



A new life in a new country has been made easier for Malek and Rola's children because of the right support from Thorpe Acre Infant School

Language challenge

When Malek and Rola moved to the UK at the end of 2012 Zaid and Ahmad spoke only Arabic and Swedish and as they were about to start at a new school, naturally their parents were concerned about how they would manage. A few months on, they could not be happier with how well their children have not only settled in well but are thriving at Thorpe Acre Infant School.

Malek and his wife, Rola, live in Loughborough with their children Zaid, six, Ahmad, four and baby Amir, who is nearly one.



"I was quite scared at first," says Rola. "Everything was so new to them - new house, new country, new language - but it was clear that the teachers were very supportive and willing to make a special effort to make the boys feel at home. I was amazed at how quickly Zaid and Ahmad started to pick up the language and that has made sure they are able to keep up with their peers, to make friends and to enjoy going to school."

Emphasis on learning and behaviour

Having looked around at all the possibilities, Malek and Rola chose Thorpe Acre partly on recommendation from friends and partly because they immediately liked what they could see for themselves. As a teacher herself as well as a parent, Rola knew exactly what she was looking for: "There are two things which are especially important to me and those are academic achievement and standards of behaviour and Thorpe Acre places a great deal of emphasis on both. Discipline is something I feel very strongly about and when it's well-applied it ensures the effective learning environment that the school obviously provides. The standards of reading are particularly high and Zaid and Ahmad have been well supported by their teachers."

Special support for speakers of other languages

Although the school has relatively few children whose first language is not English, staff were able to offer appropriate resources to make sure that Zaid and Ahmad didn't fall behind. "They had a range of special books and other learning systems designed to help the boys learn quickly and because it was done in a fun way they responded very well. I really appreciate the big effort the teachers made and the fact that the boys have been able to integrate easily because of that support."



A different approach

Rola and Malek were so pleased with their choice of school that they moved house to be closer and thus ensure they would be able to keep Zaid and Ahmad there, and so Amir will also be guaranteed a place when the time comes. Although there is always the possibility that the family may have to move again because of the requirements of Malek's job, they hope to be able to stay in the area while the boys are still at primary school age. "The English education system is very different to that in Sweden," says Rola. "They start two years earlier here but because the pre-school and Foundation stages are fun the children engage well. At Thorpe Acre they also run lots of after-school clubs which are lovely for the boys and are another way of helping them make the most of their school experience."

Whilst Rola and Malek have no concerns about their children's happiness or well-being while they are at school, if they ever feel the need to discuss any issues the teachers are, says Rola, approachable and always willing to help. "They are all very friendly and will quickly address anything I might want to talk about, which is very reassuring. The overall atmosphere is welcoming and I believe that Thorpe Acre has played a very important part in helping my children to adapt so well and so quickly to their new home."



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