

# Michelle and Anthony are grateful to Hawthorns School for doing everything possible to meet their daughter's individual needs:



*Michelle and Anthony McDonagh's daughter, Chloe, is five. Chloe lives in Denton with Michelle and has Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). She has been attending Hawthorns School since Reception.*

## Willing to listen:

Chloe has some complex needs which include sensory, language and communication difficulties. Michelle was initially anxious about how Chloe's needs would be met. "Chloe would become very distressed each morning, so I had to take her into the classroom each day. She struggled with the thought of me leaving her. She doesn't sleep at all well so this adds to her distress because she's so tired," explains Michelle. "The school was fantastic though. They always took time to listen to my concerns, to take them on board and I quickly built a good rapport with the staff."

## Consideration for individual needs:

Both Anthony and Michelle are impressed and grateful to the school for the level of support they have put in place to address Chloe's needs and to ease anxieties. "They added a lovely sensory corner into Chloe's Reception class with big pillows and blankets so she could lie down with her favourite toys and books. This was very calming for Chloe." says Michelle.



Anthony adds: "Chloe's a delicate girl and they've definitely done everything possible to make her comfortable. It's a brilliant school and I can see how her confidence has grown."

## A flexible and understanding approach:

Chloe's poor sleep pattern has caused her to miss some schooling. "If Chloe hasn't slept well, it adds to her distress in the morning," explains Michelle. She's found the school to be very understanding towards Chloe's needs. Michelle says, "They are supportive and encourage us to bring Chloe into school when she hasn't slept well. The school have been wonderful and very understanding of how Chloe's poor sleep pattern can impact on her emotions and behaviour during the day. They've done everything they can to accommodate Chloe."

## Willing to support routines at home:

Chloe's sensory needs mean she struggles with eating and putting different foods into her mouth. This has understandably caused Michelle some concerns about meal times at school but she's found the school's flexible approach brilliant in supporting routines adopted at home. "There's only certain things Chloe will eat. I give her food she likes so that she has something in her stomach, then offer new things each time for her to feel or put in her mouth. School has been very willing to adopt the same approach, which is great for consistency and really helps Chloe," says Michelle.

## Parents matter:

Michelle adds: "I was asked to write on a paper leaf my priorities for Chloe. The leaf was added to an illustrated tree in the school and will stay there for good so we can then see how she's progressed. I wrote that I wanted Chloe to be happy and to be able to communicate," explains Michelle. "I think the school has put in place some excellent support to ensure Chloe is happy!"

There are strategies in place to develop Chloe's speech, now that she's more settled. This takes place through the Verbal Behaviour Approach programme in Rowan class. I think it's great that they care how parents feel and are willing to listen."

## Excellent parent communication:

Anthony too is very positive about the school's communication with parents. He believes Hawthorns School considers it a high priority. "They send out emails each week with progress updates on Chloe, which is brilliant. Nothing is ever considered too much trouble. You can approach them about anything and they'll always do what they can to help and to keep you involved. I only have positive things to say about the school and the staff."

Michelle adds: "Hawthorns School is a wonderful school! It's a happy place for children and they want everyone to be involved. I have no regrets whatsoever!"

