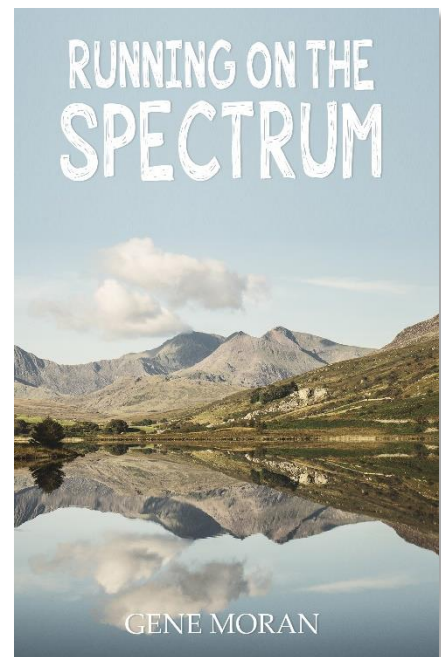




## **RUNNING ON THE SPECTRUM**

Gene Moran has been a teacher for most of his life and feels that some children aren't failing school, but school is failing some children. He passionately believes that young people should find their own place in the world. His debut novel *Running on the Spectrum* explores these themes, but with added enrichment through running, outdoor pursuits and the beautiful Welsh countryside.

At fifteen years of age, Gene Moran (known to friends and family as Chris) only gained one O level in Art and seemed to be more of a plonker than Rodney Trotter! But, devoid of the bad influence of Del Boy, Gene managed to work through the system to become the *Crème de la menthe* or 'the very best' as Del interpreted the phrase!



Gene says: "After moving to secondary school, I soon became popular with the scallywags, where I was regularly escorted to the head teacher's office for messing around. I wasn't out of control, but I was warned that I needed to change my behaviour or I would fail my exams."

Gene cleaned up his act somewhat, but did not make it to the end of Year 11, leaving school with no real direction and only one academic qualification.

Gene continues: "I was heading for factory work, but my father urged me to get additional qualifications. I'd just left school and I didn't really want to go back, but neither did want to work in the factory. Despite my academic history, I convinced the principal of the local College of Further Education to take me in. He wasn't sure I could cope with the academic

pressures and schedule, but I had turned over a new leaf and I had no intention of failing.”

Two years later, Gene left college with array of O Levels and A levels, a joinery qualification, as well as completing a full-time Art Foundation Course. But, it was during a conversation he had with his joinery lecturer about the ways in which the school system had failed him, that led Gene to follow a path he never imagined he would take.

Gene says: “I would have never occurred to me at school that I would end up at teacher’s training college. College gave me everything I needed, particularly finding out that I was dyslexic. At last, things began to make sense. No wonder I found school so difficult at times! With this knowledge, I worked hard at my weaknesses and qualified as a teacher.”

Gene’s final thesis was entitled ‘Juvenile Delinquency: its causes and some prevented measures’. However, Gene didn’t get the writing bug until many years after his teaching career. This happened when Gene spent evenings and occasional nights telling his father stories. With the very welcome aid of spellcheck, Gene began to write down his tales, drawing heavily on his own experiences as a teacher. His novel *Running on the Spectrum* is the result of this.

The book tells the story of Tom Mallalieu who arrives at a special school in North Wales to take up his new post as a secondary teacher. Just like Mr Chips from *Goodbye Mr Chips* by James Hilton, Tom is initially overwhelmed by the challenging behaviour of some of the students, but soon realises that building relationships with them is essential for any teaching to take place. Tom calls upon his own interest in running, outdoor pursuits – and his love of the mountains of North Wales – to develop strong bonds with his students.

Heart-warming and hilarious in its own right, *Running on the Spectrum* chronicles Tom’s day-to-day journey as he makes his mark on some very special young minds.

Gene hopes that the book will inform and entertain the reader about the pitfalls and highpoints of teaching. He concludes: “I started my teaching career at a highly academic boy’s independent college, but I soon transferred to a private organisation that was tasked with teaching the most difficult boys and girls from England and Wales. I had found my

place in life – helping students that were having a tough time in school. Although very difficult, shaping young people’s lives can be very rewarding.”

Gene went on to teach at Pupil Referral Units, alongside difficult students who were no longer able to attend mainstream school. Gene’s successful career culminated in the position of assistant head teacher of a special school, something that fifteen-year-old Gene Moran never would have thought possible.

*Running on the Spectrum* magnificently captures the magic that happens when young minds are open to new possibilities. It is released by Jelly Bean Books.

To order visit:

<https://www.freewebstore.org/jellybeanbooks/product/running-on-the-spectrum>