

Moving from mainstream school to New Fosseway provided a perfect solution for Leah and her family

Wendy and Rob Stone live in Brislington, Bristol with nine-year-old twins Leah and Jack.



Complex needs

Wendy's daughter, Leah, who has Down's syndrome, initially went to mainstream infant school, but this became increasingly difficult for her to cope with.

"Leah has quite complex medical needs," says Wendy. "For example, she is tube fed and is nil by mouth. The hectic pace of a mainstream school and large class sizes became too much for Leah and so when she left infants school and the opportunity came up for her to go to New Fosseway we thought it sounded ideal."

First impressions

New Fosseway is a place where children can thrive and be happy.

"We knew immediately that New Fosseway was right for Leah," recalls Wendy. "It was like she'd always been there. Everything seemed calm and the pace was slower, with a maximum of eight children per class and she loved it. Everyone was friendly and welcoming, with several teachers in each classroom. The approach to learning was very visual and staff were much more switched on to Leah's needs."

On the move

Any worries Wendy had about sending Leah to school on the bus disappeared when she saw how much her daughter enjoyed the experience.

"We were worried about Leah travelling on the school bus, but she absolutely loves it. As soon as she hears the bus she gets her coat on and she's off! It's brilliant."

Medical help

Students at New Fosseway often have numerous medical appointments, but many can be attended without the children leaving the premises.

"At mainstream school we had to take Leah out of school for her appointments but at New Fosseway a team of professionals including a paediatrician, physio, speech and language therapists, dentist and dietitian regularly hold clinics there. It's so much easier."

Active learning

Leah enjoys many fun activities and has some close friends.

"Leah loves cycling, PE, and photography," explains Wendy. "She also enjoys after school cookery club and will start a dance club soon. Throughout the year there are all kinds of shows and events and Leah now has some lovely friends."

Good communication

The school works hard to provide opportunities for parental involvement.

"Communication is very good," says Wendy. "Parents are invited to coffee mornings and the school also offers things like Makaton sessions for parents. A parent support worker acts as a coordinator and you can talk to her at any time."

Dealing with problems

Since attending New Fosseway Leah's behaviour has significantly improved.

"Leah has come on in leaps and bounds and her behaviour has changed dramatically," says Wendy. "She used to mimic the behaviour of some other kids, doing things like climbing on and under tables but her last report didn't mention any of that. If there is a problem the staff remove her from the situation and talk to her and she seems to listen and really understand that it's not what you are supposed to do."

High achiever

At the end of her first year Wendy could not have been happier when Leah won an award for the child who had come on the most.

"In mainstream school we had to fight for speech and language therapy," says Wendy. "Leah was not really talking when she started at New Fosseway, but within two to three terms of continuous speech and language therapy her verbal skills and understanding came on so much, it was amazing. We were so proud when she won the award. New Fosseway is the best thing we could have done for Leah and I definitely recommend it."

