

Was it my duty to help?

Absolutely



Divorcing parents coupled with teenage angst are never an easy combination. Happily for the young Luke Jordan, a perceptive teacher was there to keep his head above water

THE PUPIL

Luke Jordan, 34, left Dover Grammar School for Boys in 2000 and went on to study music production at Canterbury College. He now lives in Dover and runs his own events management and equipment hire company.

“Ms Lloyd – who I now call Françoise – took over as our form tutor during our GCSEs. First impressions? I thought she was quirky. She had these

thick prescription glasses and short, frizzy hair. She looked like a cartoon character. (We weren’t a kind class.) Turns out she was the right sort of quirky, and a great teacher. She didn’t rise to us taking the mickey, and within a few months had gained our trust and respect.

“When I was 15, my home life became problematic. My parents were going through a divorce and my mum had to move away for work. I ended up living in the family house on my own

– and sleeping in a lot. I didn’t go to school much back then.

“Ms Lloyd noticed that things weren’t right. She gave me a bit of a leeway, and a talking to when I needed it. Then she started to appear outside the house. ‘Allo! I got you a breakfast bar,’ she’d say in her French accent. Just checking that you’re coming to school today.’

“She was there for me pretty much every day, getting me breakfast,

PHOTOGRAPHY: JUDE EDGINGTON FOR BRIDGE STUDIO

saying nice things and generally being supportive. It wasn’t until a few years later that I started wondering, ‘How did I get through that time?’ It was all down to Ms Lloyd.

“I didn’t finish my A levels – I got kicked out of school before then. I was doing a lot of music promotion work at the time, so Ms Lloyd encouraged me to apply for a music production course. I did well in the interview because I rewired the studio – they had an electrical problem. But they said they didn’t do unconditional offers, and to do my exams and try again the following year.

“Ms Lloyd came to the rescue. She spoke to the college and made it work somehow, and I got on to the course that year. There’s no way it would have happened without her.

“We still keep in touch via Facebook and email, and sometimes she comes to my music events when she’s not off doing missionary work in Africa. There’s no doubt, I wouldn’t be where I am today without her.”

THE TEACHER

Françoise Lloyd, 69, taught history, French and German at Dover Grammar School for Boys from 1998 until 2014, when she retired. She lives in Folkestone.

“Luke has always had a wonderful sense of humour and a very generous nature. I was his form tutor for four years and almost immediately knew he had so much promise. He was full of beans, but also quite troubled. Every student needs a little extra attention at some point, and over time we built up a trust. It was very organic. I met Luke’s mum, who’s a lovely lady, and we’ve remained friendly.

“Did I see it as my duty to help him? Absolutely. The most important part of being a teacher is nurturing a pupil’s potential, helping them discover what they were made to do – as well as how to cope with the things they’re not quite so good at. I probably did a bit more than I needed to, but I took my job as form tutor seriously. These children only get one crack at it.

“To a lot of people, sound engineering seemed like a bit of a cop out. It wasn’t

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Through simple, caring acts she had an enduring effect on our family

going to university and doing a ‘proper degree’, but to me that didn’t matter. I knew it was something Luke would enjoy and be more likely to stick at. He really knows his stuff. I’m very proud of him. He still has the same wonderful sense of mischief he’s always had and a heart of gold. I’m extremely privileged because a lot of my ex-pupils still want to have something to do with me.

“The most rewarding thing about teaching? Seeing someone grow, and knowing you had a tiny hand in helping them become the person you knew they could always be.”

THE MOTHER

Luke’s mother Sarah Bowles, 54, is a financial adviser and lives in London.

“Françoise is one of my favourite people in the world. I was amazed to discover that there was someone at Luke’s school going above and beyond. She was a lifesaver for me and Luke. I remember on one particularly bad day she was there after school with a pot plant for us. It’s a French thing, apparently. I was so full of emotion.

“When Luke didn’t have the grades needed for his course, I was going to suggest he repeat sixth form, but Françoise said no. He didn’t fail to get A levels through lack of ability, she said, it was circumstance that held him back. She negotiated with the college and got him on to the HND course.

“Recently, Luke and I went for a meal in London, where one of his friends, who had also been a pupil of Françoise, was the head chef. Françoise had encouraged him to go after his dream.

“Through simple, caring acts, she had an enduring, positive effect on our family that I can’t even begin to describe. It just goes to show that teaching really can change lives.”

If you think you have what it takes to be a great teacher and inspire young people, search Get into Teaching.

Musical youth:
Luke Jordan with
Françoise Lloyd at
Folkestone harbour

