

# Gemma believes nowhere else could have embraced her daughter's needs as effectively as Chickerell Primary Academy

Gemma and Adam live in Weymouth with their three children. The youngest, Pippa, who is seven years old, attends Chickerell Primary Academy.



## Good advice

On friends' recommendations, Gemma and Adam had moved their two eldest children to Chickerell Primary Academy and it's a decision they will never regret. Having immediately felt the warm, family feeling which they believe defines the school, they had no hesitation in later enrolling their youngest daughter, Pippa, despite her serious and complex health problems.

## Positive reaction

"When we spoke to the school and outlined Pippa's needs, the first reaction was 'Yes, we will make this work' and in the three years she has been at Chickerell, they have, without a doubt", says Gemma. "Pippa has a range of physical and mental health issues, all of which require careful monitoring, and are potentially life-threatening. We needed to know that she would be receiving the best possible care at school."

## Awareness

In terms of her physical wellbeing, Pippa needs a carefully controlled diet in order to avoid collapse or possible coma, and Gemma is greatly reassured that staff members have taken it upon themselves to independently research how to identify and treat an episode. "They have made absolutely sure that, if Pippa shows signs of illness, they are fully aware of what to do in the moment, and they listen carefully to the advice given by the hospital, following it through to the letter." This may involve taking regular blood tests, administering medication or glucose if necessary, and generally being aware of the seriousness of the event, reporting back to Gemma and Adam to keep them in touch.

## Overcoming anxiety

As far as Pippa's generalized anxiety is concerned, she receives several sessions of group intervention each week, based around English, maths and reading, in which she had previously been falling behind. Thanks to this targeted approach, she is now making progress and starting to catch up with her peer group. "To begin with, Pippa was fearful of going into school and leaving me, but through the empathy and reassurance of her teachers, she has gained significantly in confidence and is happy to go in every morning. She still needs to know that there is a trusted adult alongside her but she has come a long way."

## Reassurance

Pippa's complex condition is still partially undiagnosed and medical interventions are ongoing, but Gemma is absolutely confident that, whatever is required, the school will step up to address whatever is needed to keep her daughter safe. She says: "We feel unbelievably lucky that Chickerell is our local school and that everyone there - teachers and support staff - is prepared to work with us as closely as they are doing. We have had, and still have, major challenges with Pippa's health, but knowing that we have this school 100% behind us is incredibly reassuring."

Seeing her daughter grow in confidence and achievement is all Gemma could ask, and why she is so grateful to the school which is making it happen.