



Keith and Jane Hopkinson live in Stevenage with their children, Kizzie 17, and Olivia 15 in Year 10.

Keith and Jane believe teachers who understand and value each child are key to an outstanding experience at Knightsfield School

An instant feeling of calm

Olivia has combined conductive and sensori-neural hearing loss which wasn't confirmed until she was nine years old. "Olivia was at mainstream school receiving additional one to one support from a care assistant for fifteen hours a week, but due to the late diagnosis of her hearing difficulties it was clear she was falling behind and would benefit from specialist educational intervention," explains Jane.



**Knightsfield
School**

Specialist Sensory Academy

"As soon as we walked into Knightsfield School there was an instant feeling of calm and professionalism. The moment you walk in you know Knightsfield School is where your child needs to be," adds Keith.

Working together

Olivia joined the school in Year 7 and Keith and Jane immediately saw a difference in how her needs were met. "Each child is seen as an individual at Knightsfield School, each with different needs. You don't get this with a child who has special needs in a mainstream school."

Whilst Olivia initially settled in well she began experiencing some emotional difficulties in Year 9. Keith and Jane believe much of this was related to Olivia's age but felt the school cared and included them in every aspect of supporting Olivia. "We were meeting and talking with the school from the start and working together. It's that sense of involving families that really mattered to us," says Keith.

A practical and sensitive approach

Keith was impressed with the way they were kept informed about how Olivia was managing her emotions during the school day. "The Headteacher and her staff would call us to discuss the best way forward. They offered a calming space Olivia could go to and there was a specific member of staff she could speak to, which helped enormously. We always felt consulted and considered, which was important to us and we know Olivia felt valued and supported."

Caring and flexible

According to her parents, Olivia's confidence has grown during her time at Knightsfield School and they believe this has a lot to do with the kind and caring approach of the teaching staff. "Each child has an individual plan, but it's adaptable and it's flexible. The staff are very good at highlighting progress and achievements as well as ensuring that the next targets are clear; this has been very good for Olivia's confidence. They have taught her and us to be open minded about what she can achieve."

Reward and recognition

Keith believes the staff are also very good at recognising individual talents and are constructive in nurturing those. "Olivia has a whole host of awards, from subject progress awards to

communication awards and star pupil awards. Star pupil awards are voted for by the children so it meant a lot to Olivia to receive this. The school really is excellent at recognising hard work and achievement and rewarding it."

Strong preparation for the future

Another key strength of the school for Keith and Jane is the focus on independent living skills. "Olivia went on a trip recently into the local town by bus with a group of peers for some shopping and some lunch. She learned a lot from this experience and we believe that such activities play an important part in teaching her about living independently in society."

Keith and Jane also speak very positively about the excellent links the school has with further education. "They have a very positive 'can do' ethos and instil a strong sense of belief in each child that anything is possible. We feel they are providing a firm foundation for Olivia's future."

No hesitation

Keith adds: "The speech therapy on offer is absolutely excellent. Their caring ethos and ability to value each child as an individual is outstanding. We have no hesitation in openly recommending Knightsfield School."

Children say:

Olivia says: "I love everything about Knightsfield School but for me the best thing is the library where my friends and I enjoy a great range of special books together in peace and quiet."

