



## **Ryde Teaching Services Frequently Asked Questions**

**Q1 Do you think that by taking examinations at such an early age, you are putting children under pressure?**

A1 No. Students are only entered for a GCSE or A Level examination, if the child, their tutor and parents are agreed that that the child has completed the syllabus satisfactorily and are confident that they can cope with taking an examination. More pressure is placed on 16 year-olds, who have to study for and take upwards of eight GCSEs at one time. By taking a few exams at an earlier age, this should help to reduce the pressure.

**Q2 With so many of your students taking exams early, do you think that schools are letting the children down?**

A2 No. Schools are doing the best that they are able to do under the existing curriculum, which has clear guidelines set out as to what each year should be able to achieve. Although the Government is looking at opportunities of some gifted children to be able to take GCSEs early, generally there is little flexibility to enable children to take exams according to their ability rather than their age. We as a society need to take responsibility and work towards an educational system where children can progress regardless of age.

**Q3 Would you say that the students at Ryde Teaching Services are bright/gifted?**

A3 No. Although we have the occasional exceptional students as you would in most schools, the majority of our students come from a cross-section of backgrounds, most attend state schools and we do not have an entrance examination or selection process. They simply have the opportunity at Ryde Teaching Services to study and take examinations at an earlier than usual, which in most cases they cannot do at school and are therefore seen as gifted or prodigies.

**Q4 By studying at an early age, are children losing their childhoods?**

A4 No. It is important that the student enjoys learning and has a balanced approach to education. Our students take part in all the usual activities, playing with friends music, sport, as well as attending Ryde Teaching Services. Many students attend Ryde Teaching Services for only two or four hours per week (depending on the course). This is not a great deal of time when compared with the amount of time many children spend in front of a television.

**Q5 Accelerated learning or starting formal education at a young age (under 5) has been referred to as hot housing, with no real benefits, than if a child were to begin learning at the usual age of 5. What is your view?**

A5 Research<sup>1</sup> has shown that children who have an opportunity to study with computers at a younger age benefit in many areas of their education. We agree that children should not be pushed into studying against their will; however the children that study at Ryde Teaching Services want to. This creates a stimulating environment for all our students to study and socialise in.

<sup>1</sup> Source Newcastle University research "Effective Pedagogy using Information and Communications Technology for literacy and Numeracy in Primary Schools" - published September 1999

**Q6 What do the schools think of their students taking GCSEs early?**

A6 Many schools are supportive of a child achieving academically at a younger age. After all we are all used to children passing music exams at an earlier age and achieving in physically challenging pursuits such as Ballet, Football, Netball etc.

**Q7 If a child as young as six can take a GCSE, do you think that GCSEs are becoming too easy?**

A7 No. The GCSE's have not dropped in standard, if anything the general consensus between teachers is that they have become harder in some subjects. Each year more and more people climb Mount Everest, but is it any lower?

**Q8 Is it natural for a child to take exams early?**

A8 Yes. Children are easier to motivate when younger as they have less distractions. We have found that students who have taken examinations at a younger age have improved in other academic subjects and have also gained in self-confidence. We believe a student can learn to enjoy their studies and maybe even school!

**Q9 What is your view that too much time spent on computers can be harmful to a young persons health?**

A9 We would not advocate spending hours in front of a computer or a television screen without breaks and for very young children, time spent in front of a computer screen should be limited to short exposures.

**Q10 What is the key to successful teaching?**

A10 There are many criteria that make a successful teacher. Here are some of them :

- The teacher must know their subject well at the level they are teaching. They should also be able to get a message across to a diverse range of students and have an amiable personality.
- Methods are important when teaching but so is knowing when and where to use them.
- Small Classes. Teachers need to be in an environment where they can concentrate on their job and not crowd control.
- Facilities. Teachers need the tools and incentives to do their job. If the teacher is unmotivated then this can be reflected in their teaching and ultimately with the students results.

**Q11 Do you think it is the parents who are pushing the children too early?**

A11 No. Most parents that bring their children to Ryde Teaching Services explain that they do not want to pressurise their children and that the examinations are unimportant to them. We explain that children who enrol on our courses for GCSE's and A Levels do so not only to achieve a qualification, but it also gives the children a goal to aim for.

Too much time is wasted when children are at school especially in their primary school and the initial three years at secondary school. Very little is done for the first nine years (the most important years) then suddenly there is two years of intense pressure studying up to 10 or more GCSE's (that equates to about two months per GCSE of intensive learning).