



Lynsey and Michael O'Dell live on the Kingsway estate with their daughters Thaya, six and Isla, three.

A close-knit, family-orientated environment makes for a great early education at Kingsway Infant school

Through the generations

There are quite a few reasons why Lynsey and Michael made Kingsway Infant School their first choice for Thaya. Being so close to where they live not only is it convenient but it offers the wonderful opportunity for children to grow up together within a closely-knit local community. "It's a place where everyone looks out for each other, everyone knows everyone else, and the children have the chance to establish firm friendships from an early age," explains Lynsey. "No-one knows that better than I do as my brothers and I went there, and actually so did my dad! I am still close to friends I made at Kingsway and I would really like that for my children."

Flourishing

Lynsey is a Primary School teacher herself and as such knows what to look for. "Thaya is a high-achiever so we were less concerned with checking Ofsted reports than with the overall reputation of the school," she says. "We are thrilled with Thaya's progress, and more than happy with her teacher who is caring and loving, but firm at the same time, and to me that is exactly the right recipe. Had Thaya starting slipping behind we might have had our doubts but she is flourishing in every way."

Getting parents involved

Kingsway has a strong policy of involving parents in the life of the school, and when Michael heard that the popular swimming lessons were in danger of being cancelled because of lack of helpers, he was keen to volunteer. As a Police Officer, he works shifts and so is regularly available during the school day. "The children love the swimming sessions and I think it's a really important part of the PE curriculum so I thought I'd offer to help. There are some children at the school who might not otherwise have the opportunity to learn to swim so the more parents who can do their bit, the better," he says. "Having a few extra adults in the water with them gives them confidence and makes it possible for the whole class to take part."

Community spirit

Both Lynsey and Michael are very supportive of the school's social life and of the fundraising events held every so often. "One way or another we seem to spend a lot of time at the school!" says Lynsey. "We will always do our best to attend the fetes and fairs and open days and to help out when we can. They are great social occasions, too, and very family-orientated which makes it even nicer. Because it is such a small community and Kingsway is so good at fostering close relationships between home and school, it is always something we like to be involved with."

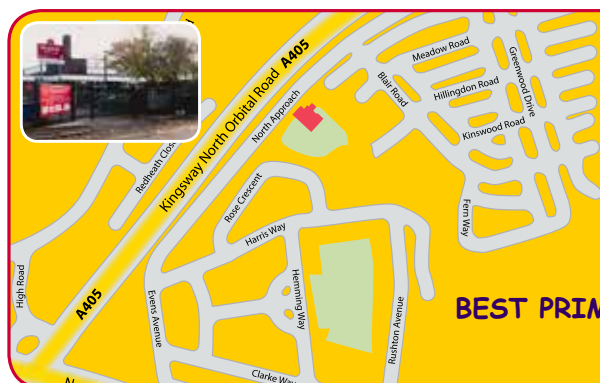


Something different

As a teaching professional, Lynsey can appreciate how giving children some out-of-the-ordinary experiences can be a valuable learning tool and she loves the way that Kingsway makes a huge effort to provide these. "They bring in local business and other agencies to demonstrate something different, whether it's science, farming, music or something to do with another culture, the children are able to see and learn about things they might not have the chance to do anywhere else. It's all great fun but an effective teaching method, too. How many children get to see a group of African drummers in their school - fantastic!"

No doubts

Academic success, whilst largely down to the quality of teaching, is also achieved by a child's enjoyment of their school life and neither Michael nor Lynsey has any doubts. "Thaya is very happy at Kingsway and, from spending time with the other children at swimming lessons, I can see that the other children are, too," says Michael. "At the end of the day, that counts for a lot."



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