



Joanne Barwell and her partner James live in Broadstairs with their children Imogen, ten and seven-year-old Lukas.

Joanne needed special support for her son and feels lucky that nearby Callis Grange Nursery and Infant School offered exactly what she was looking for

A fortunate coincidence

Choosing the right school for your particular child can be a daunting process and location is only one important factor. Joanne and James therefore feel very fortunate indeed that not only was Callis Grange Nursery and Infant School their first choice for Lukas, it happened to be the closest to where they live.

"We were aware that Lukas had some difficulties with speech, language and communication and since nursery school he had been supported by a Pre-School Specialist," explains Joanne. "Callis Grange was recommended to us because of its excellent provision for children with special needs and I am so happy to be able to say that it has done wonders for Lukas. We would have been prepared to travel further afield if necessary but thankfully there was no need. At the end of his final year there he is now a different child to the one who started in Reception, and I don't believe he would have achieved more anywhere else."

Encouragement

Joanne has been impressed with the sensitive and effective way Lukas has been encouraged in his learning, through interventions which have seen him make enormous progress. "He has been given one-to-one and small-group sessions and this is handled efficiently so that he has never felt stigmatised or made to feel any different from his friends," she says. "When he first started school, I was so worried that his communication and social skills would put him at a disadvantage but particularly in Year 1, he came on so quickly and now he is more or less holding his own. His reading and writing are good, he's doing well in maths, and he is as happy at school as any other seven year old boy is likely to be!"

Putting children first

James and Joanne have also felt supported as parents, praising the home/school communication which makes sure they are kept fully up-to-date with their son's progress. "All his teachers, the Learning Support Assistants and the SENCO have been very good in contacting us if there is anything they think we need to know, and I can always have a word with them at the beginning and end of the day. I also liked the fact that they visited us at home before he started in his first year, as they do with all the children, which meant that Lukas got to know them a bit and that put him more at ease."

Smooth transition

Lukas has been diagnosed with high-functioning autism, and a typical result of the condition is a dislike of change. For this reason, the school provided photographs of his classroom and the people he would meet, so he knew what to expect. "They also made sure that the transition to Year 1 and Year 2 was less stressful for him by keeping him with his friends wherever possible," Joanne says. "The move to Junior School later this year will be a big step, but I am confident that his teachers will do what they can to ease him in gently and help him get used to the new environment."

No further support – for all the right reasons

Joanne has never had any doubts that Callis Grange was the best choice for Lukas, given the particular circumstances, and is delighted that the early intervention to address his difficulties has been so successful. "One of the best telephone calls we have ever received was from his Pre-School Specialist to say that she was withdrawing her support as it was no longer needed – that was a wonderful day and we have Callis Grange to thank for that."

Children say

Lukas: "I like playing in the playground with my friend and I like doing easy work!"



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