

MAKING THE *grade*

With private tuition becoming more and more popular in the UK, **Bethan Rees** meets Steve Spriggs, managing director of William Clarence Education, which started humbly in a bedroom in Fulham



According to *The Telegraph*, private tuition is a great British growth industry, worth £6.5 billion a year and it's on the rise. In 2001, 270,000 tutors taught 1.6 million children and last year 520,000 tutors taught 2.8 million pupils. William Clarence Education is just one of the private tuition agencies which, having started in September 2013, has grown from strength to strength offering clients hourly tutoring, home-schooling, residential tutoring for overseas placements and online schooling. But, with so many organisations offering private tuition, what sets this agency apart from others?

As an avid believer in private tuition as a tool for refining knowledge, boosting confidence, honing a healthy work ethic and competitive spirit, Steve Spriggs set up the company following a five year stint working on a trading desk in the City. "The first two years were great, I was getting the best buzz but it gets very wearing after a while, getting to work at 7am working and staying there really late. Then I was made redundant two-and-a-half years ago and I really didn't have a clue what I wanted to do at all," Steve tells me.

A daunting prospect for most, Steve believes this career break came at "the perfect time". It was when he was visiting his local coffee shop, Local Hero on Fulham Road, where he saw an advert on the notice board for a part-time economics and maths tutor and having completed a master's degree in banking and finance, all

the pieces of the puzzle were beginning to come together.

I ask Steve what makes William Clarence Education different to its competitors.

"In all honesty, there are some great agencies around run by good people and they serve a good purpose at their given level depending on budget requirement," he begins. "All the tutors we use are true professionals, all full-time tutors, so they take it very seriously and know the syllabus inside out. You get that one-to-one attention because it's a small company and we can afford to do that," he adds. Also, Steve explains that all of the tutors have specific specialist subjects which they tutor, and they're divided up into entrance exams, GCSE, A-Level and degree, so you don't get a tutor that does "a bit of this and a bit of that".

Steve personally has met, interviewed and vetted each of the 150 tutors in his network. But what is Steve looking for in the candidates? "A lot of it's down to personality; qualifications are taken as a given, all of the tutors are great academically. They need personal skills because we're putting tutors in to homes and they need to build a bond with mum and dad, to trust them, and hopefully be part of their team for the long-term," he answers. ■

For more information, contact William Clarence Education on 020 7412 8988 or visit: williamclarence.co.uk



Steve Spriggs

