

Ben is now happy and has made miraculous progress since moving to Hebden Green School

Ben, aged 15, lives with his parents, Michelle and Gerry, and his sister near Macclesfield. Ben has low level cerebral palsy and epilepsy and has been a pupil at Hebden Green School for five years.

Right move

Moving to Hebden Green gave a lifeline to Ben and his family. His Mum, Michelle, says: "Ben had become anxious and lacked self esteem at the mainstream primary school he attended. He was having regular seizures and we knew he was unhappy. I just wanted my happy little boy back again and when the special needs coordinator at the school recommended Hebden Green we decided to go and have a look at it. As soon as we walked into the school we knew it was the right place for Ben."

Happy atmosphere

“We wanted him to be somewhere he would be accepted. We felt straight away that there was a lot of love for him at Hebden Green. It feels like a community where everyone is doing their best for the children, whereas his previous school had tried to make Ben fit in with what they were doing.”

Michelle says staff from Hebden Green went out to see Ben in the setting of his mainstream school. “They saw that Ben was very dependant and a lot was being done for him by a teaching assistant away from the main class.”

Feeling accepted

The change in him when he started at Hebden Green was miraculous, Michelle recalls. “Within about six weeks he was transformed into the happy boy we had known in the past. During the summer he had his medication changed which also helped. But the change in his environment was the most important. He was now in a setting that was accepting of him and where he was encouraged to accept himself.”

Good education

At Hebden Green they were also eager to build on his strengths. “Next year he will be doing GCSEs in Maths, English, Science and IT which would have seemed incredible to us a few years ago. He has progressed educationally so much. They have instilled the basics in him again and kept going over things until he has understood and been ready to progress to the next level. The teaching has been geared around Ben and he has flourished in this environment, “ Michelle says.

Learning problems

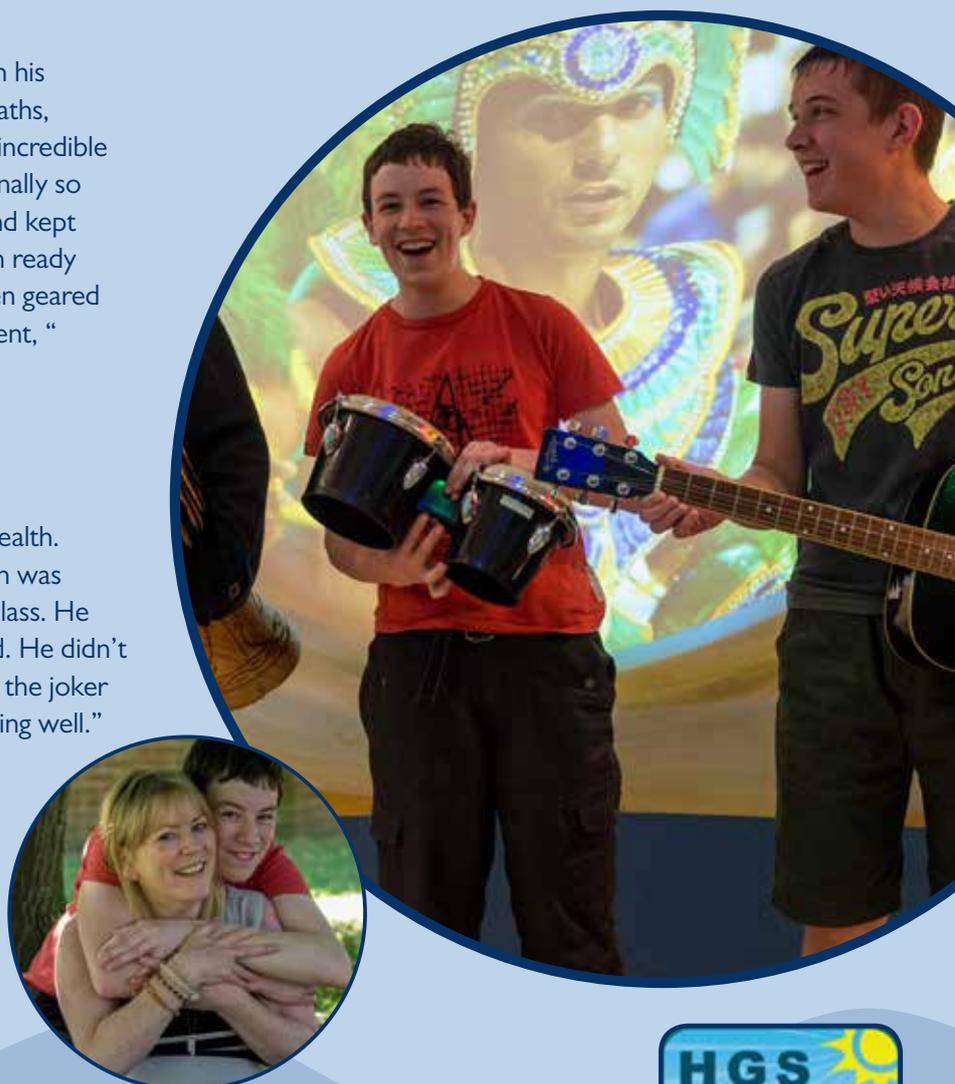
She said the main reason for moving Ben was his health. “He was having regular seizures and the medication was dampening him down and he was falling asleep in class. He was one of a class of 30 and he felt misunderstood. He didn’t feel accepted by the other children and tried to be the joker of the class as a result but it meant he wasn’t learning well.”

Friendship group

Michelle says Ben now has a wonderful circle of friends who all help each other. “He likes to talk to his friends when he is at home in the evenings. They are all very sociable and Skype each other. Now if he is upset about something at school he will talk to his friends about it and they will work it out between them. At Hebden Green his emotions have been addressed, not ignored. The school has great emotional intelligence.”

Confidence boost

The classes are small and he gets individual attention now. Michelle says: “He has been taught to believe in himself and has been helped to catch up with his education. It is also reassuring for us that there are trained nurses on the site if he is unwell. It is a weight lifted off our shoulders. We have started to live our lives again and have developed the confidence to take him abroad on holiday with the encouragement of the staff at the school. They do a wonderful job for the children who go there and I am grateful to them all.”



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