

Julie didn't want her son to be labelled as a slow learner, but Saxon Mount Community School has shown her that he can achieve just as well as the rest



Julie Brooker lives in Bexhill with her three children. Tommy, 14, attends Saxon Mount Community School.



A big difference in a short time

Tommy has only been at Saxon Mount School for a few months but already Julie has noticed a big difference – and a very positive one at that. Initially reluctant to send Tommy to a 'special school', her only slight regret is that she did not do it earlier. She explains:

“Ever since Tommy was quite young I had wondered sometimes if he was a bit different to other children his age. With two other children I had a means of comparison but as they are girls, I thought perhaps it was just a boy thing and that he would catch up later. Then when his teachers at primary school mentioned that they also thought he needed extra help, I hoped that would do the trick.”

Swimming against the tide

Julie felt that he was coping reasonably well at his primary school and it was only later that she realised the Teaching Assistants were actually completing much of his work for him. “If I had known then what I know now, I would have gone against my wishes and looked for a school which could give him the right support, which is what we now have at SaxonMount” she says. “I was keen for him to stay in mainstream education but it was fairly clear that, when he started secondary school, he was struggling to keep up. Tommy himself knew he was falling behind, and he felt awkward when he had to ask for help; I started to feel that he would do better elsewhere.”

Taking the pressure off

Having made the decision to move him, and with advice from his school and the Local Authority, Julie was allocated a place for Tommy at Saxon Mount where, from day one, he has been happier and is achieving much better than before. Tommy has learning difficulties, affecting his speech and language skills and his concentration range, but even a fairly small disadvantage like this can have a major impact on a child’s ability to learn.

“One of the best things about Saxon Mount is the smaller class sizes, where the children are taught in same-ability groups,” Julie believes. “For Tommy, it means that he doesn’t feel uncomfortable when he doesn’t understand something because he knows he’s not the only one. He is under far less pressure as the lessons are tailored towards the slower-learners and that makes it so much easier for him to actually learn, because he’s not worrying about keeping up with the others.”

Slowly and surely

The school offers a range of support, including after-school English and Maths sessions which Tommy has benefited from

greatly. With his concentration span improving, as well as his reading skills, Julie could not be happier. “The chance to learn at a slower pace and having the additional tuition has been exactly what Tommy needed. He is more confident, much happier and in a good position to take GCSEs, which might not have been the case if he had stayed in the mainstream. He is actually a different person since he joined Saxon Mount.”

Smooth transition

It says much for the school that Tommy’s transition was so smooth. “When it happened, it happened very quickly,” says Julie. “Within three days he had left one school and started at another, mid-term and mid-week, and I was so nervous for him. I didn’t need to be: he has loved it from the start. The teachers are excellent. They have always been welcoming, reassuring and very approachable, and I have complete faith in them to do the best for my son.”

The right choice all round

Moving to a different school didn’t mean that Tommy had to miss out on his favourite activities as Saxon Mount has good sports facilities including football and table tennis which are his two after-school clubs of choice. With plans to take a BTEC in Sport at college, Tommy seems to have fallen on his feet. “It wasn’t easy to acknowledge that Tommy needed support at this level but both he and I know now that it was the best decision we ever made to move him to Saxon Mount. He has better prospects because he is in the right place.”

Children say

Tommy: “Saxon Mount is very nice and I am very pleased to be there. I feel I can learn much more as they go at a slower pace.”



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