



St Mary's school is inclusive, Becky knows that no child is ever left behind and her son Alex feels part of his school community

Becky's son Alex is in Year 6.

Becky chose St Mary's because she felt it was the right place for Alex and could offer the support he needs

"It's a little scary to think Alex's time at St Mary's is ending. It's not sunk in for either of us yet. He is excited and he's ready for the discipline and structure of secondary school. We knew St Mary's had a good reputation for children with SEN. It was the flexibility and accommodating way St Mary's interacted with us from the very beginning that I liked, they even arranged for us to come and visit the day after the teachers' end of term barbecue so when we arrived, they were still tidying up. It was this openness that made it feel like the right place for Alex. It was tiring for him when he first started, but he enjoyed it from day one and settled in with the change of going to school every day much quicker than I did!" said Becky.

A caring and consistent approach

"They've always had a caring approach and I knew they had experience with children with Down Syndrome. The SEN lead has been great and she's been there the whole time. There has been consistency with the teaching staff. Alex has had the same TA for the last two years. He absolutely adores her and he's built trust with her. She understands how he works and what works for him and when he's getting tired, it's been brilliant. He's also had very good teachers who have understood how he thinks and how he behaves and they've known how to get the best out of him," said Becky.

SEN support that adapts naturally

"We've adapted as we've gone along. I remember when he moved into Year 1, by coincidence his teacher had direct experience with children with Down Syndrome, so I was happy to know she'd have an understanding. She helped establish a way of working. It can be difficult getting information from Alex about his day, but we have home-school communication books and they help me stay on top of what's happening. We have face to face longer meetings every term where we discuss targets and progress with his teacher, the SEN lead, and his TA, and we go

through things in more detail. We also have a longer annual review his Education and Health Care plan," said Becky.

Paris, Pendarren, Panathlon and pool time

"They went on a trip to Paris last year. They had a residential trip to Wales which I was worried about but school were amazing and I trusted them completely. They sent a report of the trip to a local magazine and they included a great photo of Alex, so that's something we'll remember. Alex has also taken part in many Panathlon Challenges which is a sport event for children with SEN. When it came to Alex going swimming, we needed someone to be in the pool with him and the school administrator stepped forward to help, I remember she said, "No child gets left behind," and that's just one example of what life is like at St Mary's," said Becky.

Go and see it for yourself

"I'd recommend any parent, especially if your child has SEN, to go and talk to the SEN lead or SLT, go and see the school and talk to the parents. In the beginning the SEN lead ran coffee mornings on a Friday where parents would meet and that was brilliant, it's how Alex joined a football team for kids with Down Syndrome," said Becky.

Moving on

"I don't know how many friends Alex will keep once he moves to high school, but they have all really looked after him, they've got a really nice bond, they're very caring and the kids look out for one another. We were walking home recently, and a boy just came up and said hello to Alex. He's now in secondary school but he'd been at after school club with Alex and remembered him - that felt lovely," said Becky.

Children say:

Alex says, "I love playing sport."

Friendship, compassion, hope, wisdom, community and endurance.