



Alannah's children were traumatised by family breakdown, but Bursar Academy was able to help them **overcome** their worries and give them a **new joy** in learning

Alannah Devine lives in Cleethorpes with her daughters Thalia, seven and Zanthie-Mai, five.

## New town, new start, new school

Moving into a new area is always a challenge, not least when a priority is to find a new school for the children, so Alannah feels very lucky that Bursar Academy was virtually on her doorstep. "Location was obviously important but there were a lot of other things I had to take into consideration as well," she says. "I wanted a fairly small and intimate sort of school for Thalia and Zanthie-Mai and that was exactly what Bursar Academy offered."



## Change of personality

Alannah had moved to Cleethorpes following her separation from her children's father and this was another problem that she had to address. "Thalia especially had been very close to her dad but I had to stop her from seeing him when she witnessed fights between him and his new partner. Thalia was very upset about the whole situation but although I knew I was right to break contact, I felt very guilty when she started to become quiet and withdrawn – so different from the happy, bubbly little girl she had been before."

## Reassurance

Although at first she felt slightly embarrassed at approaching the school's Pastoral staff, Alannah's mind was soon put at rest. "I had to make sure that Thalia was going to be OK at school so I let the teacher know why I was worried about her," she explains. "I am very impressed by the way the school has handled everything, not only how I was reassured that I had done the right thing, but in the way Thalia has been supported so amazingly well."

## A huge difference for the better

Thalia was introduced into a Friendship Group, where she could spend time with other children who were also experiencing personal difficulties, and which is overseen by a member of staff skilled in counselling. "This was one of the things which made a huge difference to Thalia," Alannah says. "She had been so unhappy at home and wasn't talking to me about how she felt, but because she had someone at school to listen to her and who understood her, she began to come out of her shell. It has been wonderful to watch her turning back into the child she had been before."

## Pastoral care

The pastoral care demonstrated by the teachers and support staff at Bursar Academy is something Alannah particularly appreciates. "They obviously really care about the children, and understand completely that their emotional welfare is just as important as their academic performance, and that the two are closely related. Both Thalia and Zanthie-Mai have achieved extremely well because of this approach."

## Team effort

Not only has Thalia come to terms with her parents' separation but she has blossomed in the classroom. "She is consistently getting high marks in every subject, loves her work and her teachers, and is a much happier child," says Alannah. "There is something about the way the teachers treat the children which really works; it's not so much a question of 'them and us', but 'we are all in this together!' Zanthie-Mai has also benefitted

from this: before she started at Bursar Academy she hadn't shown any interest in learning but now she is so enthusiastic. Because she loves animals she is really happy to add up three beetles and four horses to make seven."

## Going the extra mile

If Alannah had to think of only one reason to recommend Bursar Academy to other parents it would be a difficult choice. "I would say that it is the family, personal feel of the school which is most important to me, because both my daughters and I have had an immense amount of support from the staff. However, between us we have also gained socially, academically and personally from being a part of a school which does not just do its job, but goes much further for the children, and for the family as a whole."

## Children say

Zanthie-Mai: "I like school because I get to see my friends and play with them in the den. I like to learn Big Maths as well and sometimes bigger kids come into our bit of school and play with us."

Thalia: "I like Bursar School because it's fun. I like playtime, I like the Friendship Club because we speak about what's been going on with us and we do fun stuff like make handbags. I also like it when it's wet play and year 6 children come to play with us."



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