



Charlotte and her sons Alex, six and Jake, one, live in Watford, to where they have recently returned from Brazil.

New country, new school - and new confidence for a shy child through the intervention of Kingsway Infant School

Colourful, comfortable

Although Charlotte had lived fairly close to Kingsway Infant School when she was a child, she knew little about it other than what her friends had told her at the time. When researching schools for Alex before she returned from abroad, she made Kingsway her first choice on the recommendation of people she knew who themselves had children there. "I was lucky to secure a place for Alex as we hadn't even moved back to Watford, and when we were given a tour of the school by the Headteacher I loved the colourful and comfortable setting and the personal attention we were given. I really loved it, and now Alex loves it, too."

Apprehension

The fact that Alex is so happy at Kingsway is an enormous relief to Charlotte, as she had had good reason to be apprehensive. "Even when he was a small baby, Alex had separation anxiety and for years it was virtually impossible for me to leave him with anyone else," she says. "During the brief period when he was at school in Brazil I always had to stay with him in the classroom, or just outside, otherwise he would panic and the teacher would have to get me back in to collect him. For almost four years, he was completely dependent upon my being close by, and sometimes that made life quite difficult."

Change for the better

Charlotte had discussed this issue with the Headteacher before Alex started school, and was assured that she would be able to stay with Alex in the classroom for at least the first day or so if necessary; however, when she arrived on his first day, there was a change of plan. "Alex's teacher suggested that it might be better if I left and that she was certain he would settle more quickly if I did so. Although I was apprehensive I agreed and arranged to ring later to see how he was, and when I collected him at the end of the day I could see that the strategy had worked; he was absolutely fine."

Alex had been assigned to two 'buddies', who sat with him in class and looked after him at lunchtime and in the playground and, says Charlotte, they have never looked back. "I honestly thought that this 'short sharp shock' tactic was the wrong way to go as I knew Alex better than anyone but there is no question that he has come out of his shell, is much more confident and independent, and is happy and well-adjusted. I have always tried to make him feel proud of himself, but it took Kingsway Infant School to show him that other people had faith in him and valued him, too."

Valuable life lessons

The Kingsway reward system has played a part in boosting Alex's confidence while at the same time teaching him and his peers, as it is designed to do, a valuable lesson for life. "It encourages the children to work towards a goal and shows them that they

all have the ability to achieve in one way or another," says Charlotte. "They are rewarded for effort as well as achievement, and helped to realise that no-one can 'win' every time. Every child should learn this at an early age and shouldn't need to be ashamed at not coming first, because it is always trying your best which counts above all else."

Alex was very happy to get a special commendation for his aptitude in Spanish: "His teacher was amazed how quickly he seemed to pick it up," laughs Charlotte. "I had to admit that he had spent a lot of time in Brazil and already spoke some Portuguese, so his reward was a bit of a cheat!"

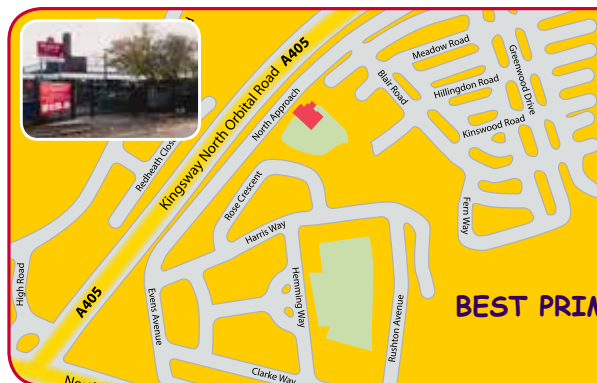
Early introduction to useful skill

Charlotte is a linguist and language teacher and so was especially glad that Kingsway offers Spanish lessons to young children. "Introducing children to a second or even third language at an early age is the best time to do it. At four, five or six, they are much more receptive and have fewer inhibitions than they would have at a later stage when languages are usually introduced into the curriculum. As we have lived abroad for much of Alex's early life he has picked up a lot of German and Italian as well as English, and I'm sure that this talent will stay with him because of his early exposure. It's great that Kingsway recognises the value of starting them off early in this field."

Although a much more independent and secure young man, according to Charlotte Alex has only one ambition remaining: "The one award he's still waiting for is the one 'To make my teacher smile!'" But then, so many children love Kingsway, and only one can win each week.

Children say

Alex's feelings about Kingsway are short and sweet and straight to the point: "I like Choosing Time the best!"



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