



Lucy is delighted that Holly Hill Primary School is making her children as happy as it made her, her mum and her siblings all those years ago!

Lucy and Russell Garland live in Selston with their children George, seven, Harry, five and Oscar, who is two and half.

Fond childhood memories

There was never any doubt about which school Lucy and Russell would send their children to, as Lucy, her brothers and sisters and even her mother had all had a very happy early education at Holly Hill Primary School. "Although we didn't live in the village when George was due to start school we put his name down for Holly Hill as soon as he was born," says Lucy. "I had very fond memories of my time there, and it was lovely to find that George's nursery teacher was the same lady who taught me years ago! In the four years since George started it has absolutely lived up to our expectations."

Every child an individual

Perhaps reflecting the size of the village, Holly Hill is a relatively large primary school but even so, George and Harry's classes have only around 24 children in each. As George is the oldest in his class, Lucy was concerned that he would find the work too easy but her worries were soon put to rest. "What I like is that the children are given age-appropriate work and enough to challenge them," she explains. "I did think that George might be held back but that hasn't been the case at all; he is treated according to his ability rather than his age, and doing very well."

An effective approach to lessons

Harry is not quite such a keen scholar as his brother, but Lucy has been impressed by how he is encouraged to do his best. "I can never get Harry to sit down and practise his reading at home, so when I went to an Open Morning at the school and watched how well he engaged with a phonics lesson I was thrilled. The teachers manage to draw a very fine line between being friendly and expecting the children to complete their work, and it is clear that this approach is very effective."

Home from home

In fact, believes Lucy, the school has a family atmosphere and both George and Harry are very keen to please their teachers. "Neither of the boys has ever said they don't want to go to school and there have even been a few tears sometimes during the holidays when they can't go! Holly Hill is a little community of its own, and knowing your child is happy at school is so reassuring." Something else which keeps George happy is the wide range of after-school clubs which he is able to attend, from French and Maths to Library Club, PE and IT – most of which are free. "He is hardly ever home straight after school, and Harry already has a long list of the clubs he wants to join next year!"

Getting parents involved

Holly Hill is very happy to encourage parent participation in school life and before having Oscar, Lucy was a regular classroom volunteer. Russell, too, spends an afternoon each week running a gardening session in the school grounds, where he shows the children how to plant, nurture and harvest fruit and vegetables. "The school had a lot of the equipment and the space but no-one to organise everything, and as Russell is used to working with children he decided to volunteer. Hopefully, the produce will be sold to raise funds at the Summer Fair."

Big is beautiful!

Lucy feels strongly that no-one should rule out Holly Hill because of its size. "I know that some people might be put off because it is bigger than some primary schools but that is deceptive. It is in a world of its own, set back from the roads in lovely open space, and with fantastic staff who are approachable and friendly. I have nothing but praise for Holly Hill School and would recommend it to anyone. It all felt very familiar and homely to me but if it has changed at all, it is only because it is now even better."

Children say

Harry: "I loved it when the teachers dressed as superheros and rescued Mrs Parwood who was tied to a tree! And when we are allowed to go and play on the field, and roll about in the grass, and hide in the willow den!"

George: "I love my teachers they are very kind and I learn lots and lots. My favourite activity is IT with Mrs Warsop when we all get to learn and have a go on the laptops and Ipads."



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