

Only one place could provide the support this family desperately needed, and that was Chickerell Primary Academy

Megan and Liam live in Weymouth with their two sons. Connor is six and Jack, four, is in the pre-school, Chickadees.



A long wait

Connor has been on a waiting list for an assessment for autism since he was two and a half years old. He had initially been placed in another nursery but Megan and Liam felt that Chickadees would be more appropriate as it would help his transition to the main school reception at Chickerell Primary.

Kind and caring

“The difference was immediately apparent,” says Megan. “The pre-school staff were very understanding of his particular needs and helped him settle in so well. They were kind, caring and patient and, in contrast to his last placement, allowed me to go in with him for a while to get him settled, rather than my having to leave him at the door, crying for me, which was heartbreaking.”

Set back

Connor became comfortable with his new pre-school but the summer break between leaving pre-school and starting at Reception class set him back. “It was a totally new environment, with different teachers, and he really struggled to adapt,” explains Megan. “The staff, however, were wonderful with him and we felt he was turning a corner, but Connor does not respond well to change and again, we were nervous when he was about to start in Year 1.”

Nowhere to turn

Megan and Liam had previously sought help from their local GP. “The doctor just said that this was not something within their remit and referred us back to the school. At this stage we were tearing our hair out, needing some support from somewhere. Thankfully, Chickerell stepped up and gave us a massive amount of help.”

Routine

At school, Connor was generally well behaved and showed no major signs of behavioural problems, but he was very dysregulated at home.

“What the school helped us with, and recognised when we talked to them, was that Connor responds well to a school routine but because he had less structure at home, he found it difficult to make decisions. When those decisions were taken out of his hands at school, he found it easier, so we came to understand how we could do something similar at home. It was invaluable advice.”

Invaluable advice

Parents of children with additional needs are naturally fully aware of their childrens’ various personalities and their own particular traits, but as Megan freely acknowledges, having an expert and professional input from another source is invaluable. “What Chickerell has done is to fully understand Connor’s own self. They have seen him as a person in his own right and have put in place everything they can to support him, and us as a family.”

Above and beyond

Megan and Liam’s youngest son, Jack who is diagnosed with Autism and Global Development Delay, has also received a huge amount of support from Chickerell. They have created a sensory space for him to regulate within the pre-school and go above and beyond to ensure he feels happy and safe whilst he is in their care. They have also been instrumental in gaining an EHCP for Jack and allowing him to do an extra year in pre-school whilst a placement in a specialist school is sought.

Our extended family

“We still have a way to go with both our boys, but we know we have the full and absolute backing of this school to help us through this complicated process of diagnosis and additional, funded, support. Chickerell to us feels like an extended family, who know us and our children so well. They really, genuinely care about the children, and that means the world.”