



# Jennifer needed sanctuary and support and Clifford All Saints has been both, in every possible way

Jennifer Popplewell and her two children have recently returned to England from their home in Spain. Olaia, 8, and Atreus, 5, now attend Clifford All Saints Primary School.

## Reflection of faith

When Jennifer returned to the UK less than a year ago, her first priority was to find a new school for her children, and she was very specific about the type of school she was looking for.

"We are a practicing Christian family so most important to me was a school which celebrated our faith. I looked at schools closer to where we live but it was Clifford All Saints which immediately stood out: there were depictions of Bible stories everywhere; pictures, beautiful stained glass and an overall atmosphere which so closely reflected my feelings not only about Christianity but about the environment in which I wanted my children to be educated."

## Welcoming and inclusive

All Saints, says Jennifer, was the small, village-type school she had envisaged. "From the start, I have felt welcomed and included by everyone, and what I particularly like is that, although Christianity is at the heart of the school, all other faiths are equally respected and valued."

## Smooth transition

Because Olaia and Atreus had spent their early education in Spain, the transition to a completely different education system might have been a difficult one but as Jennifer explains, this proved otherwise. "In Spain, the school hours are much shorter, there was no uniform and the teaching methods less child-focused. I would not criticise the system, but I greatly prefer the way that in the UK, and at All Saints in particular, the teaching is more interactive and the children are listened to rather than just being talked to."

## Leaps and bounds

Jennifer has been delighted by how quickly both Olaia and Atreus have adapted. "I'm amazed that they have never complained about the longer hours, and Olaia especially adores her pretty school frock! In Spain, they were both achieving above average in their work

but because of the curriculum here they were quite behind. Now, within only a few months they have more than caught up with their peers and I credit their teachers for supporting them so effectively."

## Dedication

In fact, this support has gone above and beyond what Jennifer could have hoped for. "My children are bilingual so it was not a lack of English that held them back but the different approach to early education. I was incredibly impressed that Olaia's class teacher took it upon himself to research the Spanish methods so he could better understand what help she might need, and it is that dedication to the individual child which I find so reassuring."

## Above and beyond

It is not only in terms of education that Jennifer has found a greater level of support than she could have hoped to expect. The family were going through a period of readjustment relating to their relocation to the UK, and there was a great deal of bureaucracy involved. "At All Saints, staff members made heroic efforts to help me through all the complicated paperwork and administration. For that, I cannot thank them enough."

## New beginnings

If her children's welfare and happiness were not enough, Jennifer herself has been grateful for the welcoming reception she has experienced as a returning ex-pat. "Although I have family here, having spent so much time abroad it was important to me to establish a new friendship group and feel part of a community again. Through the school, I have been able to do this to a great extent and we regularly socialise with and without the children. Many of my friends are of different faiths to my own, or of none, but this is a very positive thing and in no way divisive."

Perhaps no more needs to be said to understand why Jennifer feels that her decision to put her children into the care of Clifford All Saints was the right one for her and her family, in every way.