

Zabie's daughter was the target of bullying, but the instant and compassionate response from St Ursula's Junior School gave her absolute reassurance in her daughter's safety



A place of safety

Apart from a good education, what parents expect from a school is that it should be a place of safety for their children, somewhere they will be cared for and nurtured when away from home. Zabie and Calvin had an additional prerequisite, that it should be a Catholic faith school, and this was largely the reason that they chose St Ursula's.

Zahra was bullied in her infant school, and it continued briefly into her junior school. Despite some of the problems they have encountered, Zabie is certain that it has always been the right choice. "Wherever your child goes to school there are never any guarantees that they will be fully protected from negative influences and it was just unfortunate that Zahra was the target of bullying. Although I accept that these things happen, I am impressed with the way that

Zabie and Calvin Nathaniel live in Romford with their children Zahra, eight and Calvin Junior, six.



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the issue was dealt with exceptionally quickly and effectively by St Ursula's. Thankfully, Zahra has not lost her love of school and I believe this is mainly because of the way her teachers addressed the situation."

A troubling situation

Zahra's story begins when she was in the Infant School where she was one of several other children to be the focus of another child's unwanted attentions. "We were aware that Zahra had a problem with one of the children but as she didn't make too much of it we didn't feel it would be appropriate to take things too seriously, and then the situation appeared to have settled down," Zabie recalls. "Unfortunately, when she joined the Junior School not only did it all start again but became rather more troubling and that was when my husband and I decided we needed to address it."

Out into the open

It is only recently that Zabie believes she has been given a new perspective into her daughter's personality, based on the insight of Zahra's teachers. "You think you know your own child but sometimes they will open up to someone else, for whatever reason. Zahra's teacher realised that she was almost too forgiving and had tolerated the bullying because she wanted to be friendly. This was also why she had not told us very much about what was going on," says Zabie. "When we pieced things together and went to talk to the Headteacher, we were very impressed at the way she handled it. It was sad that Zahra hadn't told us earlier everything that had happened but once it was out in the open, the school did everything I would have expected of them."

Zero tolerance

In the first instance, Calvin met with the Headteacher to discuss his and Zabie's concerns and both he and Zabie were immensely reassured by her reaction. "The first thing the Head did was to contact the other child's parents to make them aware of what was happening, and she made it clear to them and their child that inappropriate behaviour would not be tolerated. She subsequently arranged to meet us again to let us know exactly what she had put in place and completely reassured us that Zahra would be safe from that day forward."

Appropriate support for all involved

St Ursula's has a system whereby pupils can contact a trained member of staff confidentially to express

any worries they might have and this is a further reassurance to Zabie that her daughter need never feel she needs to suffer in silence. The family were also offered counselling sessions for Zahra with the school's Family Support Worker, which they accepted. "I was so pleased with the way the school took our concerns on board and the instant response," Zabie says. "I am fairly sure that the other child concerned would also have been offered appropriate support and I believe that this compassionate attitude is absolutely the right approach; a bullying child needs help just as much as the victim."

Protection from harm

It was only Zahra's reluctance to come forward that the situation went on as long as it did but, feels Zabie, Zahra is now more inclined to express any concerns because she knows that everyone will work together to make sure things will be sorted out comfortably. "Zahra was vulnerable but St Ursula's has made every effort to resolve what could have been a worse situation and I have complete confidence in the school's approach to the children's emotional welfare. I feel I can send Zahra to school every day knowing she will be happy, and protected from harm."



Zahra says:

"St Ursula's is a very comfortable place to be. It makes me feel safe and happy when I'm there. The teachers are lovely and my friends make it even more fun! I really think I never want to leave. I would miss everybody. If I had the authority I would put this school around the world."



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