talk to them about what they are seeing, feeling and thinking and ask them questions that will encourage them to understand and articulate where their opinions, biases and assumptions come from.

The Doon School is looking to attract and develop exceptional boys from all backgrounds to transform them into educated men. Exceptional can take many forms and whilst we expect a solid grounding in academics, which any good school will give, we are also looking for characteristics such as originality, creativity and intellectual risk-taking which are not the sort of things a boy can be prepared for by a tutor; **our experience is that tutors usually make them worse in these areas.** We expect that a boy's schooling and track record of hard work will have prepared him well for the content of the examinations and that his experiences and character will provide the quality and style.

An open letter to any parent considering taking a child out of their current school and putting them into tuitions in preparation for another school's admission test.

For those invited to The Doon School for a group discussion we are looking for evidence of the following:

- Exceptional: Standing out without stopping others shining.
- Diverse: Bringing something to the table that others do not as well as being prepared to share it and help others learn from it.
- Meritorious: Being good at something they do and allowing others to be good at something they do while remaining free of entitlement and arrogance.
- Inspiration: Positively influential in a group and sharing with others an infectious enthusiasm, joy and curiosity.
- Just & Ethical: Able to articulate the dilemmas of life and act on a visible moral compass, even when no one is looking.
- Trainable: Learning oriented, curious and not so certain that they cannot see the perspective of others or have their mind changed by experience or evidence; not being cynical or closed to new ideas.
- Wisdom: Having learned from their experiences, mistakes and failures as well as those of others; not being judgmental.
- Principled: Able to be upstanding, to support others who are in need and to call others out on their poor actions and choices.
- Brotherly: Able to give care and support to another in a way that is both honest and kind.

Again, these are not things that a tuition centre can provide, they are the sum total of years of thoughtful, compassionate parenting working in harmony with dedicated teachers at the school you have chosen for them. Please don't ruin the next 6 months of your child's life by throwing this away on the belief that someone in a tuition centre will do a better job; they won't.

It's a tragedy to sit through a discussion with over prepared, stressed out boys who parrot their way through what someone else thinks makes good listening. Allow them to keep doing what they are doing so that when we meet them they are themselves, leaving all of the qualities that make them special firmly intact.

Yours,

Matthew Raggett
Headmaster