

# Brandon's artistic talent has been nurtured and encouraged by caring staff at Bristol Gateway School



Debbie and Paul Hodge live with their son, Brandon, aged 13, and daughter, Chelsea, aged 17, in Southmead in Bristol. Brandon had to leave his mainstream primary school because of behavioural problems and moved up to Bristol Gateway at the age of 11 after it was recommended as a good secondary school for him.



## Art success

This year Brandon will be sitting his art GCSE exam, the youngest pupil ever to sit it from Bristol Gateway. "Brandon has made tremendous progress since starting at the school. His talent for art has been recognised by his teachers and he is producing some really good work now so they have put him in for the exam two years early. I am so proud of what he has achieved," his Mum, Debbie, says.

## Moving up

Brandon has come a long way since he had to leave his primary school to attend Tree Tops Kids Company in Bristol. "The primary school couldn't cope with him because of his temper and behavioural problems so he started attending Tree Tops to receive extra support," Debbie says. "The staff at Tree Tops helped him a lot and when it was time for him to go up to secondary school they recommended Bristol Gateway, even though it is five miles from where we live and Brandon has to go there and back in a taxi."

## Smaller class

"At his mainstream school he was in a big class with just one teacher who didn't understand him at all and couldn't cope with him. The school just kept ringing me up and asking me to collect him and take him home. It is well worth him travelling to Bristol Gateway. He is now in a class of six children and they have both a teacher and a Teaching Assistant to help them. He understands that the other children also have issues and so he doesn't feel bad about asking for help when he needs it," Debbie says.

## Amazing teachers

"He is doing well in the environment of Bristol Gateway because it is an amazing school with wonderful staff and I wouldn't want him to go back to mainstream education now. Brandon is consistently achieving above his targets and he is producing some excellent work. I am really pleased that the teachers have recognised his ability and, in particular, have helped him develop his talent for art," Debbie says.

## Good incentive

Brandon likes going to school each day and never says he doesn't want to go in. "One of the reasons he is enthusiastic about attending each day is down to the points system that the school use. The children get points for good attendance and points for good behaviour. If they reach 250 points in a week they can go out on a Friday afternoon to do something just for fun, such as bowling or to see a film at the cinema."

## Famous visitors

"The school also bring people into the school to work with the children, such as an actor from a James Bond film who came in recently to teach them about Parkour, or street running, and how to keep themselves safe. Last year Sir Steve Redgrave took the Olympic torch into the school to show the children. The school like to give the children some fun as well as educating them," Debbie says.

## Better home life

"I can only have praise for the staff at Bristol Gateway. They have not only helped Brandon but they have also helped me. They have given me advice on how to deal with Brandon's temper at home and I am learning how to handle him better, thanks to the advice they have given me. Their support has been invaluable to us and has improved our home life," Debbie says.

## Children say

Brandon says: "I like Bristol Gateway School because the teachers understand me."



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