



GCSE

4171/01-A

**ENGLISH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE
FOUNDATION TIER
UNIT 1 (READING)**

A.M. TUESDAY, 29 May 2012

Resource Material

Barnsley boy aims to become next Billy Elliot

A factory worker from Barnsley is planning to take a second job after his nine-year-old son won a place at the Royal Ballet's boarding school.



The youngster has dreamed of being a ballet dancer since he performed a Billy Elliot routine in front of Barnsley-born Royal Ballet star Philip Mosley.

Steve and Zoe Faulkner need to raise £100,000 so their nine-year-old son Keenan can become the next Billy Elliot. The talented boy, who speaks with a broad Barnsley accent and lives on a terraced street in the former pit town, beat off competition from 2,400 kids to win a place at the Royal Ballet's boarding school for the best young dancers in the world.

Mr Faulkner, who earns £15,600 a year at an engineering factory, plans to take a second job so he can pay the tuition fees. The proud father hopes to earn a small fortune by appearing on *Deal Or No Deal*, and is prepared to remortgage the family home as a last resort if he fails to get rich quick on TV. Mr Faulkner, 40, said, "I'm sure that we'll manage to do it somehow – and if I don't win a fortune on *Deal Or No Deal* then I'll work Saturdays and Sundays and every day of the week just so Keenan doesn't miss out!"

Keenan started dancing at two and a half when he joined his sister's dancing class. The youngster has dreamed of being a ballet dancer since he performed a Billy Elliot dance routine in front of Barnsley-born Royal Ballet star Philip Mosley – who inspired the hit film about a boy dancer from a mining town – at a show in Barnsley three years ago.

Mrs Faulkner, a hospital records clerk, said, "All he's wanted to do since then is go to the Royal Ballet School in London and train to be a classical dancer like Philip. Most of the young lads in Barnsley and his classmates are into football and computer games. Ballet's not something they even think about, but Keenan absolutely lives for dancing. Nothing else matters at all. He practises ballet, tap and jazz routines in the studio seven days a week, and he'd be dancing at home every minute of the day and night if we let him. Some people think we're mad trying to raise such a huge amount of money, but the Royal Ballet has offered Keenan the opportunity of a lifetime, and we're not going to deny him that chance and let it slip away."

The couple hope to have raised most of the cash before Keenan leaves Barnsley behind and enrolls at the exclusive boarding school in a year's time. Mrs Faulkner, 37, said, "Our friends and family are right behind us, and we're forming a committee to organise events and set about raising the funds. If we need to take out a second mortgage on the house, so be it. We know we're going to be permanently poor for the next few years, but Keenan's going to get the best tuition that money can buy, so it's a price worth paying." She added, "He did fantastically well in the entrance exam. There were 2,400 children from all over the world chasing just 22 places, so getting picked was a massive achievement, and we want to make sure that he's not going to miss out now."

Pupils at the school pursue a rigorous training schedule – with up to eight hours of dancing lessons and four hours of general education each day.

News of Keenan's success was greeted with delight by his classmates at Shawlands Primary School in Barnsley.

Mr Faulkner added: "We were a bit worried that they might take the mickey out of Keenan with so few boys doing ballet and tap, especially in a town like Barnsley. But the kids have been great, and when the headmistress announced the news that he'd been accepted by the Royal Ballet all the boys stood up and started clapping. Some have even asked for his autograph for when he becomes famous!"