

Leigh and Daniel are **delighted** with the way their two daughters are **progressing** at Oakfield Community Primary School



Leigh and Daniel Santamaria live at New Ash Green with their daughters, Carmen, aged six, and Stella, aged four.

Supportive staff

Carmen and Stella have both made rapid progress since joining Oakfield Community Primary School last November. Leigh says: "Staff at the school have given both girls excellent support. Carmen is now reading and writing well and Stella has learnt her alphabet, whereas at their previous school they weren't learning very quickly."

Specialist provision

Carmen has autism and is now in the ASD unit at Oakfield. Leigh said: "She had been a friendly, happy child but while she was at her previous school she became withdrawn. When I picked her up in the afternoons she would be staring vacantly and not communicating and she wasn't able to tell me what was wrong."

Change of school

Eventually she came home from school one day and became distraught. Leigh said: "She finally managed to articulate what was wrong and told us that she tried hard at school but couldn't learn because she kept forgetting things." Leigh and Daniel tried to get Carmen into a school with a special ASD unit but found it was oversubscribed. Then they heard Oakfield were going to open an ASD unit and rang to put Carmen's name on the waiting list. Leigh said: "We were told it was up and running and had two children already in there and that they could take her. I went to look round the school and from the moment I saw it I knew it was the right place for the girls. We contacted the council immediately to say we wanted places for both children. It was the best thing we have ever done."

Building confidence

Now happily settled at Oakfield, Carmen is much more confident in her ability to learn. Leigh says: "She tries hard and is doing very well. After just one month I went to pick her up and she said she was enjoying herself so much she didn't want to go home. From just writing squiggles she is now writing well and she has made quick progress with her reading from not being able to read at all. By the time she had been at the school four months she was getting full marks for her spelling tests."

Careful planning

Leigh thinks Oakfield have been successful with Carmen because they have drawn up a detailed plan for her education. "They have

mapped out all the areas where she struggles and needs one to one help. They have scheduled times for her to go into her link class to integrate her with other children in the school and they are trying to improve her social skills. A specialist speech and language therapist has observed Carmen with her teachers and has said they are doing everything they should be doing with her so we are confident that she is now in the right hands."

Learning quickly

Carmen's younger sister Stella has an August birthday and is one of the youngest in the year. Leigh says: "She was not doing well at her old school and when she started at Oakfield she knew only a few letters in the alphabet. But after she joined the school her new teacher assessed her and has given her the right support. She has been quickly brought up to speed. Within six weeks she knew the entire alphabet. We are amazed by how quickly she is learning."

Friendly teachers

Leigh says she can't speak highly enough of the staff at Oakfield. "They are all very friendly. You can tell they are engaged and interested in the children. They are there to talk to when you drop the children off and they speak to every child as they arrive to make sure they are comfortable."

Children say

Carmen says: "I love my new school."

Stella says: "I like seeing my friends at Oakfield."

