



Victoria thought her children would never want to go to school again but Bursar Academy **changed everything** and gave them all a **new love** of learning

Victoria Johnson and her husband, Glen, live in Grimsby. Three of their children currently attend Bursar Academy: Lizzy is nine, Charlie six and Annabel five years old.

Felt at home

A child's first experience of school is a significant event in their life so when that experience is a bad one, it could potentially affect their whole attitude to education. When Lizzy and her older brother, Scott, were badly bullied at their previous school – Scott because of his learning difficulties and Lizzy for being clever – Victoria felt she had no choice but to withdraw them and home-school instead.

"Not only were they constantly bullied but the school seemed unable to do anything about it so for over two years I taught them at home," says Victoria. "It worked quite well until I had Annabel to look after as well, and then I became seriously ill so I had to start looking for another school. Both Lizzy and Scott were understandably nervous but after looking at Bursar Academy they both felt at home straightaway. Considering their previous experience of school, it says a great deal for Bursar Academy that the children actively looked forward to going there."



Learning together for a life of opportunities

Relieving the pressure

Given that the family live some miles out of the catchment area, Victoria had a lot of work to do to secure places for the children but did so eventually, with the encouragement and support of the school. "From the very first, the school was extremely helpful in every way and backed our application, and we have found since how this attitude prevails; if the Headteacher says she will do something, she does so, and that takes a lot of pressure off my shoulders."

New confidence

With her own poor health and that of her elder daughter to worry about, Victoria was relieved at how well Lizzy settled into Bursar Academy, and how accommodating her teachers were. "The staff were all aware of our situation and they took particular care to make sure that Lizzy was made to feel welcome, and that she had someone to talk to if she needed. For the first time, Lizzy began to realise how capable she was; she had never before been praised for her work at school and she is now so much more confident in her abilities."

Strength to strength

As far as Charlie and Annabel are concerned, Victoria has been greatly impressed at the innovative teaching methods which have sparked their interest in surprising ways. "Both of them are quite single-minded and Charlie especially has a stubborn streak! Because he could sometimes be difficult in class at one point he was assessed for SEN, but then his teacher told me she believed his behaviour was caused by boredom and she was absolutely right. Charlie is now given extra work to stimulate him and I give full credit to the school for bringing out a side of him we hadn't before seen: whereas his main passion had been computers, he has recently won a National award for creative writing. He is going from strength to strength."

Fresh approach

Annabel, explains Victoria, was always more inclined to climb trees than concentrate on reading and writing but since her interest in travel was identified by the school, this was made the focus of a class lesson. "They organised a day trip to 'Spain'!" she says. "The classroom became a plane, the children made boarding cards and passports, and wrote about their holiday. Annabel was full of it and it was exactly what she needed to engage her in literacy."

A new enjoyment of learning

All children have their own strengths and weaknesses, their own different personalities and their particular needs but Victoria believes that Bursar Academy knows how to make the very best out of each child. "In many ways I wish that Scott could have gone there, too, as I am quite sure his learning difficulties would have been addressed very well. However, I am very thankful indeed that my younger children have had the opportunity to attend this exceptional school which has given them the chance to enjoy their education as they should be able to do."

Children say

Lizzy: "I love the new friends I have made!"

Charlie: "I run really fast at a high speed all over the playground! I like learning about science and the Human Body the most!"

Annabel: "I love my teachers and my friends lots and lots."



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