



Sharon and Neil Arnold live in Langham with their daughter, Shannon, aged 16, who is studying child development, and son, Kieran, aged 14, who has been at Lexden Springs School since he was seven. Kieran has been diagnosed with verbal dyspraxia and global learning development delay.

Kieran has grown in confidence in the caring atmosphere of Lexden Springs School

Improved communication

Kieran is happy, confident and communicating better with his family now he is at Lexden Springs School. His Mum, Sharon, is thrilled with the progress he has made and is enjoying being able to have a conversation with her son. "When Kieran was still at his mainstream school he couldn't communicate with anyone and was unable to do what the other children were doing," she says.

Learning difficulties

"In his mainstream school Kieran was alright when he was in the reception class because they were mainly playing, but once he went into Year One and was having to sit and learn it became obvious he had problems. He couldn't ask questions about what he was learning. He could communicate with us using Makaton, which is a language programme that uses signs and symbols, and with his PECS cards, but he was isolated at school," Sharon explains.

Fitting in

After Kieran's diagnosis, the family started looking at special schools. "We didn't choose Lexden Springs originally, as I didn't think Kieran would like it - but the headmaster of Kieran's mainstream school asked us to go and look at it. I suppose I was in a bit of denial at that stage. However, he settled in really well and took to the routine like a duck to water," Sharon says.

Trying new things

The first sign of progress was Kieran seemed happier when he was at home. Sharon says: "He was interacting with us more and seemed more confident. He was attempting to do things he wouldn't have tried before. For example, he started to change the Makaton to fit with what he wanted to say."

Writing skills

Kieran never wants to miss school when he is unwell, which shows he is happy there, Sharon says. "I am

constantly informed by the school that he is doing well with his work and when he comes home from school, without being told, he sits down and practices his writing. If he wants something I am trying to encourage him to write it down, or to at least give me the first letter of the word he wants to say, which he can now do by pronouncing the sound."

Physical activity

Kieran loves sports, PE, swimming and all the outdoor activities at Lexden Springs. "His teachers say he is engaged in everything he does. He likes all the staff and particularly looks up to the male teachers. He has a taxi to school every day but he enjoys the journey and likes his escort. He loves the school dinners. If I have to take him to a hospital appointment he never wants to miss his school dinner. He has had a

problem with his stomach and we have had to try to eliminate various foods to see what is causing it, but the school have been really helpful and are prepared to cater for his needs," Sharon says.

Mixing well

Kieran has made lots of friends at Lexden Springs and talks about them to his family by pronouncing the first letter of their names using phonics. Sharon says: "Kieran enjoys seeing some of them out of school at the youth club he goes to. He's a typical teenage boy and he likes listening to music when he comes home from school. It's his way of de-stressing.

"I would definitely recommend Lexden Springs School to other families, having seen Kieran become settled and happy there and knowing that he really enjoys going every day," Sharon says.



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