



Mr and Mrs Shahzad and their children Tehzeeb, five and Rahaan, four, live in Broadstairs.

As a parent in a cultural minority, Shahzad feels that his daughter has had the best possible early education at Callis Grange Nursery and Infant School

Attention to detail

The first point of call for many parents when looking for a school for their children is its Ofsted report, and not only did Callis Grange Nursery and Infant School score an impressive Excellent rating, but it had also been recommended by friends. "We did look at other schools but we were impressed by Callis Grange for other reasons, too," says Shahzad. "It is in a lovely area of the town, and is clean, bright and obviously well looked-after and to me, that implies an all-round attention to detail."

Overcoming the language barrier

From almost the first week, Shahzad noticed in his daughter the results of this policy. "Although Tehzeeb could understand English she was not a confident speaker and, as a multi-lingual household (the family speak Urdu and Punjabi as well as English) it is very important to us that our children should be fluent in the language of their country of residence. Within a very short time, Tehzeeb had not only become a great deal more comfortable in her speech, but she started to write stories in English and I credit the school with bringing out this element of her creativity."

Right from the start, says Shahzad, Callis Grange involved them in every stage of Tehzeeb's progress, and paid special attention to improvement of her language skills. "Obviously, this was an issue of particular importance; bearing in mind that Tehzeeb was greatly in the minority as far as speakers of other languages are concerned, yet her teachers showed great skill in encouraging her progress. Within less than a year Tehzeeb became virtually fluent, and this is something which has pleased us very much."

Vive la difference!

In a predominantly White British area, Callis Grange has not had to address a significant amount of issues relating to culture and diversity so it is even more impressive, believes Shahzad, that the school has fully taken onboard his family's specific values. "Naturally, our children's physical and emotional welfare is of prime importance to us and we were concerned that Tehzeeb's nationality might make her a target for discrimination. Having gently questioned her on this subject, we are completely reassured that she has never felt any concern in that area and says that 'My teacher wouldn't let anything like that happen!'"

Listening to parents

Shahzad is also very happy with the school's security measures, and by the fact that the family's vegetarian preference is both accepted and monitored. "When Tehzeeb asked for a meal which contained gelatine, she was told that it was not something which she should eat but she was allowed to take it on condition she checked with us before she ate it. That again is another example of how seriously the school takes parent's wishes, and how we are listened to and respected in our beliefs."

Home/school support

Mrs Shahzad is particularly interested in the academic achievement of her children and is very pro-active in ensuring they make the very most of their education; to this end, she has worked closely with the school to make sure that Tehzeeb is able to do so. "We know exactly what work Tehzeeb is being given so we can support her with her homework. I think it is

fair to say that Tehzeeb is right up at the top of her class and as she started school with a language disadvantage, she has done remarkably well. I really believe that Callis Grange has played a large part in making this happen, and that the ethos of the school is such that it will address any issue which could potentially hold a child back."

No better choice

Shahzad could not be happier with the school he and his wife eventually decided on for Tehzeeb, and are very glad that Rahaan will be going there next year. "As a family in a cultural minority, we feel we have been accommodated very effectively and that our requirements have not only been addressed but welcomed. I do not think that we could have chosen better."



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