



Tutoring helps students gain the knowledge and skills to build on their schoolwork

Tutor

Suzanne Markham

Tuition subjects

Science KS3 and Chemistry and Combined Science KS4



Background

Suzanne Markham has been a tutor for Pearson Tutoring for two years. Prior to this, she was a secondary school science teacher for 34 years. We spoke to Suzanne about her experiences as a tutor and why she joined Pearson Tutoring.



I wanted to reach students who needed help the most

I left teaching following an injury and I was not sure what I wanted to do next. I considered various options, but I soon realised that I was a teacher at heart, and I was still thinking like one. A former colleague told me about Pearson Tutoring, so I looked into it and there was a natural fit because of my teaching background and the fact that I had been a Pearson Edexcel A level and GCSE Chemistry exam marker.

I had years of skills and experience and I wanted to put my knowledge and resources to good use. I had previously worked in a secondary school with a lot of disadvantaged students, and I wanted to reach those who needed the most help and to feel that I was making a real difference.



It's important to connect with the students and make sure they are engaged

It's important to make the students feel relaxed during the lessons so I make a point of asking them how they are and what they have done since the last time we met. The students all have varied interests, so I ask them what they like to do outside of school which is a good ice breaker. It's so important to connect with the students and make sure they are comfortable and engaged.

I make sure I manage the students' expectations from the beginning and explain that it can take time to build knowledge, and every time they answer a question, they will be able to retrieve that knowledge more easily. I have drawn diagrams of the brain to show how this works, so they understand the 'why' behind what I am doing. I don't want them to feel disheartened if they don't know an answer but instead use this as an opportunity to learn and progress. The fast feedback provided by tutoring stops students hanging onto any misconceptions and move on.



Students feel that tutoring has helped them to catch up

The pandemic has meant that students have missed practical work which helps with scientific understanding and knowledge. Some students cannot name techniques, for example, for separating mixtures, or haven't seen the reactions of alkali metals. Having said that, I know schools have made a massive effort to recover this.

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Many students have had a lot of supply teachers and absent teachers, which is understandable, and they feel they have missed a lot of work and sometimes their learning has been inconsistent. They know they have gaps in their knowledge and lack scientific vocabulary. The students feel that tutoring has helped them to catch up and one student even said she felt clever when the work done in tutoring was covered in the lessons.



Bramble helps students review their work and refresh their knowledge

Bramble, the online portal used for the sessions, is straightforward and easy to use. I have a touch screen laptop and use a pen when I need to write. The students find it easy to type and one student last year used a tablet which he could use to draw on and he really engaged with it. Some students do worry that they may not retain the knowledge they have gained in the sessions, so I ask them to use Bramble to review or search for work we have covered which helps them when they need to refresh their knowledge and go over content we have already covered.

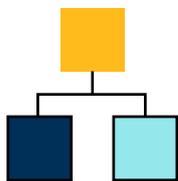


Students gain knowledge and skills which build on their school lessons and help embed their learning

I am very happy with the progress students have made after completing the sessions. There are some areas that can take longer to teach, and need a lot of explaining, and the students can sometimes find application challenging. However, this is where tutoring comes into its own because students gain the knowledge and skills to build on their schoolwork and help embed their learning.

I think the students who benefit most are the ones who want to be there. All students who attend the lessons, no matter what their additional needs are, benefit when they come to the sessions and show progression.

The key skills I think the students gain by attending the additional sessions are:



Learning to structure an answer



Give explanations which will gain marks in exams



Predicting answers by applying knowledge



Articulating their responses to the group



Self-motivation, they are attending the sessions



Becoming more proactive in their learning



Building confidence and a foundation to add to

I believe that all the students have benefitted from tutoring, and I am so pleased when they come to the sessions. They tell me that they want to make progress which is lovely to hear. I think the students do really well as we are asking them to fully engage for an hour with no hiding place.



Tutoring makes a big difference to students

I think that tutoring makes a big difference to students. Some of them are worried when they first start, but they realise quite quickly that it's not scary at all. It is important to remain positive and encouraging by speaking to the students and helping them to make progress. Tutoring is fabulous and I already have recommended it to a couple of my friends who were former teachers. I was sad when I had to leave my teaching job, but as a tutor I can now reach a whole range of students and help them make up for lost time.

