

I approached 189 schools before I found one where my son could take exams. He wanted to take English, Maths, a science and a humanities subject. The school we finally used was only able to let him take the Maths and the humanities. He took IGCSEs in the end because of the controlled assessment with GCSEs. We'd already previously used a correspondence course for the English GCSE and had his coursework marked, but we couldn't find anywhere for him to sit the exam at the time.

If he wanted to get his English now at the same school as the other exams, he'd have to start the IGCSE from scratch using a different exam board instead of the GCSE he studied before. We never did find anywhere for him to take the science exam.

I wrote to most of the schools individually by ordinary mail as when I tried telephoning the first 30 or so I got told to put it in writing or refused outright. Cost wasn't a factor, I offered to pay whatever they wanted to charge not because I'm well off, I'm not, but because I didn't want to let my boy down.

The majority gave an outright refusal and some did not reply at all. There were two that normally took private candidates but one of those refused because they only accepted girls. The other refused because they only accepted candidates in their immediate catchment area. A third said they would consider it but then said that they felt that their pupils would feel uncomfortable sitting the exam with a younger candidate.