



David Stoker and Sharon Slade live in Colchester with Sharon's daughter, Lauren, aged 15, and their son, Joseph, aged five. Lauren, who has physical and mental disabilities as a result of having Rett syndrome, has attended Lexden Springs since she was eight.

Lauren's family are delighted to see her making progress with the help of staff at Lexden Springs School

Improved mobility

David and Sharon are pleased with the progress Lauren has made in the last few years at Lexden Springs. Sharon says: "Lauren has a lifelong condition that has affected her speech and mobility but thankfully she has now started to improve with the help of staff at the school and there is real hope for her future. She is meeting and exceeding her targets each year and the staff are pushing her and challenging her to continue to improve and stay mobile."

First symptoms

Lauren was born with Rett syndrome, a rare genetic condition that mainly affects girls, but there were no signs of it until she was two and a half. Sharon says: "She lost what speech she had and started to develop other symptoms, such as constantly wringing her hands and putting them in her mouth. Her mobility suffered and she struggled to walk unaided. It is a condition which starts with slow development but is followed by alarming regression until it reaches a plateau."

Good recommendation

Lauren was not definitively diagnosed with Rett syndrome until the age of four. "It was just in time for her to get a place in another local special needs school rather than in mainstream education. The school was lovely but they had little experience of Rett syndrome. They looked after her in the reception class for three years but eventually recommended Lexden Springs as they knew it was more equipped to cater for her learning difficulties," Sharon says.

Consistent improvement

Lauren didn't immediately make progress after starting at Lexden Springs, but eventually there were small signs of improvement. Sharon says: "In the last three or four years we have noticed a consistent improvement. Hand wringing had been her default position but the school have taught her to use her

hands better and she is now able to use the pincer movement and her pointing finger. They have taught her to spoon feed herself under supervision. There has been an improvement in her verbalisation and they have encouraged her to interact more with her peers."

Sensory curriculum

Lauren enjoys the way they teach her at Lexden Springs because a lot of her learning takes place in a multi-sensory environment. Sharon says: "They have an interactive white board which she likes to touch and they encourage her to make choices using pictures to decide on what activity she is going to do. They also use objects of reference to help with her understanding of the day ahead. For example, Lauren knows that an armband means that she is about to go swimming. They are teaching her to use her hands properly and to reach out and touch things. Everything has to be sensory

for Lauren. They have discovered that once she starts using her hands properly, she will concentrate better, engage with the activity and enjoy it."

Improved concentration

Sharon is pleased that Lauren has been able to have continuity at Lexden Springs. "She has really benefited from having the same teacher for the last few years because by now she has got to know Lauren inside out. We have been lucky that many of the support staff have also remained consistent. They understand when they should be pushing and challenging her and when she genuinely can't do things because they have got to know her. They have encouraged her to respond more and have definitely helped improve her concentration. They are constantly trying to help her be the best she can be, which has been wonderful for us, and her extended family, to see."



Lexden Springs School
Halstead Road
Colchester
Essex
CO3 9AB

Tel No: 01206 563321
Fax No: 01206 570758
Holly Lodge: 01206 364475
Email: admin@lexdensprings.essex.sch.uk
Web: www.lexdensprings.co.uk