



Jayne and Mick Sheehan live in Borehamwood with their son Michael, 20, who has autism. Michael finished his education at St Luke's School in 2010. Impressed with the school, Jayne became involved with the school and is currently Chair of Governors.

Jayne believes St Luke's School is very visionary, always eager to move forward for the benefit of the children.

Jayne and Mick chose St Luke's School for Michael after he was becoming very stressed in mainstream school. "Michael struggled to cope with changes to daily school routine and would get very angry," explains Jayne. "It was recommended that we should look at a special needs school and St Luke's really stood out for us and for Michael. It looks like a very normal secondary school but the teaching is very different."



A good balance

For Jayne, the layout of the school was impressive. "The site had lots of open space for children to move around. Like an ordinary secondary school, I liked its separate curriculum areas for subjects like wood work and science, but I really liked the way it taught at a primary level meaning the curriculum was accessible," explains Jayne. "This reassured me that Michael could cope in the environment."

A consistent approach

Jayne was impressed with the school's understanding of autism. She feels it was this that helped Michael to settle so well. "The staff understand the need for consistency in their approach. They very much understand that they can't change routine and that things need to be regimented. They do introduce change but it's done gradually. And the behaviour policy is very consistent at St Luke's."

Building confidence and skills for a brighter future

According to Jayne, Michael is now a very independent 20 year old. "If you'd have told me when Michael first started school where he would be now, I wouldn't have believed you. He has GCSE's, has passed his driving test and is now on a level three Business Studies course at college," says Jayne.

Jayne believes St Luke's School played a huge role in Michael's progress. "St Luke's is excellent at delivering the different teaching styles required by special needs children. This allowed Michael to realise he could access the curriculum but in a different way," explains Jayne.

"At St Luke's School, children are entered in to exams that they can achieve in. Things like this play a huge part in their self-confidence! Michael hopes next year to start a career in accounts and bookkeeping."

Parent involvement

Jayne became a Parent Governor while Michael was at St Luke's School but has remained actively involved as Chair of Governors even though Michael has since moved on to college. "The school gave us so much that I really wanted to give something back," says Jayne. "St Luke's is a truly wonderful school. It's very visionary, always willing to change what it does for the best interests of the children. That's why it's such a good school."

About his time at St Luke's School, Michael says:

"The school gave me the support I needed. The teachers were very good at explaining why certain behaviours were wrong. The same was true with lessons too. They had a very good way of always explaining things in a way I could understand," says Michael.

"We had lessons in Citizenship topics which taught us about important life issues by presenting both sides to us. For children with autism, we often live in our own cocooned world and find it hard to see things from other perspectives, so talking about issues in this way, like bullying for example, worked really well for me." Michael adds: "I remember spending time preparing for life after St Luke's School. We would visit a college and take part in lessons like cookery and woodwork, and we'd spend time getting used to visiting the canteen environment."

St Luke's School teaches confidence and independence

When asked how he feels St Luke's School prepared him for life as an adult, Michael is very certain in his response: "I think, had it not been for St Luke's School, I wouldn't feel as confident or be as independent in society as I am today!"



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