

Kelly and Kieran live in Reading with their daughter, Darcie-Mae, aged 5. Darcie-Mae was left with brain damage after she was born and has been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and global developmental delay. She also has complex medical needs.

Darcie-Mae is progressing in leaps and bounds thanks to the caring staff at Kennel Lane School

Exceeding expectations

Kelly and Kieran are thrilled with the way Darcie-Mae has progressed since starting at Kennel Lane. Kelly says: "The change in Darcie-Mae over the last few months has been amazing. She has come so much further than we ever thought possible for her. She has always had problems with her movement, but she is trying to run now. We really can't believe it and we sometimes get emotional watching her doing things."

Improved communication

Kelly says that before Darcie-Mae started school, communication was an issue because she couldn't tell them what she wanted. "Now she will show you what she is asking for. She will go to her snack cupboard if she wants something to eat, or take her bottle to the sink if she wants a drink. If she wants to go out, she will fetch her shoes, or push her wheelchair about. She has come on in leaps and bounds."

Good first impression

"Darcie-Mae went to a special needs nursery, but the local authority could only offer her a place at a mainstream primary school, which wouldn't have been suitable for her. Although it was out of our area, someone suggested Kennel Lane to us and so we went to look around and fell in love with the school."

Kind thought

"On her first day her wheelchair was just put into a taxi and she was away. We were told she settled in really quickly, although we were both upset at home. Her class teacher gave us a call at midday to let us know she was getting on well and also sent us photos of her first day, which was incredibly kind."

Excellent staff

"Darcie-Mae was happy at her nursery, but we can tell that her love for Kennel Lane is far deeper. She knows when she is going to school because we will put her wheelchair in the hall and she is always ready too early and impatient to go. We have nothing but admiration for the staff who look after her as she has complex needs and has to have regular medication. They are great at communicating with us and will let us know if her mood changes, or if she has a tumble."

Innovative ideas

"Darcie-Mae struggles with transitions, such as leaving assembly and going back to the classroom, so the staff get the whole class to do an activity to help her, such as dancing a conga on the way back to the classroom. She can only say three words at the moment, but her sounds are definitely coming on because of the speech and language therapy she is receiving."

Happy pictures

"She has great relationships with everyone at the school and is always smiling on the pictures they take. She loves going to the sensory room and enjoys soft play. Before she started school, she was tactile defensive and didn't want to touch things, but now she enjoys exploring different textures", Kelly says.

Wonderful achievement

"We just wanted her to be happy and have her welfare needs met at school, but they have achieved far more than that. She always comes out of her taxi smiling in the afternoons, which shows us that Kennel Lane is definitely the school where she wants to be."



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