



Fenella and Alex Berry live in Halifax with their children Ella, 13 and Nye, eight

Fenella believes that a school should offer life skills as well as good academic results, and that Whitehill Community Academy does that and more



No contest

As a former teacher Fenella knows what makes a good school, and having been fortunate enough to have had a very good education herself she knew what she wanted for her children. "When we looked at schools for Ella and then Nye, I wanted one which felt right," she says. "Whitehill Community Academy did feel right, from the start: the children were busy, the classrooms were tidy and well-organised, the staff were enthusiastic and we liked everything we saw. For us, there was no contest."

Big is beautiful!

Every parent looks for something different in a school, and one thing that Fenella particularly liked was the fact that Whitehill's reputation attracts pupils from every walk of life, giving every child of any ability and background the same chances and opportunities, whilst at the same time introducing them to the wider world. "It is big for a primary setting but I feel that is to its advantage," she says. "It very much reflects our society and real life and that has to be an important part of a child's overall education."

Forward-thinking attitude

Another thing which Fenella identifies as being a positive issue is the fact that Whitehill has a larger than usual ratio of male to female teachers in a primary school. "Very often female teachers greatly outnumber men but I think it's important that male teachers have a major part to play as role models at this age. The school has also brought in some younger, recently-qualified members to the teaching staff and that's great in injecting new ideas and enthusiasm. I really like the forward-thinking attitude of the school, and that it is prepared to look for ways to further enhance the quality of the provision."

Every child, every ability, every opportunity

With a large catchment area, Whitehill has a proportion of children with special needs, all of whom are involved in the mainstream as a matter of course. This, believes Fenella, is a very positive addition to the school. "Children with special needs are obviously given a great deal of support and I really like the fact that every child, whatever their circumstances, is offered every opportunity. The policy of inclusion means that no child is stigmatised for any reason, and I have seen that each child is valued for themselves and supported accordingly. Every Child Matters is the impression I get, and that is important to me."

Encouragement, praise and reward brings results

Both Ella and Nye have, and are, achieving more than acceptable academic targets and this is obviously a matter of priority so Fenella has no concerns about their progress. With her teaching qualifications, she is

in a good position to support her children at home but she appreciates that not all parents are able to do so. For this reason she admires the fact that the teachers at Whitehill recognise and encourage the potential of every pupil in their care. "They make an effort to bring out the best in all the children, through encouragement, praise and reward. They are proud of all the children and their achievements, whether those achievements are through the school itself or from outside interests. This attitude is part of the 'value added' aspect to Whitehill, and is exactly the school experience I wanted for my children."

Children say

Nye served as a school councillor last year and says: "I liked that we were allowed to attend meetings and think of ideas to make the school better. We were taken seriously and it wasn't just adults giving their point of view. I like the after school clubs where you can learn new skills. And I like the lessons, they're interesting and the teachers are nice!"



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