

Introduction

Welcome to Fairlight Tuition. I aim is to provide students with the kind of education and encouragement I would want for my own children. Not that I actually do provide that for my own children, of course; I'll be looking for some other sucker to tutor those little monkeys.

I've been teaching for almost forty years and specialise principally in maths and physics (although I also offer help with essay writing). In addition to covering content, I encourage students to think more deeply about how and why they learn, emphasising study skills, collaboration, effective revision, clear presentation and exam technique. I do try to make things 'Fun!' from time to time, specifically in that comic-sans font, but that generally goes as well as you'd expect.

Before moving on to the FAQ, I just want to say that not everyone who seeks tuition actually needs it. I know this is obvious but it's sometimes hard not to panic when our kids get a couple of wobbly reports and the media keep screaming they'll be eaten alive by some hyper-qualified exam-junkie from China or Korea (or similar) if they don't get a string of 9's or A*. They really won't . . . but the truth doesn't sell as many papers. You understand your kids better than anyone and will know if they're likely to benefit from some additional support. So please don't feel you've suddenly turned into a bad parent if you don't re-mortgage your house to get them tutored up to their eyeballs. Qualifications provide options, but clearly it's character and competence that determines whether we make a success of these options. And strong character develops through being raised emotionally secure and resilient in a loving environment – so you've probably done the single best thing for you kids' education already. So while it's obviously nice if they get good exam results, the real value in education comes from the how more than the what – from the way in which striving for a good grade changes them for the better.

Besides, it's not the globally competitive market place in skills and intelligence we need to worry about; it's the looming artificially-intelligent cyber-singularity and the Rise Of The Machines.

Thanks for trusting me with their education and should you have any questions not covered by the following FAQ then please ask. And if the way I tutor turns out not to work for your child that's fine: their education trumps my ego every time. Just let me know and try another tutor (indeed, I might even be able to recommend alternatives).

Thanks

Mark Mullins

FAQ

Are you a qualified?

I qualified as a teacher almost forty years ago and have been endulling students ever since, principally at St George's (Gravesend) but also Dartford Grammar, Oxford High School for Girls and various others. In terms of graduate qualifications, I hung around Cambridge till they gave me a couple of degrees to go away, then repeated the trick at Oxford a few years later. I've therefore acquired a bachelors in physics, masters in history&philosophy and theology, and a doctorate in theology. Which displays either commendably diverse interests or an inability to stick at anything. My wife suggests the latter.

Which subjects do you cover?

I tutor maths and physics at GCSE and A-level. I also run intermittent sessions on essay writing (focussing on style, structure, grammar and punctuation).

How do you tutor?

I tutor in small groups (generally 6-10 students) at my house in Higham. Group tuition generally works better than individual, costing less but doing more. Students teach each other what they've just been taught, consolidating and extending their knowledge while developing confidence, communication and organisation: ideal preparation for university and beyond, where they generally experience little learning support (and certainly not one-to-one tuition). Ironically, learning to work well in groups simultaneously helps students better develop as autodidacts. Although I do offer a few individual sessions from time to time these are usually for students who have attended groups and just need some small fine-tuning in specific areas.

Does the tuition work?

Good tuition should clearly help a student learn more, and more deeply, than they could on their own; anything less is a waste of their time and your treasure. However, tuition isn't a magic bullet and success depends as much on the tutee as the tutor. We only truly learn through engagement and repetition and students therefore need to value what they are being taught and secure it through periodic (spaced) consolidation. If they do, however, things generally seem to work out pretty well. Exam results are good (above the national average) and, crucially, most end up a grade or two higher than when they started. Moreover, students who engage with the Fairlight system learn better how to learn, acquiring the confidence, discipline, organisation, curiosity and skills that will serve them well for the rest of their lives; essentially, I try to make myself redundant by turning them into teachers. Over 90% of my students come via personal recommendations rather than generic advertising so hopefully something's working anyway.

How is the tuition structured?

I offer two types of groups: term and break:

- Term (T) groups run during most term-time weekends (generally in blocks of 5 per term)
- Break (B) groups run during . . . er . . . breaks (such as half-term and holidays)

What does this mean for specific subjects?

Maths A-level:

- Term: Pure specification
- Break: Applied specification + intensive testing/revision to fine-tune exam technique

Physics A-level:

- Term: Whole specification
- Break: Intensive testing/revision to fine-tune exam technique

Maths GCSE:

- Term: Key elements of specification
- Break: Intensive testing/revision to fine-tune exam technique

Physics GCSE:

- Term: None
- Break: Key elements of specification

Essay writing:

- Term: None
- Break: Essay writing (focussing on style, structure, grammar and punctuation)

How much do sessions cost?

Group Tuition:

A-level, GCSE physics and Essay Writing groups are £70 for 3 hours.

GCSE maths groups are £35 for 1.5 hours.

[Group sessions therefore cost \approx £23 per hour]

Individual Tuition:

Individual sessions cost £80 per hour.

Is the first 'trial' session free?

That depends on whether you continue with the tuition. If not, then there's no charge for that first session – you have to come along and see if it works for you, clearly. If you continue, however, you will be charged inclusively from that session onwards, on the usual pre-pay, block basis (see 'How do I pay' below).

How much will it cost over a year?

Obviously this depends on when the student starts and how many additional (break) sessions they attend. However, based on previous years, typical costs for term tuition would be:

A-level maths*	30-40 groups @ £70 per group [90-120 hrs]	= £2100-2800
A-level physics*	30-40 groups @ £70 per group [90-120 hrs]	= £2100-2800
GCSE maths	30-40 groups @ £35 per group [45-60 hrs]	= £1050-1400

[In comparison, one-to-one tuition for a single A-level for 90-120 hrs would be £7200-9600]

* Those doubling up on A-level sessions (going to both maths and physics, or both Y12 and Y13 in one of them) receive ≈ 30% scholarship in each subject beyond the first, reducing the cost to £50 per session for the additional subject(s).

How does this compare with local independent schools?

Annual fees (for three A-levels) at some of the local independent schools/colleges are:

- Cobham Hall ≈£26,000
- Sutton Valence ≈ £28,000
- King's Rochester ≈ £25,000
- Rochester Independent College ≈ £25,000

Most of these schools only teach for about 35 weeks a year (a month or so less than state schools) with 4-5 hours per subject per week. This gives approximately 160 hours tuition per year per subject at an average cost of about £8500, hence an hourly rate of about £50. Lordy! 😬

How do I pay?

Like most clubs and classes, sessions are **pre-paid on a block basis**. This allows me to reduce rates and hence widen access (the current £23 per hour being a significant reduction from the £35 I had to charge initially when running a pay-as-you-go system). Pre-pay also reserves the student's place in the group and spurs and rewards regular attendance, with obvious educational benefits.

Do I pay for missed sessions?

Alas yes. I obviously cannot offer the reduced rates associated with block booking for intermittent, non-block attendance. Again, this is normal practice (for example evening classes, private schools and universities do not refund for missed classes or lectures). If you cannot make a session in a given block, therefore, you will have to decide whether reserving the place and benefitting from the reduced rate for those attended offsets the cost of paying for the missed session. Having paid for much of my own university education, I am acutely aware of how expensive specialist support can be and therefore run Fairlight at the lowest rates possible in order to widen access. However, this clearly necessitates a commensurate reduction in flexibility. If your family circumstances don't suit regular attendance then you may be better off arranging individual tuition with another tutor.