

Meadowside School has helped Alastair achieve perhaps more than I thought possible



Gwen Seller lives in Meols with her children Olivia, 20 and Alastair, 18. Alastair has Down's Syndrome and is hearing impaired.

A calming space

When choosing a secondary school for Alastair, Gwen and Patrick, Alastair's father, were searching for the right environment for their son. "We found the space inside Meadowside a very calming and attractive space. The facilities on offer and the atmosphere are what really struck us about the school," says Gwen.

Lasting friendships

Gwen and Patrick have noticed some positive changes in Alastair during his time at Meadowside. "He's become much more his own person and more aware of his place in the world and the environment around him. One of the biggest things we've noticed is the enduring relationships Alastair has formed," explains Gwen. "Friendships have become incredibly important for him."

A real partnership

Being a smaller school, Gwen likes how the children and the staff have the opportunity to really get to know each other. "I went to one event recently where we joined in with activities in the classroom. It was a wonderful day and gave an insight into the relationships between children and staff, which is clearly a real strength of the school."

"There's lots of opportunity to work in partnership with the staff to resolve any concerns or issues. It's good that Alastair is aware that we work together consistently. It's less about pointing the finger and more about how to address whatever the issue is and how to improve it. On the whole, it's a very joined up approach and that's reassuring."

Positive progress

Gwen feels the support Alastair has received with his learning needs has also been encouraging. "Class sizes are small and each subject is monitored closely and progression is very well tracked. Sometimes it's minimal progress but it's moving in the right direction and it's this steady progress that we hope for. Regular review means that we're all involved in discussion about next targets, including Alastair, which is excellent."

Gwen believes the post 16 curriculum is strong and feels it has played to Alastair's strengths. "It includes a variety of outdoor activities and classroom learning. Alastair loves his weekly trip to Crosby Marina and I'm amazed how confident he is in the canoes and handling the sail boats. I feel it's a great offer for the 16 to 19 year olds."

Every achievement counts

Each achievement is celebrated at Meadowside. "For children with learning disabilities this is so important. Alastair is enormously proud if he gets an 'Achiever of the Week' certificate or when he earns merits," says Gwen. "They also celebrate the transition from Meadowside to whatever the next step may be. Social events with former pupils and their parents have provided opportunities to speak to those families who have experienced the process of leaving, which has offered valuable insight for us."

Reassuring support from medical staff

One of the huge benefits of Meadowside for Gwen is the support available from medical staff. "They have dedicated nursing staff which means if we have any concerns they're just a phone call away or I can go into school and talk to them. I've found them incredibly receptive and it's a nice, safe port of call for Alastair too - he will often talk to them instead of me."

Helping to make things easier

Gwen adds; "We've been offered lots of support with Alastair's hearing and health issues. We've had blood tests done with the school nurse instead of at the hospital, for example, which is an environment Alastair is far more comfortable in. Sometimes that familiar environment makes all the difference."

Important values

Gwen adds; "Meadowside is a wonderfully warm and welcoming school which is incredibly supportive to pupils and their families. Their holistic approach and the values they embed have helped Alastair grow in confidence and develop into a kind and considerate young man who cares about his friendships. He has enjoyed his time at Meadowside and the staff have helped him achieve far more than I perhaps thought possible. We will sincerely miss everyone when Alastair leaves."



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