

## Audio file

[Education Matters Isabel Smith 1.mp3](#)

## Transcript

Hello and welcome to education matters. With your hosts Sajda and Elit in our shore, we aim to open education to everyone. We do this through conversations with inspiring. And guests and experts who share their educational journeys we aspire to raise awareness of a variety of educational opportunities that will enhance your skill set and support you to pursue life longer missions and career goals. If you want.

To be in a position where you can influence society, think about empowering yourself through education. Education is important to every stage of life as it supports communities and leads to positive changes in the words of the great legend, Nelson Mandela, education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change.

World stay tuned as we demystify education jargon so that learners from all backgrounds can continue to thrive and achieve personal success. Education is a lifelong journey where all students, each episode we are both sharing our knowledge and learning from our guests, so TuneIn to education matters because education. Really does matter.

Also, if you want to be involved or share your thoughts on the topics discussed. Leave a comment. We'd love to hear from you.

And as you know, and I'm sure we have our our guests who we bring. In and to talk about different topics on education, about different career paths, or in a view to to help you to guide you, to give you some insight into what it's like trying to get into different career paths and hopefully it's of use. To you and the feedback we've had so far from our listeners is that it's it's been really helpful. So that's great.

So, Ele, how is, how's your last couple of weeks been since we did our last show? I've been very, very busy. So this week we have had a year 13 residential on campus. So a year 13 residential is when year 13 students from our access programmes so. A couple of months ago, actually, we interviewed Jake Brown, who runs the Lancaster Access programme. And so we had students from all over the country come and join us for a couple of nights. Campus, we did lots of different activities with them and they got to experience different societies and as it's Ramadan and some of the students went to the Islamic Society or. In the evening. And they got to sort of meet other members of the Islamic Society and take part in some of the evening activities with them. We also did team building activities. We did cooking. Lessons we did library skills and we. Didn't seem to get as much sleep as we wanted, and we walked a lot around campus as well, but it was a really good opportunity for students to experience what it's actually like to be a student on a campus university. I had some amazing conversations with students about commuting options, about moving away from home for the first time, and what do they? Want to bring? About sort of making friends as well. That was a big theme and it was really nice today. And as we sort of saw all the students go. Thing just to see how many students had made friends on the residential, and there were lots of discussions of WhatsApp groups being created and Facebook groups and to keep in contact ahead of starting university. And one of the students said to me they're a lot less worried now because they know a group of students that they've made friends with already. So when they joined in September, they've already got a group of students. Have made friends basically. So if you are thinking wow, that sounds like a fun couple of

things a couple of days and I'd definitely recommend looking into summer schools. So that's Lancaster and we've sort of finished our summer schools now, but a lot of other universities do have that option. And if you are thinking ohh I'd. Like to do that, but I'm planning on being a commuter student. I'm not planning on going and. And staying away, that probably isn't an experience that I'll find useful. I would definitely recommend still looking into it, and because some of the students that came on this residential are planning on becoming a commuter students, they're going to get the bus or they're going to drive to university everyday. But they really like getting to explore campus and making friends. So you'd still get quite a lot out of it and. These experiences are free and and are covered by the universities, so have a look at different from the school options. If you're a student in year 12, I'd definitely recommend looking into that.

Wonderful. And sounds like it's been a. Very productive from the students perspective. So their year 13 about to take their A level exams. So it's great motivation for them as well. What's insight, once they've done their exams and hopefully achieve what it is they needed to get into university and were there any umm, tasteless sessions as well? These students were they? Did they get an idea of different subjects?

No, because the students have already chosen which subject they want to do, but what they did get to do as a taster session was the library. So they did different study skill sessions with the library, so learning a bit more about referencing, learning a bit more about where to actually start with a library that's the size that university libraries are like. Where do you actually find that information, where you start to find information? I'm also looking into how they would study in a library because studying when you're a student at university in a library and doing your vision. Is a little bit different to when you're at sixth form or college or doing your GCSEs. And you you often find you'll probably do your homework anywhere, and things like that. And I think there's probably quite a few university students that will say, ohh yeah, no, I do my essays wherever I can, but being able to find a quiet place in the library or going up to the silent floors and working silently. Students were really enjoying that. And actually, we gave them quite a lot of free time and. The number of students that went and did. They could create like revision groups and they did like 2 hours of solid revision in the library and groups. And I think that was a really valuable experience for for the students.

Wow, it's. And it sounds like they get a real head start before they're actually coming to university because it can be and we've discussed this. Move issues. You know it can be quite an overwhelming experience if you've never stayed away from home and all you're used to is going to the local school or the local college. A university is is huge, not just in in physical size, but in in terms of the facilities and support services and it it can seem overwhelming to know where to go to get specific. Well, so and and the and the libraries are very central service, isn't it at any university, so failing in all universities so and it's I guess also very safe space as well. So if you're not sure where to go head to the library and and you know there's always somebody there who can who can direct you into some other services.

Yeah, not just Lancaster, but all university.

So that I mean, that's fantastic to get those study skills right from the very start before you even go into university to get an idea of what you know what it is, what is expected at the university level because there is that transition there is that. Jump from what? Might be acceptable in terms of an A level you know, writing your references in a certain way. At university, I think students do get surprised as to what high the high level of you know, expectation in terms of making sure that you know your reference risk is. Appropriate to a certain type of referencing and not Lancaster. We use Harvard referencing style so your in text citations have to be formatted in a certain way. Your

references your bibliography list has to be presented in a certain way. You know you can't just take text from sources and put it in there without. Paraphrasing or with without quotation marks. So it's all of those things which may get.

Right.

You know, sort of overlooked at school or at college, but at university it's very important that you get it right from the start and that's. All because we're teaching students good academic skills and.

There is a lot of support in so if you're hit listening to that and thinking, ah, what's Harvard referencing, please don't panic. There is a lot of support in starting those skills. And universities don't expect you on day one to know how to reference an essay absolutely correctly. And so often the feedback you get will be helping you to write an essay better the next time. Or it might be to help you reference better. And there is also lists and different books that you can get hold of at the university. Guides and to download and you can always ask like you said. The library brilliant place to start. They will be able to support you if you ever have any questions about referencing. They can look over what you've been doing and give you tips and hints. And there's also software as well, which is at university is free to download once you're university student and will support you. And because you're you can drag on on, on Google, you can drag your. Reference into that software and it will order it all nicely for you, and those programmes are free when you're a university student, and so if you're not able to go on something like. A summer school. Or you've already started university and you're feeling a bit lost in terms of these study skills. Like Sargent said, go to the library and there's lots of support there, and when you get to university that it's a it's a process for learning. So don't don't panic.

Absolutely not. And universities have paid licences for lots of different software and applications that can help with all of this as well. And referencing is just one of those areas. So when you become part of that institution. You get access. To a whole host of different softwares and applications that can help you in your studies and in lots of other things as well.

Some of them are ones you probably already heard of, and you can access at school or college. At the moment, things like word, Microsoft Word and PowerPoint, Excel. So if you are worrying at the moment you're using your school licence for word or your school licence for PowerPoint. Yeah. What I'm gonna do, I go to university because I've looked at the cost and it seems expensive. Don't panic. Universities have got the free download for you, and it's it's part of what you're paying for when you're.

Paying for university? Absolutely. And we've always said this, haven't we? It's not. You're not just paying for somebody to stand in the lectures and speak to you for two hours a week or whatever it may be. It's it's everything else. It's all the support that comes with it as well. But you have to be proactive and you have to be the person who asks the questions as to what can I get. I need support. I need help with this. Who should I speak to? And it's those who help ask for those. That that help that end up with succeeding. So that's lovely to.

Hear Ellie, I think my phrase that I've said so many times over the last couple of days is just there's no such thing as a stupid question or an incorrect questions that if you do have any questions, just reach out.

So we're now joined by Isabel. And now Isabel is a local person, so lives not too far from East Lancashire and has had a very interesting career as a teacher, assistant head teacher as well at 2 institutions and now runs a tutoring centre. So welcome, Isabel, thank you for being on our show.

Thank you so much for having me. It's a real pleasure to be here today and I'm really grateful for the opportunity to talk about all.

Things education. Fantastic. So let's start by, you know, can we ask you just to introduce yourself and just a little bit about what you.

Do. Yeah, absolutely. So as you guys have said, kindly introduce me, my name is Isabelle Smith. First and foremost, I'm a mum. I'm a wife, previously worked as a secondary school teacher. I've worked all over Yorkshire and E Lancashire. My most recent positions being, as you've mentioned, assistant head teacher. And since having my daughter two years ago, I've taken a slightly different direction in my career, I'm not working in mainstream schools now, but I decided to open up my own tuition centre in Nelson called first class Learning, where I helped students of all ages from Key Stage 1 to key Stage 4 with their English and maths.

Well, thank you so much. Yeah, and thank you again for joining us. And since you're now running a tutoring business, yes. Can you tell us a bit about your own educational journey?

Yeah. So I had a fairly traditional educational experience kind of coming through schools did my GCSE's, I made the decision to go to a local sixth form college, so very similar. Environment to Nelson and Collin College, it was a very different experience to being in schools. All your teachers were known by their first name. Everyone was a lot more casual than their appearance. There's no school uniform. I just really fancied a bit of a change from that kind of more rigid school environment I. Yes, so did my A levels. I went off to York University where I studied a three-year music degree. I specialised in playing the violin of all things. So yeah, very musical background, studied there for three years. But I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher. I went into my degree knowing that at the end of this I wanted to go into education. So I did my degree. Whilst I was doing my degree I gained lots of work experience in schools. I did lots of volunteering at local primary schools which I really enjoyed. It was it was a real pleasure to do that and following my degree I had to make the decision about do I go. For the traditional PGCE. Root. Or do I go for a more work centred approach and I decided to do to do that. So I embarked on what was known back then. Feels like a very long time ago now. The graduate teacher programme as it was called back then where you worked on the job. I I was employed by school for a year. I conducted all of my my observations and my teacher training there. And then from there went into my first teaching post.

So can I just so you did a music at university? Yeah. So are you now a music teacher? Well, were you a music teacher? I.

I did, yes.

Was a music teacher and then from. There I I. I ended up teaching lots of different things. I think. I mean, I taught music, I've taught media studies. I then ended up predominantly teaching English. And I think that was mainly because of the. Way my career. Changed and developed and progressed throughout my career. Started as a music teacher. I then progressed very quickly to become a head of department, so I was head of a a really dynamic music department. I really loved that, but my real passion was the pastoral. I really wanted to engage with, with, with young people and their families and really supporting the whole child because my experience was if the child is well grounded, supported and happy performance with their academic outcomes usually followed, and so I then became an assistant head of year, which I loved. And then I left that school and became head of 6th. Form for a. Few years so kind of working with students, you know, completing their UCAS applications, you know lots of what you're talking about really resonated with me about, you know, students getting experience of different environments beyond their A levels. So did lots of lots of

supporting students in in that regard. Before then, taking up my first assistant headship post in Oldham and I worked in a really wonderful school, I had a really, really great time working there. Work was really fortunate to work with a fantastic team of pastoral managers and within a really dynamic senior leadership team was really forward thinking and I looked back on that time really.

Fondly wonderful and going back to your college days, you mentioned doing a levels. You think our listeners would be keen to to know which a levels you. You've you've done.

Yeah. So I did a music degree, so I did a level music. I also did a combined English literature and language A. I couldn't decide which route to go, so I managed to find a combined a level and and love that. That breadth that I was able to study doing that a level. And I also did media studies. I did a S psychology as well and then dropped that at the end of year 12 and then focused on on English music and media studies.

Nasty. Thank you. And and you did really well and and you progressed very well as well, I have to say looking at you, you don't look as though you've had such a success a long career as you've mentioned, but you've you've mentioned being assistant head of a school. So what was that?

That's very kind.

Like well, it was. It was always a a real ambition of mine to to achieve a senior leadership position. It was something that I had always aspired towards. It was something that I'd always, you know, I was always searching for for the next opportunity. And I think that came down to the fact that I wanted to really have an impact. I really wanted to do some good. I really wanted to affect change, but I also. Still wanted to. Teach kids. I still wanted to teach young people and so my aspirations. To to move into senior leadership really fed all of those those goals. Really, I mentioned that I worked as an assistant head in a school in Oldham and my role there was to lead on pastoral welfare and education. And it was a really. Rewarding time for me and I worked with students of all age ranges, you know, dealt with many different issues and barriers to learning and work with, you know, a whole, you know, different really dynamic variety of different people, different stakeholders. And it was a really fascinating. Time to work in a school and in that capacity, my second assistant, headship, was in a very different role. I was actually leading on teaching and learning, and although. Obviously the role was was mainly about people outcomes. It was also very, very focused on supporting staff and their development. So a very, very different kind of role to to being in a pastoral role and and at times it was very demanding. You know that they were both very, very fast-paced roles. But despite those challenges being able to affect change for the good. And having that kind of impact whilst also. Helping young children was was highly rewarding and it was a time that I looked back on.

With great fondness and and so that particular, those particular leadership roles that you've mentioned and you know how did those the places where you were working, how did they help you prepare for those? Like you said you you went into a leadership role? And the skills that needed for leadership role is is slightly different to what you would need in in a in a teacher role. For instance. So what do you think really helped to you to prepare for that?

Particular role. Gosh, that's a really good question. I'm, you know, and and this is a really great opportunity to reflect. We were saying before the show that we don't often get times to really reflect, do we and it's a really. Interesting question I think. One thing that I will say about working in education is generally speaking, you get lots of support. CPD is high on the agenda of of schools. See continual professional development, continuous professional development and you'll find as a teacher for anybody I know who's listening, who may be considering a career into, into teaching or with an education. You might be thinking, well, how am I going to be supported? And you'll be

incredibly well supported. It's a high priority for school leaders to be supporting and developing their staff and for me. I was very fortunate to have great mentors. I was very fortunate to have been supported on various management and leadership courses. I was given lots of experience and opportunities to try out different projects that would gain me that leadership experience and that really helped prepare me. I mean, you couldn't, you can't really prepare for everything. And of course you get into that job and there are situations to think, gosh, how am I going to deal with that. But I think you mentioned before if you have a question you ask and I think that's that's the important part in all this is having those. Really positive working relationships with your peers and your mentors to seek the answers to questions if you have.

OK. Thank you. So you've worked with students in a number of different roles and you also worked with when you were talking about supporting teachers in their own professional development. And but thinking back to your time mainly in sort of the more pastoral roles, what were the biggest challenges that you saw students facing?

Yeah, that's a really good question. And it's one that I could answer quite easily. It was, it was. We did a lot of work around mental toughness and resilience, thinking today's climate. In today's landscape. There are so many challenges on young people these days. You know, we think specifically. About performance and examinations, you know that's the obvious one. You know, pupils are incredibly aware of what their target grades are, about what they're what set they might be in about, you know, how that might impact Tom, you know their future GCSE performance, but not just that you think about the pressures of, you know, social media and about what children are exposed to these days. Everything has an impact on how they feel about themselves, about what they feel their capabilities are, and that naturally impacts on their performance in schools. So I think you know from my observations and from my experience, I'd say. That the pressures on students from social media, from kind of peer pressure, mental toughness and resilience were definitely the biggest things that that you see in schools.

And with those challenges, what what sort of advice is so if any, if I'm thinking of any of the young people listening now and thinking, Oh yeah, that that's me. I I'm experienced that right now I'm I know about peer pressure or I'm feeling some of those pressures from social media what what would you recommend any of our pupil listeners. Sort of due to help with their mental resilience.

Yeah. I think first and foremost find find someone, find someone that you trust, be that you know, a friend, usually a supportive adult, is somebody that I would recommend you talk to and you find. Seek somebody out and not, you know, not to feel alone. And what you're feeling is is really key. Because I think as a young person. And you can feel very alone if you're experiencing something very challenging. You're trying to make sense of the world and you're trying to make sensible decisions, and sometimes you need some help with that. So I think for any young people listening, or perhaps any family members who you know of who may be, you know, have children that are going through things like this, it's to encourage those young people to find someone that they can talk to be like. Somebody in their family or somebody in their school environment.

So the communities that you're used to working with as well because you mentioned working in Oldham and so you'll be very familiar with the with the different ethnic communities of that of that region, which is very similar to to to here as well. And sometimes it can be difficult for. Students, you know, young people of certain communities to talk to members of the family, because that understanding, unfortunately, isn't there. Mm-hmm. And and maybe the the communication channels aren't as open as it as it may be with with other families. So if if they can't speak to people in their, in their family.

So who is it in the school that they could speak to? Do schools have designated staff who who look after this, who are trained to have those conversations? Absolutely. So, you know, for any younger listeners who might be in in primary school, you know, their class teacher will would be a great port of call. They're often the people who spend time with those young people the most. They know them the most. They feel the most safe with them, so I would definitely advise their class teach. To for those students who are in secondary school, they have form tutors. There will usually be a designated Student Support network in the school who whose full time job is to support students. They'll usually have a safe space where students can go to heads of year as well. Are really good places to go. So you'll find that in in your schools. Get to know the people who are there to.

Help you? Absolutely. And the families themselves. They're, you know, maybe concerned or have questions about their, their child's, you know, mental health. They can also contact the school, can't they? And speak to the pastoral team.

Absolutely. And you know, there's there's no like you mentioned this before. There's no question that's that's that's too awkward or too, too silly or, you know, any concern. Is is always incredibly valid and staff in school want to hear from, from, from, from parents, they want to help. They want to be that friendlier, that professional who knows where they can sign post you to for support. So absolutely form tutors, heads of year, student support services are always really great places to start. But if.

And it's great that we've got you on at this time because it is exam season coming up soon as well. So schools in the region have have closed for Easter and so we've got lots of young people at home observing Ramadan, some of them, which is great because I I've known some very young people, you know for whom it's non obligation. Too fast but are doing. So and and there may be some who've got exams coming up, so want to keep up with their studies. They're doing that alongside their. Fasting. So somebody with your experience who you know, tutors now as well? Well, what advice would you give to the the young people but also to the families as well and how they can support? Young people with these huge as you've mentioned before, these are exams that you know have implications. So how can we support them?

Absolutely. And and it can be, you know, we talk about this being a stressful time for, for, for young people and it absolutely is. But it can often be quite stressful for parents as well. You know, I'm. I'm a mum, alright? My my daughter's only two. She's got a while to go. But you know you you do become very aware that you want to fix everything for your child. You want to make sure that they're gonna be OK. You'd sit their exams for them if you could. And you can often feel quite powerless. You think? What can I do? So it's a really valid question. Because there'll be lots of parents. There, who are perhaps asking that question. What on Earth can I do to support my child and to keep them going during the? Days and and what I would say is that it's about, you know, I'm I'm very fond of a routine. Most of my life is is routine based, but routine gives US security. It gives us comfort. And I would say that getting your child into a healthy routine is is key. And by routine, we're thinking specifically about study. Skills and and how we get them into healthy habits with their studying. I I tell my students at at my my tuition Centre, first class learning plan, prioritise and and practise my 3P my 3P's. So for any parents out there any family members who know of any young people in their family who have exams coming up I would say plan. Prioritise and practise, so plan you know, come up with a study plan together as a family. Write something down on paper and build in time for study, but also crucially for recreational time as well. That's really important that young people get time to switch off and have down time so I would recommend planning in that time in a really structured way that they get a real good. Balance of study time and recreational time and down. Time. Put your plan somewhere public, put it in, put it in the kitchen somewhere. Everyone can see it. Not that you

can. Then you know, shame your child into pool. You know, got to go. Do your your vision now. But so that it's it's supportive. Everybody in the family knows what that young person needs to do and can work with them and can plan their days around. That's. That young person fitting in their study time, I think that's really important, that the whole family are on board with that plan and support that child. And then I talk about prioritising. You know, I think about this with trying to keep fit or trying to kind of like maintain a healthy diet. It's all well and good, kind of having that plan, but unless you stick to it, it's never going to have an impact. So prioritise that plan, make sure that you stick to it and then practise it. Make sure that you're sticking to it. You're making any adjustments to it, but that you're also building in time. To practise skills that you're doing, you know, repeat. Being practising those skills that you're revising for, I hope that wasn't too long. Something wasn't really aware that I was talking quite a long time now.

That's really helpful. Yeah, I'm. I'm gonna. I'm gonna. Please. Yeah, exactly use. Routine is life. If a student is sort of thinking if they're quite this, they're not a routine. If they struggle with routine, is there a way of breaking it down to sort of? Help sort of that some students really love a revision timetable. Some shouldn't see a revision timetable and feel quite overwhelmed.

Overwhelmed, I think a plan is, is personal to the individual. So if for some, some young people, you know, particularly for older, older students having a weekly plan might really suit them for. But for, you know, potentially other students who may have additional needs or for younger children who are maybe doing their sats, do it day by day. Just think like what we're doing today and and and and. Yeah, take the kind of pressure out of it. I think making it really child centred making the plan fit around what the young person. And needs is definitely the way to.

Go. I really like your point about sharing the plan. And so it's not just something that you monopolise, but it's something which is almost then owned by the whole family, the whole family, you know, support team. Let's call them that because. You know.

I like that. Support team.

Yeah, because they're your supporters. They want you. Do just as well as you do, and your teachers want you to do, but often. Maybe young people I this is just my view is that young people probably don't get them involved in their studies as much as maybe what the families would like to be involved in to that extent. So you know, share your plan with them. Then they get to see what your commitments are. And if anything, they can help you to keep on track, you know, and if they see the. That there's something on you that you were meant to be doing. That you're not. Doing like you said, you don't want to chastise them for that, but what you can do is to ask some good questions which can get you to better understand whether there is an underlying issue there that needs addressing. That you could help with. You know, or whatever that may be. But then you know you going into this, which is a very difficult period for any young person to go. Through, you know, you've got your supporters, you know you've got people around you who are supporting it and it. And it's not just about. Revision. It's about having a safe space as well, and sometimes that means compromises by the whole family. You know, if there's if there's a particular room where you like to study, but that room is also used as a playroom for your younger siblings, or if it's used by your parents as a as a work desk. Then at least they know about that, and it can hopefully reduce.

The algae mission, yes.

Should happen as well. So so that was I think that was a really good point, Isabel.

Yeah. Thank you.



So thinking about. This sort of leads on to what you're just saying. There's much about, you know, finding space to to work and things like that during the pandemic that impacted a lot of people's education, impacted a lot of families trying to find space to work and people to do the school work, people to do their working from home, and also having space to relax. Because we're all. In one house, what do you think has been the the impact and what do you think was the sort of in your opinion, the biggest impact that's had on young people's education?

Yeah. I mean, looking back on that time, how did you know think how did we ever survive, you know? And I've spoken to so many parents who, you know, echo those sentiments. They just have no idea how they got through that time it. Was just so nightmarish. Yeah, actually a.

Lot of people are describing this and that they've woken up from.

Absolutely. Like, did it actually happen? Yeah. What was that? And, you know, it was an incredibly stressful time. You know, we don't need to go into that one. But, you know, talk about the impact that that's had on on on people outcomes on people's mental health.

Did he actually have?

There is ever increasing evidence and studies that have been done by the DF E it's been reported by the Education Endowment Foundation that have shown that the impact of the pandemic has had a massively negative impact on pupil performance, both with their reading their writing, particularly with the year 7 students coming up from primary school. Particularly with key stage two students with their reading and their. That where people should be performing has been significantly lower than what you would expect and that's.

This is national.

This is national figures, absolutely. And, you know, evidence is still emerging now, we don't truly know what the impact is going to be long term over the next few years, but we know we do know that it has had an impact. I think one of the biggest challenges. Now for us is is how we. As a as a team of adults, be that as educators, be that as you know, social and mental health supporters be that as parents, how do we support those children? I think that's going to be the biggest challenge going forward. And I think that parents are increasingly seeking additional ways to support and to supplement those lost learning. That was and and certainly for for me, having taken a break from teach. Teaching. I knew I wanted to come back into teaching and I think coming back at this time made me think, well, hang on, there's a there's a need here for that. Parents are looking for to help with their, with their children catching up. And that's what led me to open first class. Learning was was that need for additional support that parents were looking for outside of school to to bridge that gap.

So you've seen a more of a demand for from from families to to want to kind of supplement that because of? That sort of maybe. That an attainment gap that they've noticed that their child is probably not doing as well as. What they could do so he's performing below potential, maybe that's been communicated through the school reports or parents evenings. And they're now. Wanting to do more for this child out of school and I'm sure the schools are doing as much as they can, but there's also opportunities out of school as well. And you've mentioned tutoring is so. So tell me a bit more about the tutoring then.

Yeah. So, I mean, you know, one thing you know, we've obviously mentioned the attainment gap, but there there is a need and parents are looking for that support and and one thing that is a common theme amongst parents that I'm talking to now is they're talking about a lack of confidence. That's

saying, you know, my son or daughters, just lacking confidence, they're not as confident as they used to be. They're not asking questions in class like they used to be and especially for the younger children who have maybe. Taking a back seat with social interaction, they're less confident to speak up now, and so lots of parents are coming to me to help build up. Pupils confidence through the work that I do with their English and maths. They're in a small setting. They have one to one support from me. We can we can work at their own pace and very, very quickly you start to hear that they're asking more questions. They're talking more. They're engaging more in conversation about the work that they're doing and that then trickles slowly but surely into their school work and that's. That's their ultimate aim that we want students to perform at their best at school so that they can go on and be whatever they want to be and achieve their very.

Test with this teaching so the teaching you're offering them so, so it was 1:00 to 1:00 and also in groups. Yeah. So the way the way we work at first class learning is it's.

We we allow students in small groups to come to our centre, it's it's a drop in service really. They come anytime they want. We have up a maximum of up to six in a room, but they're all working on their own individual programme, so no student is working on the same thing. They're all at their own. They have their own study packs, their own studying objective. Lives. They have a combination of 1 to 1 support from myself and my tutoring assistant and then they get some opportunity for some independent study as well.

That's brilliant. So it's not only sort of like gaining that one to one support and gaining confidence in their own abilities, but because they're in a small group, they're also getting that peer peer support as well.

Yes, yes. And it kind of harks back to what I was mentioning before about resilience and and mental tough. Us and you want to support the students, but you don't want to hold the hands either, you know. So it's that that fine balance that that we that we achieve it in my tutoring centre where we are supporting them but we have a bit you know we try and give them some hands off time as well so that they can feel confident that.

They can do it themselves as well. It's a good, safe space to try new things to sometimes. Get things wrong, but it's in a small group and you're.

Working on your own project. Exactly and there's no peer pressure. You know that that you know, they're they're all of different ages. They're all doing different things so they can compare. They're purely focusing on. And and I think that's really important for those students who are maybe lacking some confidence having that opportunity not to worry about other people and what other people are thinking is really powerful for them.

You mentioned different ages. What what what age does it go up to? And what age does it start?

So we offer English and maths from key stage one. So the start of primary school right up to GCSE, yeah.

So we're gonna have, I mean, you've probably you have actually discussed a lot of these tips already, which is great. So we have we have listeners who are from all age groups. What are the tips, would you give them because you've mentioned they've they're coming out of a very difficult. Period. And you know you've you've got you've got to. Talking to a lot of them. So you've got a lot of inside information, some of the kids don't really have. Some have conversations with their parents. Unfortunately, it happens that way, but you get a real insight into what the concerns of these

students are, what the challenges that are that they face. So if you were talking to them directly now, what would you say to them?

For students that are taking exams or just generally generally, generally I think one of the main things that I try and and talk about, and this is what I talked about in my previous role in schools and with my pupils now, is believe, believe in the why believe in the what and believe in the how. So believe in why? Why are we doing this in the 1st place? Why? What's the point? How so? Why? Why we're doing this? What are we doing it for? So we're doing it for, you know, to get into college. Are we doing it because we want to? To. Go get an apprenticeship. Is it because we want to go to university, get a job? And then how are we going to do it? So we know why we want to do it and what it's for. But how are we going to get there? So that's what I try to talk to my students about is having a reason for, for what we're doing. Cause I think students can get really bogged down in the nitty gritty. I've got so much homework. I don't know what to do. I don't. I don't really like this subject, but get out of that. Let's look at the bigger picture. And I think that's the point that I'm trying to make is trying to help. Students to to to get out of that kind of. Of magnifying glass of oh, I've just got to focus on my learning, but getting out. Of that and looking.

At the bigger picture, there might be ulterior roots. There might be. They don't necessarily maybe have to do. You know the qualification that they're currently doing. It could be there might be another route which is more suited to them. Which has assessment which is more suited to them, which might be a hybrid of working and. In exams and I think you know, that's something that I and I've realised over the last few months is that there are so. Many different it's.

Yeah, and isn't that great, you know?

Routes and that's so. Many different careers as. Yeah. So it might be you thinking, oh, I want to do a certain career because I want to help. People, there's so many different. Absolutely, people. And it's not necessarily, you know, one job or one size fits one.

One-size-fits-all. Yeah, absolutely, yeah. And isn't that great that we live in a world where we have choice and we have options and we have flexibility? I mean, look at look at me, I've, you know, I've, I've taken a very different path with with my career and. It's it's liberating and it's really empowering. And you know, if we can get more young people to feel like. That as well about their futures. And that's the really positive thing.

Absolutely. And it's and and that's great for you to to share that with with, you know, Pendle Community radio listeners because, you know, you. Had a very successful career in teaching. You know, you progressed to senior leadership and and you had your lovely daughter who's now two you said. And now you have another successful career. But the skills that you learned from being a teacher is something that you've transferred over to what you're doing currently, and that happens in many jobs, right where you you can develop a skill set, but you can apply that skill set in a different career, not necessarily within the same.

Career path? Absolutely, yeah, definitely. And I think that's what employers are looking for. They're not, you know, yes, they want to kind of see that you've demonstrated a certain academic kind of profile because that gives everybody a benchmark. But they're looking at the individual they're looking at who you are and what you can offer and what skills you have. And I think, again, that's a message. That you know, many young people need to to know, need to be reassured and reminded about that. This is about you and about what you can offer. Yeah. And. And the fact that you have.

Tutored in English, you mentioned, you know, that's one of the subjects maths, maths and maths.

English and yes, yes.

And I have kids myself and and and one is a teenager now and another one is about to be a teenager and. I understand how important it is that they continue to read. Oh my goodness. Yeah. So just. Say a little bit, so coming from you.

Especially boys, especially boys.

From you. Advice would you give to parents who are listening now? Who have that experience that I've had, where kids, you know, love reading and then they go into their teens and you don't see them with the book as often as they used to because they're all so many distractions.

Yeah, absolutely. I just read anything, even if it's just a magazine, even if it's just the kind of TV Guide or, you know, if you've got children who, like baking, even just reading a recipe. Or, you know, reading, you know, if your kids into football, you know, you know, reading a profile on on your favourite football player, you know, anything, anything is good reading and just finding something that engages your.

Child, I always make sure the kids have subtitles on so they're they're really into the show at the moment, which is death in paradise some.

Ohh death in paradise, yeah.

Something like that. Far too many series and episodes for my liking. I.

Yeah, that that's a dedication to start that there. It's like 9 series goodness. Wow.

Have to say. Oh my goodness. Well, I started.

And you'll have to see it. Through now as well.

Yeah. Ohh. They they will insist on it. They'll. Yeah, they will insist on it.

If you start, you have to keep going.

But the.

The the subtitles are always on.

That's such a good idea. Yeah, that's a really good idea. Like that? Yeah.

Because they're reading well, make sure the volumes right down, yeah, mute.

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Mute and you can read that, but yeah, fantastic.

That's a great idea.

So thinking back to careers and we've talked a lot about sort of careers starting for young people and how how they can sort of there's lots of roots and transferable skills. But if anybody's listening now. Thinking, actually, you've inspired me to become a teacher. I want to go into education, but they're already in their career. Have you got any tips for career changing and and becoming a teacher and what steps they would take?

Yeah, it's and it's it's different for everybody. You know everybody that like we've said, you know before there's no one-size-fits-all. I think if you're if you're considering going into teaching and you've

never, you know, never done it before. Then any experience is good experience. If you can find any opportunity to go and be around a school, you know, if you've got opportunity for some. And you will leave. Maybe see if you can approach the school and maybe volunteer to go and help help with with them. There are lots and lots of different work based routes to go into teaching these days. I was I obviously did a similar pathway when I first started out, so there were many different work based routes that you can do to get into teaching. And and I think that schools really want people who have come out of industry based careers. They want those people in the classroom because they are the best role models for our children. You know, if you can get a diverse staff that have had previous experience in the working world in different industries, that's great because they can talk about that to young people. They can inspire them and they can make them aware of different professions. So yeah, that's that's a great thing for your CV. If you're looking to be a teacher and you're already in a different profession, schools love that.

That's really good to know. I wasn't aware of that. I mean, it makes sense because it's the same thing about in universities, how we want to get lots of people from industry to talk about their own lived experiences and what they, what skills they've gained. So it would make sense that actually, you know, we should be starting that before we get to university. That should be something happening in our secondary schools and primary schools.

Yeah, absolutely.

So yeah, that, that that's really good advice. Thank you.

Thank you so much, Isabel, for being on education matters. It's been wonderful interviewing you at all.

Thank you.