



Sarah and Russell Mackay live in St Albans with their children, Lewis, 15 and Martha, 14 and Donald, 12 in Year 8.

A great education and a nurturing environment - Sarah believes Knightsfield School offers children the chance to shine

Donald was born very prematurely and then contracted meningitis at two months old and he now wears hearing aids. "Donald lip reads and utilises his residual hearing very well, but it was clear he was going to struggle in mainstream secondary education. The big class sizes were an issue and the acoustics of the buildings weren't suitable for deaf children. With thirty other children around him Donald would have struggled to learn, and been constantly exhausted from straining to listen all day" explains Sarah.



**Knightsfield
School**

Specialist Sensory Academy

A superb facility

Sarah and Russell chose Knightsfield School following a suggestion from Donald's mainstream Teacher of the Deaf. "I had a number of reservations about choosing a specialist school for the deaf, but as soon as we visited Knightsfield School, every one of those dissolved. It's a superb facility and it was immediately clear that this was going to be the best school for Donald," explains Sarah.

An incredible opportunity

According to Sarah, Donald was initially resistant to the idea of going to a different school from his friends but he returned with a real energy after his first day. "He came back beaming and he hasn't looked back really. He's a different child in terms of his attitude to learning."

"The teachers are so in tune with every single child's ability and character; they know how to teach each individual, which is an incredible opportunity for our child."

So many strengths

For Sarah and Russell, Knightsfield has many strengths. "The fabric of the school, the acoustics, the small classes, the way each classroom is set up so that each child can lip read, and how each child's individual needs are met by specialist teachers - mainstream education just can't offer this," says Sarah. "The teaching staff feel like a real team and communication with the parents is amazing. They are able to respond to the characteristics and learning style of each child."

A growth in confidence and ability

Sarah feels certain that the benefits of the school have begun to make a real difference to Donald. "Knightsfield is giving him confidence and a belief in himself that he can learn and achieve. It's great to see how his self esteem is improving.

Sarah believes that Donald now has a more positive view of his future opportunities.

A chance to shine

The annual theatre performances have really demonstrated Donald's transformation to his parents. "He stood at the front,

delivering his lines, with confidence and emotion," says Sarah proudly. "Knightsfield gives all the children a chance to shine at these sorts of things. It is wonderful to see!

"Donald really enjoys his sport too," explains Sarah. "He has recently been chosen as a Sports Ambassador for the school. This will enable him to gain leadership skills and is a really great way of providing him with recognition and reward for his hard work."

Incredible warmth and commitment

Sarah adds: "We've seen some wonderful changes in Donald since he started at the school. The staff are so supportive and helped him to feel at home almost immediately. There's an incredible warmth and level of commitment at Knightsfield School.

"If you have an oral deaf child who you think will struggle in a mainstream setting, I suggest you visit Knightsfield School. It's been the perfect choice for Donald, and we have no hesitation in recommending it."

Children say:

Donald says: "My favourite thing about Knightsfield School is my friends."

