

Fatema Riazi and her husband, Saeed, live in Kenton with their son Ali, seven and daughter Zahra, five. Both children currently attend Harrow Primary School.



Fatema and Saeed were prepared to take a calculated risk by sending their children to Harrow Primary School, and they have never looked back

Don't accept middle-of-the-road

Ali was one of the very first children to be enrolled at the new Harrow Primary School when it opened in 2012. He had previously attended another school but, says Fatema, she and her husband were concerned that he was not living up to his potential. "Ali is a bright boy but in a class size of thirty or more we felt he was being overlooked in favour of the very forward children and the less able, falling somewhere in the middle and thus given less individual support. I had no particular complaint about the school but every child is different, with different needs, and we felt that Ali would benefit from somewhere which could offer more one-to-one attention, in smaller classes."



Children say

Ali: "I love playing in the playground and doing activities in the class and I love my teacher and everything we do!"

Flourishing

It was something of a leap of faith for Fatema and Saeed to decide to send Ali to an as yet unproven school, but they were sufficiently impressed with what they saw. "Our two main criteria were the size of the school and the fact that we wanted our children to benefit from a Muslim educational setting, and I am happy to say that everything has slotted very neatly into place," says Fatema. "There is nothing about the school for which we have had cause for regret, and much to be glad about. Academically, both Ali and Zahra have flourished, they are settled and happy, and if I had been apprehensive about anything to begin with, I am no longer."

Close relationships

Fatema's apprehensions were solely about the quality of teaching she could expect, and with some concern about the lack of outdoor facilities. However, she has been completely reassured on both counts: "Ali's teachers could not have been more attentive and they know every child inside and out. They know exactly what each pupil needs and they provide that, and I am convinced that this is a large part of the reason that both Ali and Zahra are such confident and well-adjusted children. Being able to form close relationships with both teachers and classmates alike because of the intimate, family atmosphere has made a big difference."

Any worries Fatema may have had about the sports facilities and other extra-curricular activities have also been quashed, as the children have been able to attend classes in martial arts, tennis and more at local grounds and sports halls. They have also enjoyed educational visits to London museums as well as a city farm and Legoland.

An open-minded approach

Although Fatema and her family are devout Muslims, she describes herself as open-minded and is pleased that the ethos of Harrow Primary is to welcome families of other faiths. "Like any other faith school, it promotes its principle belief in Islam but it also teaches the children about Christianity, Judaism and other major religions and I am happy with that. As far as I am concerned, the basic tenets of any religious faith are tolerance, kindness and acceptance, and these are all promoted at Harrow Primary."

Change of heart

Fatema had never intended to choose a private education for her children and has no particular quarrel with the state school system. Nevertheless, she accepts that every child has

a different set of needs depending upon their personality and ability, and that she was fortunate to be able to take up another option. "We are not wealthy people but we felt our children were capable of more than they were being offered elsewhere. Harrow Primary School has definitely been able to give Ali and now Zahra the education we felt they would benefit from, and it is affordable for us – and well worth it."

Community spirit

Because Fatema has such a strong belief in the school, she is currently Chair of the PTA and helps to arrange fundraising events such as the annual Summer Fair. "The PTA is a valuable addition to the school, not just for fundraising but to bring families together and create a community spirit. Getting parents involved at all levels helps to give the children a sense of belonging, and in this and many other ways and Harrow Primary encourages that ethos"



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