



Sarah and Philip Lingard live in Colchester with their daughter, Elle-Mae, aged nine. Elle-Mae is autistic and has attended Lexden Springs School since she was four.

## Elle-Mae has blossomed in the warm friendly atmosphere of Lexden Springs School

### Enjoying reading

Sarah and Philip are thrilled with the talkative little girl who comes home from school, smiling and happy and delighted to be bringing home a reading book in her school bag. "Elle-Mae couldn't talk or communicate at all when she first started at Lexden Springs. Now she chatters away and is reading and writing, it's brilliant," Sarah says.

## Communication problems

After Elle-Mae was born Sarah and Philip noticed that all stages of her development were delayed. "She crawled late and she walked late and she didn't show any signs of talking at all. She started to attend a nursery, where she had a one to one key worker looking after her, but she still could not communicate with us and did not make much progress while she was there," Sarah says

## Welcoming atmosphere

The turning point came when the family moved to Colchester and started looking for a suitable school for Elle-Mae. Sarah says: "We went to look at three different schools for her because we wanted to make sure we found one that really suited her and where she would be happy. As soon as I saw Lexden Springs I was impressed. I liked the layout and thought that the atmosphere was friendly, warm and welcoming and I just knew instinctively that it was going to be the right school for Elle-Mae."

## Fun with phonics

From the minute she started at Lexden Springs, Elle-Mae began making progress, Sarah says. "She started to talk and communicate with us and began learning to read using their phonics programme. Within about a year of learning this way she picked up a book and started reading it and yet she couldn't read at all when she first

started at the school. The school teach using phonics to pronounce the actual sounds, rather than saying the letters in a word and then they put all the sounds together to make the full word. Elle-Mae loves phonics lessons and saying the sounds."

## Writing and spelling

"Now Elle-Mae can read, she loves bringing books home with her. She is still behind considering her actual age but the progress she has made since she has been at the school is fantastic. She can read and understand what she has read and she can spell words and copy pieces of writing. They are now helping her improve her handwriting and teaching her to write on lines. She really has come on loads since she started at Lexden Springs," Sarah says.

## Varied activities

"Elle-Mae loves absolutely everything about the school. She loves the teachers, she loves the other children, she loves swimming and she loves

doing PE," her Mum says. "She enjoys going there in a taxi every day and taking her packed lunch with her because she is a fussy eater. She will just have school dinner once a week when it is pizza and chips on the menu. But she loves doing 'shop, cook and eat' with the school and going to the supermarket with her little list and buying things to take back to the school to cook and eat. As a result she also likes going to the supermarket with me."

## Settled and happy

"Elle-Mae loves colouring and drawing and has told me that her favourite subject is English," Sarah says. "After being at the school for five years she is really settled and happy there. We have never had any issues with the school and I would wholeheartedly recommend it to other families. The teachers all regularly fill me in on how well Elle-Mae is doing and every day she comes out smiling. You can tell that she just loves everything about Lexden Springs School."



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