

Lucy is helping New Fosseway School in doing everything possible to support children with additional needs

Lucy Hunt is a Community Nurse with the Specialist Service for Children with Learning Disabilities in North Bristol NHS Trust. She and her colleagues work with schools and families to support children and young adults with learning disabilities and emotional and mental health needs.



A rewarding environment to work in

If there is one particular thing which Lucy loves about her job it is the fact that she is often able to see a tangible improvement in the lives of the children she works with, many of whom are students at New Fosseway School. "New Fosseway is a very rewarding environment to work in, mainly because of the fantastic staff team who are absolutely dedicated to the children in their care," she says. "The ethos is that the children come first and staff are doing everything they can to make sure that happens."



Communication

Communication is a vital factor in assessing a child's needs and for those with limited verbal skills, other means have to be sought. "Challenging behaviour is a form of communicating and may well be an expression of frustration or anger and a child's only way of showing their feelings, so by learning how to interpret that behaviour we can start to address the reasons for it. Many children with learning difficulties, including autism, display what seems an inappropriate reaction to noise, a change in routine or various other triggers which distress them, but this is actually their way to communicate their distress or discomfort."

Every child is different

Lucy's training and experience in the field of learning disabilities has given her a deep insight into how best to address the situations she encounters on a daily basis. "I can never be quite sure what to expect and no two children are the same so each one needs to be treated individually according to their needs. We may explore sensory support or do sessions through drawing or group work. At New Fosseway it is very encouraging how the staff are very pro-active and happy to share and try any new ideas and to implement suggestions."

A close collaboration

"We work very closely together as a joined-up team so that every aspect of a child's treatment and on-going care is addressed, and everyone is aware of the current situation," she explains. "This collaborative approach makes our job easier and is the best way to make certain the children at New Fosseway have the highest standard of care."

We also hold a monthly meeting between school, health and social care as an opportunity to share ideas to support young people in the school; this promotes good working relationships and provides early intervention support. Teachers have given amazing feedback into how valuable they find this and how it gives them a voice and empowerment to support young people and their families further."

Rising to the challenge

The school itself is, says Lucy, a lovely, welcoming environment with excellent resources including the sensory and hydrotherapy rooms which are used extensively. "I always look forward to going to New Fosseway," she says. "Whatever challenges it presents I know I have the complete co-operation of the staff and I admire and support them in turn. It is a good feeling to know that what we are doing is helping to improve the lives of these children and their families and I would recommend this school to anyone who has a child with additional needs."

