



## ONE SCHOOL, 30 NATIONS, ZERO BOXES:

# MARK LOVE ON BUILDING CONFIDENT KIDS AND AN IMPACT THAT LAST

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By Sarah Webb

If you ask Mark Love what's kept him in education for more than three decades, his answer is quick - and refreshingly simple: the impact.

The passionate Head Teacher at Earlscliffe has dedicated his career to guiding generations of students from diverse backgrounds and shaping their journeys well beyond the school gates.

And along the way, he's earned a reputation for being one of the best in the game when it comes to balancing academic excellence with a deeply inclusive culture at one of the UK's most distinctive independent boarding schools.

On the topic of impact, Love's not referring to top grades or impressive university placements – but something a lot less quantifiable yet far more profound.

It's the kind of impact that comes from creating a safe space where kids can be themselves, in a school where there's no dominant culture but one where tolerance, empathy and global understanding reign supreme.



“It’s about creating a space where students feel safe to be themselves,” he says.

“Not who others want them to be. Just themselves. And once they figure that out - learn to take pride in it - the hardest part of the climb is over.”

Love says that sense of safety and self-discovery is central to the Earlscliffe experience. With more than 30 nationalities represented and no single dominant culture, the school has become, in Love’s words, “a bit of a beautiful melting pot.”

“If you were a fly on the wall in any classroom you would hear students chatting away, getting along, and of course being silly,” he says.

“And that’s where the magic starts. When you’ve got kids from all over the world learning together, they start to understand different cultures, different religions and different ways of thinking.

“Through that, they don’t just understand the world better - they help make it better. And that, to me, is more important than any exam result.”

He credits the school’s small size - just 140 students - with making that kind of culture possible. But he insists it’s about more than scale, it’s about intention.

“Everyone here - staff and students alike – have a role to play in living out the school’s values,” he says.

“If you say you believe in kindness, you’ve got to show it. If you say you value multiculturalism, you’ve got to live it.”



That includes owning up to mistakes.

"I've always believed it's up to us as teachers to model this. And the students see that. We teach them that it's ok to mess up - as long as you take responsibility and grow from it.

"We're the lightening rods."

Love says an example of this that's stuck with him was when a "brilliant, hilarious" sixth former recently dropped into his office.

"She'll often come in, flop onto the sofa, ask how I'm doing, and then launch into some story. But this one day she said, 'Sir, you look like you need cheering up.' And That sort of thing matters. She feels part of this place - and without even realising it, she's helping shape its culture," he said

For families in Asia weighing up options closer to home, Love believes the UK boarding experience offers something uniquely valuable.

"I was in Vietnam recently, and I said to parents: if I want my daughter to really learn about Vietnam, I wouldn't send her to a Vietnamese school in the UK - I'd want her to go to school in Vietnam," he says.

"It's the same in reverse. If you want the real UK education, you come here."

He sees the UK as a cultural bridge that connects tradition with modern multiculturalism while offering students an authentic, globally relevant education.

As for his role in it all, it's one he doesn't take lightly and it's one that crystallised for Love in a deeply personal way during an "aha" moment in a hospital ward.

"I was a deputy head when my daughter was born," he recalls.

"Sitting there in the middle of the night, I remember thinking: every day, parents trust us with their kids. It hit me all at once - the weight of that responsibility. I'd always carried it, but that night, it really landed."

It's a feeling that's stayed with him. And it's one that deepens with every reminder that the impact lasts.

"Every year when results come out, you get that knot in your stomach. You think about each student and what they hoped for and what the plan is if they don't get in," Love says.

"And when they do - when you know they've made it - that's an incredible feeling."

Then there are the moments that take him by surprise.

"I was at the airport one day and a man came up and said, 'Do you remember me?' It took me a second, but then I recognised him - a former student, now 20 years older, with a family of his own," Love says.

"He said, 'I never thought I'd get where I am, but you and the school helped me believe I could.' "You hear something like that... and it stays with you."

Because for Love, education was never about ticking boxes. It's about tearing them up and giving students the space, support, and confidence to build something entirely their own.

