



Marie's son has achieved more than she ever thought possible under the dedicated support of Baston House School



BASTON HOUSE SCHOOL
DEVELOPING LEARNERS' SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Marie and Michael Pace live in Croydon with their son, Tristan, who is 16.

Every child an individual

"When you have met one child with autism, you have met one child with autism"; as the mother of a son with Asperger's Syndrome, Marie knows only too well that every child on the autistic spectrum is completely different to another and that the only approach is to treat them as the individuals they are. At Baston House School she has found the setting she can trust to recognise Tristan's own special traits and needs and to address them appropriately.

Tristan was diagnosed when he was six but it was only two years ago that Marie finally succeeded in her fight to win a place at Baston House.

"It was quite clear from very early on that Tristan would not have survived in mainstream education," she says. "When we did manage to find a special school for him it failed him, and other pupils, badly and we had to take him out. It was almost a year before we got the funding to send him to Baston but it has proved to be well worth the wait."

Expect the unexpected

Having spent so long out of education, Tristan's confidence was very low and his fear of failure meant that he was unwilling to attempt something he felt he might not be able to achieve. However, within weeks of starting at Baston House he had gone from struggling with simple children's books to reading complicated adult literature, something Marie finds almost incomprehensible. "I think that because his teachers knew he was capable of doing more he was able to believe it himself and so was willing to allow himself to try," says Marie. "Their faith in him seemed to give him faith in himself and he has succeeded spectacularly." Tristan has also taken and passed exams which Marie and Michael had never remotely expected would ever happen.

Overcoming fears

Apart from Tristan's academic achievements, Marie has noticed a great improvement in his social skills. "One thing which can generally be said about autistic children is that they often have difficulty in coping with certain social situations and there were times when Tristan could have a sudden meltdown in a shop or in the street," she says. "The staff at Baston House have gone to a lot of effort to help him to overcome some of his fears, taking him out and about to shops and cafes in the town, for example, and finding ways to help him cope if he becomes distressed. Perhaps one of the best outcomes of this approach is that people who are not aware of Tristan's condition can meet him without realising that he is autistic."

Genuine dedication

Every parent wants the best for their children but when a child has a condition such as Asperger's it can be almost impossible to know where to start without professional support.



Marie is very impressed not only with the professionalism of the Baston House staff but with their genuine dedication to the children: "I really believe that they care deeply about what they are doing; they take pleasure in Tristan's achievements, big or small, and he is absolutely thriving. Having watched his struggles in other schools over the years, I have no doubt that it is Baston House which has kept Tristan engaged in education and enabled him to have at least some independence and a better quality of life."

New points of reference

It is impossible for Marie and Michael to know what the future might hold for Tristan but Marie is reassured that at present he is safe, supported and gaining in confidence and has better chances in life than he could otherwise have expected. "When your child is born it is tempting to map out their life in terms of exams, career and marriage but when you get a diagnosis like this you lose all points of reference. Now, anything which Tristan achieves between the ability to tie his own laces to going to university is a milestone which makes me happy, and I will always be grateful that Baston House has helped him to reach those milestones."



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