

Graham Stuart M.P.'s remarks for the Launch of The Tutors' Association

Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors

Tuesday 8 October, 6.30pm

Good evening. It's great to be here tonight, at the launch of The Tutors' Association. The Tutors' Association, or TTA, has the chance to become an important Quality Mark in the education marketplace. It is of course early days.

When doing my research ahead of tonight's event, I found the Association will face some rivalry if it wants to be identified with the TTA acronym. At the moment, there is stiff competition from The Traditional Taekwondo Association... and the Tibetan Terriers Association! As any good tutor will know, Tibetan Terriers are venerable creatures, who were bred to guard the animals owned by monasteries in the more remote parts of the Himalayas.

But even in the face of such competitors, the potential of The Tutors' Association is clear. Private tuition is now extremely big business, worth up to six billion pounds a year. According to a survey last autumn by EdPlace, an educational resources provider, 28% of UK parents use tutors, spending an average of £2,758 per child, every year. Nationwide, hundreds of thousands of people now work as tutors – many on a flexible or part-time basis. These are astonishing figures. They underscore how deeply parents care about their children's education. They also make a powerful case for why private tutoring needs a voice, and a representative body to promote best practice and set high standards for its members.

The Tutors' Association can be that organisation.

It will represent both large tutoring companies and independent tutors, sharing information and promoting professional development. But it will also play a valuable role in quality control. The Tutors' Association will be selective. Applications will be carefully vetted.

Furthermore, the TTA can help to hold tutors to account by asking all tutors and tutoring companies to sign up to a code of ethics, and to adhere to a new complaints procedure.

This is a great step forward.

Many tutors up and down the country do brilliant work with their pupils, helping to hone their skills and boost their confidence. They range from recent graduates to retirees, united by an enthusiasm for teaching and the desire to accelerate their pupils' progress.

But in any profession, there will be bad apples offering substandard advice, either through incompetence or cynicism. A recent survey by thetutorpages.com, an educational website, discovered two-thirds of tutoring agencies did not require tutors to have a degree, while a fifth did not subject their tutors to a Criminal Records Bureau check to identify any convictions for violent or sexual crimes.

This is a license for trouble.

So it is very welcome that the industry is taking the initiative in self-regulation, to address the variability in the quality of private tuition on offer to our children. The creation of The Tutors' Association will hopefully usher in a new era of professionalism. Properly managed, it can provide reassurance to parents that their investment is money well spent, and benefit good tutors everywhere, by raising the status of the profession. So I congratulate Thomas, James, Kate and everyone else connected with this project for their hard work and wish them every success in the future.

Thank you very much indeed.