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Why are the rich pulling their kids out of school?



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Pupils at Harrow School

As most children return to school, many affluent families are choosing to pull their children out of the mainstream education system altogether in favor of having a tutor at home – particularly as competition for places at the most prestigious schools heats up.

"Around 50 percent of the inquiries we're getting at the moment are for long-term, daily home tutoring," Steve Spriggs, managing director of London-based private tutoring service William Clarence Education told CNBC. And, he adds, the trend has grown from families asking for personal tutors to replicate the classroom environment in their own homes.

Many families that were making the inquiries for full-time home tutors, Spriggs said, were either travelling so frequently that sending their children to one school was impractical and others did not want their children to go into boarding school.

"We've had one family from the Middle East request a residential teacher to teach at their children within their penthouse in Knightsbridge because even getting to a school with drivers and guards is so much of a hassle," Spriggs said.

Classrooms in the home



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Home tutoring is nothing new, and many tuition firms also offer extra tutoring services to families wanting their children to have a little extra help learning ahead of entrance exams at competitive private schools in the U.K., such as Harrow, St. Pauls or Eton.

But Spriggs said his tuition firm was receiving fewer requests for just a few extra hours of tuition here and there and more for full-time tutors that, essentially, become other members of the richest household's retinue of staff.

"We always make it clear to parents that we will only offer full-time home schooling for a year though," he explained to CNBC.

"Any more than a year and children start to lose out on what a school environment can give them, such as social skills and that vital interaction they need – although we try to mitigate that anyway in our home tutoring with sports clubs of museum trips as part of the teaching program."

Spriggs would not reveal the salary region of tutors, who he described as among the best in London, if not Europe, but did say that the costs of hiring a full-time tutor would exceed the fees of a top boarding school, which usually charge around £35,000 (\$54,400) a year.

Some families employ two full-time tutors, one to cover humanities and the other to cover science and maths. Devising an educational plan for youngsters in these situations is not a quick process, however, taking up to six weeks to plan, Spriggs said, with a tutor being matched to the child to ensure they are compatible.

One such residential tutor is Phineas Pett, who has travelled the world for his work. His longest residential tutoring stint was seven weeks on a family yacht in which he had to work eight hours a day for seven days a week. "The parents wanted their children to get into a certain school and desperately wanted their children to get into the British education system," Pett said, explaining the arduous hours and desire for tutors abroad.

"There's usually a certain goal in mind- such as the entrance to a certain school – and maybe the schools in the child's home country aren't up to scratch on certain subjects so a residential tutor is called in to provide weekend tutoring or after-school tutoring," Pett said.

Pushy parents?



Steve Debenport | Getty Images

Many families employ a residential tutor with the end aim of getting their child up to scratch in order to pass the entrance examinations that the U.K.'s top schools insist upon.

Competition is tough although some parents think that money can be the solution to the problem. Pett mentioned an anecdote that

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happened to a fellow tutor who worked for a Russian businessman who demanded that his female child get into Eton -- a boys-only school.

Despite the fierce desire for the benefits of an English education, tutoring agency director Spriggs said his firm does not allow children to be "hothoused" -- a controversial practice where children are given intense tutoring programs -- often at young ages -- to get into certain schools.

"I always tell parents that getting into a certain school is only 5 to 10 percent of the entire process," Spriggs said.

"I do believe that anyone can be tutored to pass an entrance exam but once the child is in, they have to compete with their peer group. If they're not good enough to keep enough they'll have to leave. Also, if the schools get the faintest whiff that a child has been over-tutored, they won't let them in anyway."

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