



## **News release**

23 August 2012

### **Graphite Capital backs MBO of Explore Learning, the UK's leading provider of tuition for primary school children**

Graphite Capital, the UK mid-market private equity specialist, is backing the management buy-out of Explore Learning, the UK's leading provider of after-school tuition for primary school children.

Since opening its first centre in 2001, Explore has grown rapidly and now operates a network of 62 centres nationally, with over 16,000 children currently enrolled as members. The centres provide individualised key skills tuition in mathematics and English to children aged 5 to 14 of all abilities. They also offer additional courses including creative writing, enrichment mathematics and preparation for the 11+ exams.

The company was founded by chief executive Bill Mills, who has been active in the education sector for many years. Explore appeals to parents who have a passion to see their children reach their full potential while providing a vibrant and fun atmosphere for them. Its current membership profile covers a wide range of communities and backgrounds.

Tuition is increasingly commonplace in the UK, with 23 per cent of children having been tutored at some point during their schooling. The global market for tuition is expected to double to \$100 billion by 2017 and is particularly well developed in the Asia Pacific region.

Mills has ambitious expansion plans for the business, underpinned by forecasts of rising numbers of primary school children in the UK, as well as by a favourable schools policy and academic reform environment focused on improving educational attainment. The group plans to open a significant number of new centres in the UK and is considering overseas expansion.

The transaction widens Graphite's exposure to the education sector following its acquisition of Teaching Personnel in 2010 and of Protocol Education in 2011, creating the market leader in the provision of teaching staff in the UK. Graphite also has extensive experience of rolling out successful business concepts such as restaurant chain Wagamama and luxury footwear retailer Kurt Geiger.

Graphite is acquiring a majority stake in Explore from a group of investors, including the Spectrum Venture Management Fund and Wittington Investments Limited, and the senior management team is re-investing a significant proportion of its sale proceeds.

"We are delighted that Graphite has chosen to invest in our business," says Bill Mills. "Their experience of rolling out sector-leading concepts and helping businesses expand in international markets will contribute to refining our customer proposition and shaping our expansion strategy in the UK and overseas."

Graphite senior partner, Markus Golser, commented: "We were very impressed by Explore's culture and the proven operational ability of its management team, led by Bill Mills, an exceptionally talented chief executive. We see Explore as one of the most compelling investment opportunities in the fast growing education sector."

The Graphite transaction team included Markus Golser, Mark Hall, Omar Kayat, Mudassir Khan and Jack Langdon.

**Ends**