

## **The Penny Elliott Scholarship Fund**

**An overview by Sian Goodspeed, founder of Flying Start Tuition**

### **Background**

The scholarship fund has been set up in memory of Penny Elliott, a dear friend of Flying Start and respected member of the local Chesham community, who sadly passed away in 2019. One of Penny's many fields of expertise was the Secondary Transfer test (more commonly referred to as the Eleven Plus) and she was a tremendous source of advice and support for the Flying Start team when it came to queries over the complexities of schools' applications and appeals. Over the years, Penny guided many Flying Start parents through the Eleven Plus appeals process and gave freely of her time to do so.

Penny was passionate about helping others and, like us, wanted to see greater equality of opportunity in the education system. Always supportive of our charitable work with the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (the Tuition Plus Project, which provides free tuition to year five children resident in the Trust's houses) Penny was an invaluable 'secret weapon' when it came to all things appeals! Without Penny's help, I don't doubt that the various housing trust cases that went to appeal over the past decade would not have succeeded. With Penny's intervention, all of those children are now thriving at grammar school.

It was, in fact, Penny who inspired me to set up the Flying Start bursary fund, when, many years ago, she asked if we could offer some educational support to a family going through a very challenging time. We provided a full year's tuition to the son who then went on to achieve a grammar school place. Since then, the Flying Start bursary scheme has grown and we are proud to have assisted many low income families whose children needed some extra support with maths, English, 11+ and GCSE preparation.

Over the years, Penny referred a number of students to Flying Start for bursaries – many of whom went on to successfully achieve a place at a grammar school. All of the families knew Penny directly and I know they are eternally grateful to Penny for the kindness and support she showed them.

We felt it was fitting, therefore, to set up a scholarship fund in Penny's name, so that her memory will live on at Flying Start and the amazing support she gave so many of us will continue in the form of financial support for children from low income families going through the Eleven Plus process for many years to come.



Penny Elliott

### **Why is tuition necessary?**

Although the official line is that it is not necessary to have your child tutored in order for them to successfully navigate the Eleven Plus test, the reality is that it is very difficult to qualify without any form of prior preparation. The variety and unfamiliarity of the question types, number of questions and tight time limits on the test papers, together with the young age of the students means that most children find the exam very challenging and are unlikely to demonstrate their true potential if put on the spot on the day. The fact that so many parents do prepare their children in some way also inevitably means the bar is raised from the outset.

Many parents therefore opt for private tuition whilst others provide extra support at home in the form of practice books and test papers to familiarise their children with the question types and help them to build up confidence and speed.

Despite attempts by grammar schools to improve equality of access, the figures show that very few pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds qualify for a grammar school place. Our experience at Flying Start of working with the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust for the past ten years has proven to us that effective, targeted tuition can make a significant difference to the chances of these children who for a number of reasons are starting with a disadvantage compared to many children from more affluent families.

Whilst tuition can make a difference, it is not possible to tutor anyone to 'pass' the Eleven Plus exam. Children need to have the potential in the first place. We certainly do not condone any form of tuition that involves coaching children excessively for the exam to the point they manage to scrape through the test only to flounder when they get to grammar school. We see it as our responsibility to identify the students with the potential to flourish in the more fast-paced academic environment of a grammar school and to help those students prove their potential by teaching them the necessary techniques and strategies to give them the confidence to demonstrate this on the day of the exam.

### **What the scholarship includes**

The fund will pay for one eligible student per year to complete a Flying Start Year 5 Eleven Plus course, to include:

- Weekly term-time lesson
- All resources needed for the course
- Week long summer holiday revision course
- A set of mock test experiences
- Support and guidance for the parent(s) as needed regarding the 11+ process, school applications, appeals advice etc

### **Eligibility**

The aim of this scholarship is to give a helping hand, in the form of academic support and exam preparation, to a student who would like to apply to a Bucks grammar school for entry into year seven.

This fund is specifically designed to provide Eleven Plus tuition to a year five student whose family have financial limitations and would therefore not be able to pay for their child to attend tuition.



The child must be attending a Buckinghamshire primary school and must be within the catchment area for a Buckinghamshire grammar school.

The wellbeing of our students is our top priority and therefore this scholarship will only be awarded to children showing the potential and desire to thrive in a grammar school environment.

Before any scholarship is awarded, we will therefore request to see evidence of academic ability, in the form of a reference from the child's school teacher or head teacher.

### **Applications**

Parents should apply directly by completing the application form and submitting it along with an academic reference and proof of financial status.

Flying Start Tuition also runs a bursary scheme which is available to all parents to apply for full or part payment of fees for any group tuition, including English, maths, GCSE and 11+ support. The bursary is means tested and proof of income is required. For information on our bursary scheme, please call 01494 772898 or email [hello@flyingstarttuition.co.uk](mailto:hello@flyingstarttuition.co.uk)