

Extreme education

Level 2 • Intermediate

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words and phrases from the text.

attitude admission appropriate zero tolerance mentor
achievement disadvantaged behaviour proficient strict

1. If you are _____, you do not have the same advantages as other people.
2. If you are _____ at something you have learned, you are skilled at it.
3. A person's _____ is the way in which he or she follows basic social rules.
4. A person's _____ is the way they show their feelings or opinions about something, especially as shown by their behaviour.
5. If a rule is _____, people must obey it completely.
6. A _____ is an experienced person who helps someone with less experience.
7. Academic _____ at school consists of the things children succeed in doing well.
8. _____ is permission to join an institution like a school or a college.
9. If something is _____, it is suitable or right for a particular situation.
10. _____ is a situation in which all offences, even the most minor, are strictly punished in accordance with the law or a set of rules.

2 Find the information

Look in the text and find the answers to these questions as quickly as possible.

1. How many hours a day do pupils study in US 'small' or 'charter' schools?
2. What percentage of children at the North Star Academy get free meals?
3. How many charter schools are there in the US?
4. How many children are on the waiting list for the North Star Academy?
5. How many pupils normally attend charter schools?
6. How many children at the Kipp Academy can read music?

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Coming to an inner city near you, extreme education

Small US academies with tough rules and excellent results are model for British

Polly Curtis, education editor
October 22, 2007

- 1 For some people it is extreme education: 10-hour days, contracts with parents and very strict rules on behaviour in small, 200-pupil academies. The result is a new type of school in the US is 100% acceptance of college, test results as good as those in private schools, and teenagers from New York's South Bronx district who play the viola like their neighbours in Manhattan.
- 2 James Verrilli, principal of the North Star Academy in Newark, America's second poorest city, said: "These kids know drugs. These kids know crime and violence. Their fathers are in jail. We have a school culture here which is very different from the attitude they have when they first walk through the door. It's a culture that tells them they can go to college."
- 3 At the North Star Academy children like Charism and Queen-Ama smile politely as they shake your hand and welcome you in. About 85% of pupils are African-American and 90% get free school meals. Last year 80% got 'proficient or advanced' grades in maths, compared with just 28% in the local neighbourhood school. This was above the state average. Pupils work in silence with a professionalism they have learned during a three-day process. From the beginning pupils are taught to speak clearly, answer questions in full sentences and look the teacher in the eye.
- 4 Parents have to sign a three-way contract with their child and the principal, and must promise to participate themselves. When a child's homework isn't handed in by 8am, there is a phone call home. When the parent doesn't turn up for a meeting, their child is not allowed back into school until they turn up. There are signs saying 'No excuses' on the walls. "I was working until 11 last night. I'm tired, but I know I've got to work," says one 11-year-old, as she finishes up her homework over breakfast. "Even my mother's gone back to school since I've been here." Pupils are tested every six weeks and their results are examined carefully.
- 5 "As a principal of a small school I know how every child is progressing and how they are behaving," says Mr Verrilli. He also sits in on classes himself, observing the students and writing notes for the teachers.
- 6 North Star and other small schools like it have developed from the charter school movement in the US. The 3,500 charter schools are independent schools, funded by the state, and allowed more freedom to set policies, including their admissions procedures. North Star runs a lottery for admissions and has 1,800 children on the waiting list. Parents have to put their child's name into the lottery; three times more girls apply than boys.
- 7 Mr Verrilli strongly rejects the idea that his students might not be the ones most in need. "It's quite wrong to say that parents from disadvantaged backgrounds don't care about their kids' education. 95% of parents just want a better education for their children. "We're not taking the best kids. I'm defensive about that. It's something a lot of people say. How hard is it to put your child's name down on a piece of paper?" he said.
- 8 Every child who attends the Kipp (Knowledge is Power Programme) academy in south Bronx, New York, plays in its orchestra, the best school orchestra in New York. Every child can read music. Shirley Lee, a director of the Kipp academy in the Bronx, says the school works because there is a consistent structure throughout the school. "The truth and reality is that kids like structure," she said. "It's about telling them what's appropriate and them learning when to use it. I wouldn't talk to you like I am now if I was out in some of these areas. But if we teach them to look in my eyes when I'm speaking to them, they will use that if they get stopped by the police and that will protect them."
- 9 In the UK, there is a growing political debate about the differences in academic achievement between rich and poor in schools in big cities. A recent report

Extreme education

Level 2 • Intermediate

highlighted the growing gap in achievement and the government is trying to deal with this problem. Three London academies are experimenting with small school principles and last week a group of British teachers in training visited the US looking for methods they could use to deal with the problems of 'complex urban education'.

10 Ark, a UK educational charity, is taking key components of the small school model into London academies. Lucy Heller, managing director of Ark, says: "It's small schools, strict rules on behaviour and a firm belief that inner city children can be just as successful." The UK schools minister says small schools can teach disadvantaged children the skills that middle class children take for granted: "High ambition, zero tolerance of failure, an expectation that children will go to university and that schools will give them the education to go to university."

11 Ark is also helping to fund the 30 'Future Leaders' group on the school leadership training scheme visiting the US. The trainees are expected to take some of the ideas they experience in the US back home to the UK. Many of them think it will be difficult to transfer the model to the UK, however. They talk about the fact that most of the US schools are middle schools, for 10–14 year-olds. The model has been tested less in the secondary school age group (11–18). They also ask where the money to fund smaller schools will come from, though others point out the fact that in the US facilities are basic. "They don't even have interactive whiteboards," says one of the group's mentors. "They just teach. Small schools might not be practical in the UK, but what I really want these new school leaders to take back is the sense of culture in these schools."

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3 Comprehension check

Are these sentences *True (T)* or *False (F)* according to the text?

1. Newark is the poorest city in the US.
2. Pupils at the North Star Academy are better at maths than kids in the local neighbourhood school.
3. Pupils have to look teachers in the eye when they speak to them.
4. If a pupil doesn't hand in their homework by 8am, the school calls their parents.
5. Pupils have a test every six days.
6. Mr Verrilli doesn't go into classrooms himself.
7. More girls apply to go to North Star than boys.
8. The UK is planning to start academies like the US charter schools.

4 Vocabulary 1: Find the word

Look in the text and find these words or expressions.

1. A phrasal verb meaning *to give to someone in authority*. (para 4)
2. A phrasal verb meaning *to arrive*. (para 4)
3. A verb meaning *to provide the money for something that costs a lot*. (para 6)
4. An adjective meaning *not changing*. (para 8)
5. A noun meaning *a formal discussion*. (para 9)
6. A verb meaning *to emphasize*. (para 9)
7. An adjective meaning *relating to a city*. (para 9)
8. A three-word expression meaning *expect something always to happen without thinking about any possible problems*. (para 10)

Extreme education

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5 Vocabulary 2: Prepositions

Fill the gaps in these phrases from the text using prepositions. Check your answers in the text.

1. look someone _____ the eye
2. hand in homework _____ 8am
3. _____ the waiting list
4. care _____ their kids' education
5. the difference _____ rich and poor
6. to deal _____ a problem
7. take something _____ granted
8. where will the money come _____?

6 Vocabulary 3: Word building

Complete the table.

	verb	noun
1.	accept	
2.	behave	
3.	tolerate	
4.	expect	
5.	believe	
6.	admit	
7.	achieve	
8.	educate	

7 Discussion

Do pupils achieve better results in schools with strict rules? Would you like to attend such a school?
Why? / Why not?