

||| **NEXT** **MOVE**

By Fiona Beddall
Author, Teacher Trainer

WHAT'S THE RATIONALE BEHIND THE REAL LIFE PAGES?

All the writers working on the course have children and teenagers of our own, and we know that the type of role models they have can be really important. We wanted the course to be an opportunity to introduce teenagers to inspiring young people who they can really relate to. Rather than people from celebrity magazines and reality shows, famous for their designer clothes, plastic surgery and ever-changing love lives, we've written about ordinary kids who have decided to do something extraordinary.

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THE YOUNG PEOPLE TO INCLUDE?

We wanted them to come from a wide variety of geographical areas, and to have achieved in different ways. We've got an artist from the USA, a climber from Romania, an inventor from Malawi, a sailor from Holland, and many more. They range in age from six to eighteen. These are kids who don't just dream of what they want to be when they grow up. They do it now, and in doing so, show our students what their own potential might be.

HAVE YOU GOT A FAVOURITE?

I've got several! I like the stories about the kids who've overcome incredible difficulties to get where they've got today. One of them is young businessman Louis Barnett from Britain, who had severe learning difficulties at school but managed to overcome his problems with reading and writing through cooking. By the age of fourteen he had built a very successful chocolate company. Another is Phiona Mutesi, a girl from the slums of Uganda who had to leave school when she was eight because her family had no money. She discovered the game of chess and has travelled the world to play in tournaments – and won.

AND SOME OF THESE KIDS ARE REALLY CHANGING THE WORLD, TOO.

Yes, they are. At secondary school age, it's easy to feel that you don't have the power to make a difference. You can't vote in national elections, you can't get a job, you have to do what your parents and teachers tell you. But there's nothing to stop you campaigning for what you believe in, and you can make your voice heard loud and clear. The voices of teenager campaigners can make a huge difference in the issues that matter to them.

CAN YOU GIVE US SOME EXAMPLES?

Of course. Rob Frenette of Canada has a personal mission to stop bullying in schools. He's set up a website, met with politicians, and created a bullying awareness day that's celebrated in more than 150 schools. In a world where suicide because of bullying is all too common, teenagers like Rob really save lives. And Indian filmmaker Kishan Shrikanth is trying to change things too. His critically acclaimed film *Care of Footpath*, about a homeless orphan's struggle to get an education, raises awareness of the problems facing street children in India and in many other countries. And thirteen-year-old Litia Fruean is tackling the problem of rubbish on the Pacific island of Fiji, where she lives, and campaigning for greater environmental awareness. These young campaigners are an inspiration to us all.