

First impressions can be misleading, and Vikki is **delighted** that she chose Maldon Primary School second time around



Maldon Primary School
Inspiring success for all



Vikki and Gary Mitchell live in Maldon with their children Alfie, eight and Evie, three. Alfie moved to Maldon Primary school in Year 3.

A downhill spiral

As the Manager of a Pre-School, Vikki knows more than many parents about what makes a good school so when she and Gary chose one for Alfie they believed they had made exactly the right decision. “For the whole of his Reception Year we couldn’t

have been happier but when he moved into Year 1 everything started to go downhill,” she says. “He was finding it hard to keep up and was falling behind with his targets but when we asked if he could have a bit of extra help it was refused. We were even told that he wasn’t very bright and, as a professional as well as a parent, I was angry and upset.”

A welcoming and positive attitude

In desperation, Vikki and Gary decided to look at alternative settings and to reconsider Maldon Primary, somewhere they had not initially believed to be suitable. "When we first looked round we didn't think it was right for Alfie but lately I had seen how well children from my Pre-School were doing there. We explained our situation to the Headteacher and were very impressed with her welcoming and positive attitude and also by her practical advice. She explained that Alfie's grades might suffer to begin with because of the transition but that they would do everything they could to support him."

New start

Despite the busy end-of-term activities, the school arranged for Alfie to visit and to meet his new teachers so he would know what to expect. Although he was a little apprehensive at first, as soon as he started in Year 3 Vikki and Gary noticed a big change. "Instead of falling further behind, he absolutely blossomed," remembers Vikki. "We felt that Alfie had missed a whole year of school during Year 2 but before long he was right up there where he should be, alongside the rest of his class. He was also a bit worried that everyone would have made friends already and that he'd be left out but this has not proved to be the case; he has some very good friends and is extremely happy there."

Inspiration

Fairly typically for an eight-year-old boy, Alfie is not always very forthcoming when his parents ask what he has done at school that day, but he is always keen to talk about the fun he has on No-Pen Wednesdays! "That's when the class spends the day doing creative things, obviously learning but without writing anything down and it really inspires Alfie. It's just one of the things that makes Maldon Primary that bit different and helps to engage the children's interest."

Children say

Alfie says: "I am glad my mum and dad talked to me about changing schools. I love my new school, the Headteacher is really nice and so are the teachers and children."

Sensitive support

Something else which impressed Vikki was the way the whole family was supported following a recent bereavement. "When my mother died suddenly and unexpectedly it was a dreadful shock for us all, but the school was extremely understanding and arranged for Alfie to see a Counsellor. They let him know that he could talk to the Family Liaison Officer, which was a great help, and even offered him a place in an after-school club when I was so busy with funeral arrangements. It was such a help to have this support at a time when we really needed it."

Active encouragement

Being amongst the youngest in his year has not held Alfie back and, in fact, he is one of its stars, owning medals and awards for his skill in judo. "Although the school doesn't have a judo club, Alfie is encouraged to give talks to the other children and to explain about the sport," says Vikki. "It's great that pupils' achievements are actively celebrated in this way as it is a real confidence-booster for them."

Fingers crossed!

Little Evie has her name down for a place at Maldon Primary and has already joined her classmates in a visit there to meet the staff and to familiarise herself with the school. "We are keeping our fingers crossed that she will get in as it has been wonderful for Alfie," Vikki says. "Maldon Primary has turned out to be exactly the school I wanted for my children and, actually, is getting better all the time."

