

Jordan J (aged 19) referred himself to VSE with the aim of improving his reading, writing and vocabulary. In his written assessment he stated that his school record was good at the beginning of his time at secondary school but not at the end, although he achieved GCSEs in Maths, English, Art, ICT and P.E.

Jordan could read simple texts fluently, but guessed at or skimmed over longer words, particularly those of three or more syllables, and often juxtaposed the letters. His spelling was patchy and inconsistent.

Jordan was keen and well-motivated. He tackled tasks enthusiastically and with a sense of purpose. We worked on his main problem areas each week, particularly the need to *break words down by syllable and sound them out phonetically*. We went through word endings such as '-tion' and '-ately', abbreviations and apostrophes, plus lists of the most commonly misspelt words. Jordan's ambition was to become a bricklayer, so we worked on a glossary of bricklaying terms and studied texts on bricklaying and construction. We also explored Jordan's other interests, including skyscraper construction and Motocross.

In the third month we began to incorporate some practical exercises likely to be useful on his release. These included the terminology, layouts and requirements of official forms (we used a passport application form for practice), the layout of a typical pay slip and the meanings of gross and net pay, deductions, PAYE and NI contributions, and developed a CV for Jordan, listing his exam passes and work experience.

After we had read a prison newspaper article on mentoring for ex-offenders, Jordan was keen to find out if this might be available to him. We explored various schemes, but it was the Blue Sky Development programme that really excited Jordan's interest, since it offered not only pre- and post-release mentoring but also employment for six months. *Jordan took a copy of the pamphlet to his release team, who made contact with the charity and Jordan had his first meeting with the Blue Sky team just nine days later. After a second meeting, he was accepted for the scheme, which was a great boost to his morale.*

Over the four months that Jordan attended VSE he made steady progress in all target areas of reading, spelling and vocabulary. He also gained confidence in his ability to deal with the bureaucracy of life and the workplace.