

Michelle's children were used to changing schools, but Kingston Park Primary has given them the warmest welcome yet



Michelle Del Fava and her husband, Carlo, live in Newcastle with their children Nathan, 11, Anthony, seven and three-year-old Samantha.

Worrying decisions

However used a parent is to choosing a school for their children, it never gets easier or less daunting, says Michelle. Having spent ten years travelling around Europe with Carlo's rugby career, the children had been to schools in France, Northern Ireland and Italy before arriving in England two years ago. "We knew absolutely nothing about the area before we moved here so we relied largely on friends' recommendations," Michelle explains. "We heard some very good things about Kingston Park Primary and we had a positive feeling about it right from the start. It is always a worry to think about whether you have made the right choice but I have no doubt at all that on this occasion we have."

A warm welcome for newcomers

When Nathan and Anthony started at Kingston Park in Years 5 and 1 respectively, many of their classmates had already formed their friendship groups but this, says Michelle, was never an issue. "All the children were very welcoming and more than happy to absorb the boys into their circle. Although it was a bit harder for Anthony, being younger and less used to moving schools than Nathan, it didn't take very long for him to settle in. It really helps that the teachers are all so friendly and open, and they are sensitive to the children's needs. To begin with, Anthony was reluctant to go to school in the morning but this was only because he was nervous about meeting new people and not because he didn't like the school; on the contrary, as soon as he got there he forgot his fears and enjoyed his day."

Engaging and effective

Being familiar with the education systems in so many parts of the world, including her native South Africa, Michelle was impressed with the child-focussed atmosphere she found at Kingston Park. "It wasn't only me who picked up on it; the children did, too," she says. "Nathan told me he loves the fact that his teachers are 'less shouty' than he was used to in Italy! I think it's because of this approach that the children respond so well to their lessons and the teacher/pupil relationship has an element of humour which is very engaging. Instead of learning parrot-fashion, they are encouraged to ask questions and to gain a real understanding of what they are being taught."

An empathetic approach

Michelle has seen this teaching style at first hand at a recent English Workshop she attended: "The teachers know how to get the children fully involved in the lesson and the technique works very well. I believe that this is the way to make children actively want to learn and it certainly shows as far as Nathan is concerned. At one point he had been falling behind with his maths and this could be because he had not enjoyed the subject at his previous school. His teacher at Kingston Park reassured me that he was perfectly capable of catching up and he has now done so, mainly because he is being taught in a different way. We were also given suggestions for books and websites to use to support him at home, which helped at great deal."

Smooth transition

Nathan has now moved up to High School and, again, has settled in easily. "We were very pleased with how well Kingston Park handled the transition process," says Michelle. "Even though he has many of his primary school friends with him it is daunting for a child to suddenly find himself in a new environment and a new routine but Kingston Park offered a sequence of visits to the new school and brought in teachers prior to the move to explain about things and to answer questions. The process was gradual and ensured that the Year 6 pupils felt familiar and at home by the time they actually joined their new school."

Reaping the benefits

Little Samantha has recently started at the Kingston Park Nursery and, Michelle says, they would be more than happy if she were able to stay at the school all the way through. "We are planning to move back to South Africa within the next few years but in all honesty, we are so pleased with the way that the children have settled at school and the quality of the education, we are prepared to wait longer than we might otherwise have done. Having made such a good choice of school, we'd like to let the children benefit from it for as long as possible."



Children say:

Nathan: "The teachers want you to work but they have fun activities."

Anthony: "Everyone will be happy at Kingston Park, it's a fun school!"

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