



Roger and Danielle Mendes live in Basildon with their son Rogerio who is thirteen, and four year old Alaina



Roger and Danielle have watched their son blossom into a confident and achieving young man through the care and opportunities offered by Castledon School

A fine line

The line between the need for mainstream versus specialist education can be a very fine one, and this is something Roger and Danielle are fully aware of. Whilst they were initially advised that Rogerio would be well supported in a mainstream secondary setting they felt instinctively that this was not necessarily the route they should follow. "Until about half way through primary school Rogerio was doing well," says Roger. "Then he began to become withdrawn and apparently disruptive and his teachers thought he was just being naughty. When he was diagnosed with Asperger's at eight years old his behaviour started to make sense but obviously he needed additional support."

A chance to flourish

"The improvement we saw in Rogerio was swift and dramatic," says Roger. "From being quiet and withdrawn, lacking confidence and being obsessed with perfection in his work, he became much more outgoing and able to accept that everything he did, did not have to be 'just so' all the time. He is much more tolerant now, of himself and others, and he is able to participate in everything the school has to offer."

Amazing opportunities

And Castledon does have a great deal to offer. Roger is amazed at the opportunities his son has been given and the vision the school demonstrates in promoting the interests and enthusiasms of the students. "A great deal of time and effort is put into finding ways to capitalise on the children's strengths and to help them reach their potential. For example, Rogerio has a fascination for trains so if his class are going on a trip, instead of taking a coach he is allowed to plan the journey so they can go by train instead. Further, the school made an arrangement with a local engineering

firm so that he and some of the others were able to spend one day a week for a year in the company's workshop, learning about motor mechanics. The school also has reciprocal arrangements with other mainstream schools whereby Castledon students have the chance to use facilities not available on site. To me this is a demonstration of how seriously Castledon takes the welfare of its pupils."

Maximising potential

Giving the children the chance to follow their interests and recognising the potential in each of them is what, Roger believes, makes Castledon such a perfect setting. "The staff aim to ensure that every child should leave school with as many skills as possible. They are given career-based, practical opportunities and the chance to thrive and I cannot fault what they do. If we as parents have a suggestion or an idea for further provision, usually it has already been actioned. That's what makes a great school."

Improvement at every level

He has made excellent progress on the specific targets that have been set for him but just as importantly is gaining the additional skills he will later need for independent living. "Socially and on a practical level he is improving all the time, and every day he comes out of school with a big smile on his face." Knowing that your child is so well provided for and is happy in the process is enough to put a smile on any parent's face, too.



Castledon School

Bromfords Drive, Wickford, Essex SS12 0PW

tel: 01268 761252 fax: 01268 571861

www.castledon.essex.sch.uk

email: admin@castledon.essex.sch.uk