

# No child is too challenging for St Luke's School, as Joke has been grateful to discover



**Joke and her son, Michael, 9, live in Newham.**

## Determination

Joke and Michael moved to Newham a year ago and consequently Michael was obliged to change his school. This was something which had needed to be addressed anyway and Joke was glad to have a friend's recommendation of St Luke's, the Church of England school she favoured above other, secular, settings.

The need for a change of school was the result of Michael's behavioural problems which had led to his frequent and sometimes lengthy exclusions. "I used to be constantly expecting a call from the school about something he had done," remembers Joke. "So often I would be asked to answer for his actions, to collect him or to be told



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his behaviour was unacceptable; it was very upsetting and I didn't know how to deal with all this. When I heard about St Luke's I was determined to get him in there as I had heard such good things about it and I was so happy when he was granted a place."

### **Addressing the needs of every child**

When Joke approached St Luke's she was completely honest about the difficulties Michael had had at his last school. However, the policy at St Luke's is to accept any child, whatever the circumstances, so his past record was not an issue although Joke was glad to know the school was prepared to cope with her son's challenging behaviour. As the Headteacher explains: "We do not discriminate or select our pupils but take them on catchment-based entitlement, and expect that some will have greater needs than others. This means that we have measures in place to ensure that every child is given the specific support they need in order to integrate effectively and to get the most out of their time in education. In Michael's case, we knew that he had certain issues which had led to previous exclusion but made every effort to address these."

### **Effective measures**

Joke has no doubt that these measures have been very effective indeed. "When Michael had been causing problems in his last school it seemed that his teachers had not been able to cope, just sending him out of the classroom and leaving that as punishment in itself. At St Luke's, he was given much stricter boundaries such as being deprived of his beloved football if he didn't behave. Slowly, the message started to sink in and now we are going from strength to strength."

### **Mutual respect**

At St Luke's the message is clear: do what is reasonably asked of you, respect your teachers and your classmates, and then you will be respected in turn.



"We fully understand that some children have difficulty in understanding appropriate boundaries," says the school's Learning Mentor, "but also that this is something we may have to teach them to do. What is needed is consistency, with emphasis on sanctions and rewards, and an appreciation of what each child may be experiencing in his or her own world. Our job is not to judge but to make a difference."

### **Firm but fair**

And what a difference this policy has made to Michael. "Michael has changed so much," says Joke. "He is much happier and calmer now that St Luke's and I are working together to help him see that some aspects of his behaviour will not be tolerated and that penalties will be imposed if necessary. Our life is so much better now that Michael has the support he really needed."

The message is 'firm but fair', and the teachers at St Luke's work together to maintain that policy as a standard. "We are giving all the children lessons for life," says the school's Learning Mentor. If those life lessons help to make academic achievement more effective, St Luke's is apparently taking the right approach.



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### **Children say:**

Michael has much the same opinion as his mum: "I like the learning, the fun and the activities and at St Luke's I don't get into trouble for any little thing. They encourage me to do my work."