

# Apryl and Dennis are delighted with the nurturing and supportive approach offered by Hawthorns School and its flexible approach to learning:



*Apryl and Dennis Callaghan live in Stalybridge with Evlyn six, and Séamus, four. Evlyn joined Hawthorns School in Year 1 and Séamus joined in Reception; both children have Language and Communication difficulties. Séamus also has Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC).*

## A warm, friendly and welcoming environment:

For Apryl and Dennis, when they first went to view Hawthorns School, they got a wonderful feeling that it was the perfect place for Evlyn.

Evlyn was given a preliminary date for starting after her first visit but she settled so well that this date was brought forward. "It's such a lovely, warm and friendly place. It just felt right. It's made a big difference to the whole family."



## Specialist training:

"Evlyn's speech has been the most obvious change. We went from hearing one or two words a week to lots!" explains Apryl.

Apryl feels the changes in Evlyn are largely down to the strategies the school has in place for speech development. For example, the staff in Rowan Class have had specialist training on the Verbal Behaviour Approach, which has been shown to be very effective with children who are non verbal. Rowan class runs a completely different curriculum to the other classes, which is based on the children learning that communication is vital and that good things happen when they communicate with the adults. This curriculum is particularly effective with children on the Autistic Spectrum. Apryl's explains "Evlyn was in Rowan class until recently, where her speech has progressed so well, she has now transferred to another class, even though it's mid-year."

## A child centred approach:

Apryl considers Hawthorn School's ability to work with each child's individual abilities a real strength. Apryl says, "The staff are excellent at recognising when your child is ready for the next challenge. They'll speak with you and explain what they feel your child needs to develop next, for example, they've just moved Séamus into Rowan class for some focused language support. It's a very child centred school, with a very strong focus on meeting each child's needs. That's why they get the best from the children."

## A flexible approach with constant support:

Apryl adds: "We've been extremely impressed with the level of communication and the way the school works. Their willingness to move them during the school year to whichever class is going to support them best, rather than waiting for the start of a new school year, is very reassuring. It ensures they are constantly supported to progress. This makes the school stand out for us."

## Contented and happy children:

Apryl and Dennis feel certain both children are very happy and contented at Hawthorns School. "They both love going," explains Apryl. "Séamus struggles socially, so for him to want to go is a real recommendation in itself."

Apryl feels this has much to do with the level of focus placed on each child's individual abilities. She believes this has really helped her children feel valued. "At mainstream school, Evlyn was often excluded from activities because of her speech difficulties, but when she arrived at Hawthorns School she had renewed energy for learning. I'm certain this was because the staff ensured she was involved in everything."

## Small class sizes which nurture and support:

Apryl feels the small class sizes have also really helped Evlyn and Séamus with their social development. "The staff are so welcoming and friendly and have the capacity to work very closely with each child. I'm certain the small class sizes have helped both of my children in reaching social milestones. Their confidence has grown so much!"

Apryl adds: "Hawthorns School is an amazing place! They're always one step ahead and know just what your child needs next. They really value your opinion as a parent. We can't recommend it highly enough!"



## Children say:

Evlyn says: "I love cooking. Mummy comes to school. Mummy cooks with me."

Séamus says: "I like the donkeys."