



Heathlands has enabled Julia to consider a future for her son that she had not previously thought possible

Deaf awareness

Family circumstances made Julia acutely aware of problems that deaf children can face in mainstream school.

“Max was diagnosed as profoundly deaf at neonatal screening,” says Julia. “My older sister is also profoundly deaf and I was very aware of the problems and bullying that she endured at a mainstream school. I was quite clear that I wanted Max to have a strong deaf identity and not worry about being different or become a target for bullying. I wanted to find a school where he could just enjoy being a little boy and where aural/oral communication would not be a barrier to his learning potential.”

Julia and Steve Kenny live in Ware, Hertfordshire with eight-year-old Max.



Heathlands School

Nursery, Primary & Secondary Provision, Day & Residential

Choosing Heathlands

Max attended a pre-school club for children with hearing impairment, which had connections with Heathlands. Julia began to consider that this might be the ideal school for Max.

“Max started at Heathlands nursery when he was three and enjoyed it so much that he was quickly attending every day,” says Julia. “It was really good for him to enjoy peer-to-peer interaction and have other children to play with. He loved it.

“The facilities at Heathlands are excellent including its design, the fact that the rooms are all soundproofed to optimise the acoustics, and it has outstanding ICT technology. There are also superb auditory rooms with sensory toys that help to keep everything interesting”.

“Max also enjoys other activities, such as the school choir, which signs and they often perform at different venues.”

Academic achievements

From his early years Max effectively communicated using sign language, but at the age of three underwent surgery for bilateral cochlear implants.

“The first year after his implants Max was quite overwhelmed by the interruption of noise into his silent world,” recalls Julia.

“However he began to adjust and things became easier. I think that because he could say everything he needed to say with signing the speech just came naturally. He continues to do really well academically and his reading ability is fantastic, which helps to extend his vocabulary so that he now has a reading age that is a couple of years above his chronological age.

“The words that Max can speak now far outnumber the words he can sign and he now shows a strong preference for the spoken word.”

Finding solutions

The staff:pupil ratio at Heathlands School is very high, which enables staff to provide tailored teaching programmes and to deal swiftly with any problems that may arise. Julia was very pleased when staff quickly identified a potential problem with Max and provided an effective solution.

“There is a mix of deaf and hearing teachers and classroom assistants at Heathlands, and they are excellent role models for the deaf children,” explains Julia.

“There are only seven children in Max’s class and I was really impressed and grateful when staff flagged up their concerns that Max sometimes seems isolated at play times.

This is because Max now prefers speech and is unable to sign everything he wants to say to the other children, which is very frustrating for him.

“As a solution, the staff asked us to consider Max’s inclusion at a nearby primary school with a deaf unit to enable him to receive support for his deafness but also enjoy peer-to-peer support.

“Max now attends this primary school for two days per week. This school has very strong links with Heathlands and although I would never have thought this possible when Max started, we are now considering a permanent transfer. Heathlands has brought us to a place that we would not have previously considered possible and I recommend it 100%, without a moment’s hesitation.”

Children say

“I really enjoy the lessons because the teachers make them interesting and I also enjoy the group activities, which are lots of fun” says Max.



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