



Corey's speech has significantly improved since joining Holly Hill Church School

Sophie lives in Birmingham with her six-year-old son, Corey, who is in Year 1 at Holly Hill Church School.

Finding the right environment

Settling into school can be challenging for any child, and for Corey, it was initially overwhelming due to his autism. Sophie recalls: "It was a bit of a big environment for him at first because he's autistic. But now he's in the right environment in Blossom Class, where they learn in a smaller group setting." This class has provided Corey with the support he needs to thrive.

Enjoying school activities

Corey has a variety of interests that he gets to explore at school: "He's enjoying his painting, his sensory play, and he loves music and being around his friends," says Sophie. Blossom Class offers a tailored environment where children like Corey can engage in activities that are suited to their needs. "He's made friends now he's in his own classroom with other children like him," Sophie adds.

Favourite subjects

When it comes to subjects, Corey especially loves heuristic play: "Heuristic play is where he's learning to discover things, matching one thing to another and placing them in order," explains Sophie.

Additionally, Corey is making great strides with phonics: "He's especially enjoying learning his supersonic phonics," she says.

Supportive and engaged teachers

One of Holly Hill Church School's standout features is its dedicated and supportive teaching staff. Sophie speaks especially highly of Mrs O'Neill and Ms Mcllwain: "I speak to Mrs O'Neill and Ms Mcllwain if I need any help. They're both very good. When Corey started school, it was a bit hit-and-miss, but he just needed the right support. My partner and I cannot fault them. Corey has come on so much within a year. Before school, we struggled to get words out of him, but now he's talking."

The teachers' commitment extends beyond the classroom: "They even offer courses. I've gone to school three times to do different courses to help me understand my little boy. They offer it to parents of children with additional needs. They have a speech therapist, too, so we've had lessons with the actual speech therapist working with our child as well," explains Sophie.

Holistic support for Corey

The school provides holistic support tailored to Corey's needs: "If Corey is having a day where he doesn't want to go to school, they help with that.

They're not forcing him, and they let him have his little runabout in the morning, which helps," Sophie shares. The school also accommodates Corey's dietary preferences, allowing Sophie to bring in certain foods while still encouraging him to try school meals.

Due to Holly Hill's proximity to the secondary school, they are flexible with Corey's school day: "They let him finish slightly early so he can get home without getting upset," Sophie notes.

A welcoming community

Holly Hill Church School fosters a welcoming and inclusive community. Sophie appreciates the personalised attention from the staff: "The headteacher and assistant headteacher, Mr Carr and Mrs O'Neill, stand at the school gates. Mr Carr knows every child's name, and his understanding of every child is amazing. It's so welcoming."

There's a strong sense of community, as Sophie explains: "You feel so welcomed and get plenty of support. You go in with a problem, and you know they'll help you."

Holly Hill's commitment also extends to supporting families with future planning, including finding additional needs schools for Corey once he finishes at Holly Hill.

Recommendation to other parents

For parents considering Holly Hill Church School, Sophie offers her heartfelt recommendation: "I only know about the Blossom Class, but my niece also goes to the school. Each classroom seems like its own little family; they're all there to support each other."

Children say:

On behalf of Corey, Sophie says: "Through Corey's reactions and excitement, I know playing outside is his favourite thing about school. He also enjoys having attention and being praised by teachers when he's done something good".

