



Pauline Shanks lives in Runcorn with sons James Birchall, 19, Christopher 21, Kieran 12 and Cameron, nine.

# Pauline's son transformed from a highly anxious boy to a happy, confident young man – thanks to Cavendish High Academy

## Change for the better

James transferred to Cavendish High Academy in 2009 following a change of admission policy at his former school.

"At first James was very anxious about the move and there were lots of challenges," says Pauline. "For example he would often try to hide in bins, cupboards or the toilets. However, the staff were great, and really helped him to settle. James is no longer anxious, he's very happy."



## Pathway to success

James transferred to the Pathways system at Cavendish, which provides a personalised curriculum and one-to-one support.

"James has an amazing relationship with his key worker, Ellen," says Pauline. "He is electively mute and the staff have worked on all kinds of ways to communicate with James. He has a cracking sense of humour and Ellen works so closely with him that she seems to know instinctively what he wants to say."

## Improving communication

A range of resources has helped James improve his communication.

"At first James was taught the thumbs up and thumbs down system, which he learned very quickly," says Pauline. "They then used picture cards to help him communicate."

"James loves to go on the computer and the staff reward him with personal time on it, which really helps him to focus on his lessons."

## Enterprising students

Pathways prioritises a Core Functional Curriculum to help students become active, engaged members of the school, home and community. James has progressed so well that he now has his own catering business.

"James is so settled and happy that he now has a little business at the school, selling and making bacon butties," says a delighted Pauline.

"James goes round the school taking orders, and together with Ellen makes the butties, and then he takes the money, which he can keep. He really enjoys this - particularly when he gets the money! The staff take pictures to show me and I can see that James always has a big grin."

## Independence days

Cavendish has a fully functional independence bungalow, where students learn many skills needed for employment and independent living.

"Children are taught the basics of looking after themselves in the bungalow," says Pauline. "For example they learn how to safely make a simple meal or a hot drink. I am delighted with the progress James has made."

## Dealing with anxiety

The school helps students to develop coping skills to enable them to deal with anxiety.



"Although James doesn't really have friends, he will now tolerate working alongside other youngsters and is not worried when they try to communicate with him," says Pauline. "In addition the other students have got used to James and he does sometimes interact with him in his own little way, which is brilliant."

## Moving on

Cavendish caters for children up to the age of 19 and helps to prepare students for when the time comes for them to leave.

"James is now 19 and the school is putting on a special leavers' assembly at Chester Cathedral," says Pauline. "Six members of the family can travel on the coach for the assembly and all the students get presented with a certificate. They also have their photographs taken and then we all go to a hotel for a celebratory lunch. It will be an emotional day but also a fantastic memento of the very happy years James has spent at Cavendish."

## Loving every minute

Pauline sums up Cavendish by saying: "The staff are absolutely amazing and have the time, patience and skills to get the very best out of your child. I can honestly say that James has loved every minute. He has done so well at Cavendish that I couldn't recommend any other school higher."

Cavendish High School  
Lincoln Close  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
WA7 4YX

Tel: 01928 561 706  
Fax: 01928 590 807  
Email: [admin2.Cavendish@Halton.gov.uk](mailto:admin2.Cavendish@Halton.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.cavendishhighschool.com](http://www.cavendishhighschool.com)

