



Selworthy School



Selworthy School

Inspiring lifelong learning

Welcome to Selworthy School...a very special school!

Foreword: Headteacher, Mark Ruffett

We recognise the individuality in every learner and take the time to get to know them really well, and conversely let them get to know us really well. We believe strongly in positive behaviour support and the positive impact that relationships can have.

Very special school

- **Special** because we have wonderful learners who are each individual, enthusiastic and inspirational.
- **Special** because we have parent carers who are the experts in their children's lives and work in partnership with us to provide the best possible offer.
- **Special** because we have Teachers who go the extra mile and then keep going.
- **Special** because we have support staff who are dedicated to the holistic needs of every learner.
- **Special** because we have Leaders and Governors who will leave no stone unturned when exploring new ways to improve the school.
- **Special** because we have superb working relationships with external specialists who expand our knowledge and provision.
- **Special** because we are part of multiple collaborative learning communities with other education establishments.
- **Special** because we have a local community who support our belief that the real world is the best place to learn life skills and welcome us with open arms.

Our aims and values

At Selworthy School we put the young person at the centre of all we do. We strongly believe that the school has to fit the learner and not the other way around. Each day we venture into a community where opportunities flourish, and which fosters individuality. We expect the best of ourselves and celebrate our achievements within our school community.

We know every learner

One of the great qualities of our school is that we are small. We are therefore able to know each learner really well. Positive behaviour support relies heavily on relationships. The aim in our school is for learners to become part of a whole community which instils a sense of pride in each other.

Parent carer partnership

Another very important part of our school is you; the parent carer! As you will see, by reading the many parent carer and learner stories within this prospectus, you and your child are very important to us. We value the link between school and parent carer and work very hard to involve you in every step of your child's time here. We hope that your association with us will bring both happiness and success for your child.

Get in touch

We welcome your interest in our school and ask that you come and see us for a visit while our children are present; when you can see us as we really are. Please email office@selworthy.somerset.sch.uk, or phone the office on 01823 284970, to make an appointment.

We strongly believe that the school must fit the learner and not the other way around.



Ria Borrett and her eight-year-old son Travis live near Taunton. Travis is a learner at Selworthy School.

Ria knows that her son is special and unique, with a great deal to offer, and so do his teachers at Selworthy School

A mother's instinct

Ria had visited several special schools before deciding that it was Selworthy which could best address the needs of her son. Although each school had its own merits, it was Selworthy which stood out in terms of provision and ethos. "It was an instinctive thing for me; I loved the attitude of 'we won't make your child change, we will change for your child', and ever since Travis started there I have seen this in action. Even though Travis's condition is extremely rare,

they assured me that they would treat him according to his own needs and capabilities and this has been the case since day one."

Living life on his own terms

Travis is one of only 16 children worldwide diagnosed with Temple-Baraitser Syndrome which causes epilepsy, extreme hypermobility, compromised muscle tone and global delay, and Ria was given a diagnosis only two years ago. "In some ways it was a relief to have a confirmed

diagnosis but the most important thing was for him to be given the right help for his symptoms. No two children are alike whatever their condition is called and at Selworthy, they look at the whole child and their individual needs. Travis gets exactly what I want for him – if he won't be able to learn maths, science and geography, he's learning about social interaction, how to feed himself and enjoy life on his own terms."

Instant response

Because Travis tires very easily, often quickly and without warning, the staff keep a constant eye on him and make sure he has ready access to the sensory room where he can take time out to recover, and he spends much of the day there, often taking his schoolwork with him. "Everything is very flexible and his teachers are aware that if he flags he needs to be able to recuperate straightaway. Although he is non-verbal and his communication skills are limited, they are totally switched on and understand what he needs, when he needs it."

A two-way street

There are various ways in which the school is helping Travis's ability to communicate, including picture cards, Eyegaze, signing and Proxtalker but, like many other eight-year-old children, Travis has come up with his own way of expressing himself. "What is so lovely about Selworthy is that they know him very well and the staff have learned as much as I have how to interpret him," Ria says. "I have learned from them as much as Travis has and they also listen to me. It's very much a two-way street."

Accelerated progress

Travis has regular sessions in speech and language, occupational and physiotherapy, all of which are paying dividends. "His co-ordination is improving and he can now feed himself pretty

well, and he is starting to say a few words, but for me, the best thing is that he is getting much closer to being able to walk unaided because of the dedication of his physiotherapist, who has worked with him tirelessly and greatly accelerated his progress. Seeing him take his first steps with his K-Frame walker was a serious Proud Mummy Moment!"

The same opportunities – and more

Children with special needs are undeniably different from those in the mainstream but are no less capable of appreciating many of the same things. This is why the children at Selworthy not only have the chance to go horse riding, swimming and on educational visits, but participate in school productions, after-school clubs and other events, just like other children take for granted. "All Selworthy children have opportunities like anyone else – perhaps even more so," believes Ria. "I sometimes think that Travis has a more privileged education because he is not being obliged to fit in with a fixed curriculum in a class of 30 children, but has access to what really works for him."

A different perspective

Ria is obviously passionate about her son and about the care of children like him, and says that her perspective on life has completely changed since Travis was born. "My understanding of human nature is so different now. I have learned for myself, and Selworthy has reinforced my views, that no-one should be put into a box and labelled. Travis has his difficulties but he is still a very special person to whom people are drawn because he has his own beautiful, unique personality. I am so fortunate that Selworthy School recognises and appreciates that as much as I do."

School day: settling in

School times

The school day starts at 9.00am. There is a morning break at 10.30am-11.00am and lunchtime is 12.00pm-1.00pm. Our school day ends at 3.15pm.

Getting to school

Children who come to school on County transport are met on arrival and they will walk into school with members of staff. Children who come to school with their parent carers are met at the school reception by staff.

Independence

We are always considering developing independence skills and will work with children and their families to support a more independent transition into school where appropriate.

Uniform

We have a school uniform that many of our learners like to wear, but we are relaxed about slight alterations to this if it supports a child coming into school with minimal challenge. Our everyday uniform with the school logo consists of sky blue T-shirts and polo shirts with navy sweatshirts, cardigans and fleece.

School meals

Children have the choice of either a hot nutritious meal from our school meals service, or bringing a packed lunch into school. We provide all children with fresh water.

Free school meals

For children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, the government provides free school meals. For older children, you need to be in receipt of certain benefits.



Nicolette and Chris Venning live in Taunton with their large family of 15 children. Nathan, 12, Nicolette Junior, eight, and Robert, five, are learners at Selworthy School.

experience had affected him to the extent that he was terrified of strangers, of anyone in authority, and he had absolutely no self-confidence. Despite his learning difficulties he didn't reach the criteria for a diagnosis of autism and so we had no help at all."

A life-changing move

Eventually, three years ago, Nicolette and Chris managed to get a place for him at Selworthy and this has, says Nicolette, changed their lives. "It took Nathan quite a while to settle in but what was so wonderful was how the staff understood him and worked to his strengths. Gradually, with a sensitive and sensible approach, they managed to break down the barriers he had put up around himself and restore his confidence, so that he actually started to want to learn. They concentrated on what he was good at and what he enjoyed, and now he is starting to read and write, and enjoying it. He no longer feels different, but accepted for who he is."

An unexpected talent discovered

Nathan is learning a range of life and social skills, such as personal care and appropriate behaviour, and has discovered a fascination and talent for cooking. "He absolutely loves the cookery lessons and is really, really good at it!" laughs Nicolette. "It's another thing which makes him feel good about himself and an example of how the school takes the time and trouble to find a way of getting through to children with additional needs."

The chance to blossom

Like Nathan, Nicolette Junior also started in the mainstream system but she suffers from a range of physical disabilities as well as learning difficulties. With Chromosome 16 disorder, cerebral palsy and epilepsy, she, too, found school challenging and it was a relief when she was

accepted into Selworthy last year. "Selworthy had done such an amazing job with Nathan, I knew it was the right choice for Nicolette as well," says her mum. "She has some way to go but is starting to blossom and the facilities available have been such a help. The hydrotherapy pool is wonderful for exercise and for strengthening her muscles, and music therapy is perfect for her love of performing and singing. Although she talks a lot at home, she wouldn't do so in a group setting but now that is changing as she becomes more confident."

A clever approach to learning

Robert's difficulties are somewhat different, and can present particular problems for the family: at five years old he has an energy which his parent carers find hard to keep up with. "Robert has autism and is non-verbal but what he doesn't lack is strength and speed! Even his teachers say they have rarely seen anything like it but fortunately, the outside space at Selworthy is perfect for him to let off steam. He is having speech and language therapy and occupational therapy, and uses picture cards to help his communication. Cleverly, he is being taught to count by using his favourite toy dinosaurs and he's improving because the method engages his interest."

Transformation

Whilst Selworthy School has been a huge help to all three children, as well as constantly supportive of the family as a whole, it is mainly for Nathan's sake that Nicolette is so grateful. "Last year Nathan had the lead role in the school's production of The Snowman. To see my scared, withdrawn and sad little boy up on the stage, singing his heart out and full of confidence was truly astonishing. For me, that transformation sums up Selworthy School."

Nicolette despaired for the mental health of her son until Selworthy School transformed his life, and that of his brother and sister, too

A difficult start

From an early age, it was clear to Nicolette and Chris that Nathan had a range of learning difficulties, although without an official diagnosis they had little choice but to send him to a mainstream school. "He struggled from the start," remembers Nicolette. "He was making hardly any progress and he was picked on and bullied because of his problems. We tried another school but the same thing happened there and I decided he would have to leave and

be home-schooled instead. He was dreadfully unhappy."

Shut off from the world

For some considerable time, Nathan refused to leave the house and insisted on all the curtains being closed because he was so frightened of the outside world. Despite constant reassurance and care from his parent carers and siblings, his mental health had deteriorated so badly that Nicolette feared for his future. "His school

Curriculum: foundations for the future

Stimulating and varied

We aim to instil a positive attitude for learning through offering a curriculum which is stimulating and varied whilst meeting the needs of each individual learner. The curriculum is planned for the learner and is accessed in a way which enhances and develops every learner's ability to think for themselves and feel for others.

Partnership working

We pride ourselves on partnership work and recognise the importance of collaborating with professionals such as Educational Psychologist, Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists to maximise the potential of all our learners.

Individual and multi-sensory learning

Individual timetables enable learners to access curriculums tailored to their needs and ensure they succeed in education. Cross-curricular activities ensure consolidation of learning and child initiated lines of enquiry are pursued. Our nurturing approach promotes participation and every child's contribution is valued and encouraged to embrace challenge and build resilience.

Multi-sensory

Multi-sensory learning provides all children with the opportunity to feel, develop and learn through active engagement on multiple levels. The importance of play is visible within every lesson and is a fundamental part of our planning.

Different learning styles

We offer opportunities for children to learn in different ways which include:

- Investigation and problem solving.

- Research and exploration.
- Group work, paired work, independent work, whole class work.
- Asking and answering questions.
- Use of ICT.
- Fieldwork and visits to places of educational interest.
- Responding to musical or recorded material.
- Debates, role plays and oral presentations.
- Designing and making things.
- Participating in athletic or physical activity.

Personalised curriculum

We offer every child a curriculum that is personalised to their needs taking into account the way they think, communicate and feel.

Curriculum subjects

The basic curriculum for each child will include, as appropriate for each Key Stage:

- English/Communication.
- Mathematics.
- Science.
- Technology: (DT and Food)
- Computing.
- Art.
- Music.
- Physical Education (including physiotherapy as necessary).
- Wellbeing (Personal, Social Health and Citizenship Education).
- Our world (RE, History, Geography).

Ofsted say:

“Learners make good and often outstanding progress from their low starting points. Achievement is improving very well across all key stages.”

‘Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a very good beginning in school because of skilful teaching and the excellent relationships that the staff establish with parent carers who may be anxious and diffident.’”

Our fantastic facilities

Our staff team and physical environment further support learning and enhance each child's school experience:

- Class teams are provided with extensive training including regular, personalised communication training from a communication specialist to support effective positive behaviour support at all levels.
- The school is fully accessible and has soundfield systems in every classroom to support hearing impairment.
- There are a number of specialist teaching spaces including a music therapy studio, sensory classroom and hydrotherapy pool.
- We do not believe a school is simply our buildings so much of our learning takes place in a range of outside environments.
- We have strong links with the community and make use of many of the facilities on our doorstep and also contribute to and participate in local events.

Ongoing assessments

Evaluation

Evaluation is ongoing in all areas of the curriculum and at individual, class and whole school levels. Continuous teacher assessment, reinforced with available evidence, form the basis of assessment throughout the school. The Selworthy interpretation of the National Curriculum subjects and cross curricular components lead to an effective whole school approach to assessment planning and evaluation.

Annual Review

Parent carers are invited to take part in their child's Annual Review when we discuss their progress and set targets for the following year. Your child always contributes to this meeting and where possible is invited to take part. The annual report to parent carers informs the review of the EHCP/Statement of Special Educational Needs.



Enriched curriculum: trips and visitors

Trips

Visits are an important and integral part of our curriculum. We maintain our own fleet of vehicles to facilitate this and actively seek relevant opportunities within the timetable.

The wider world

These visits provide learners with real life experiences, that can help them relate what they learn at school to the world around them and develop confidence and self-esteem. The most meaningful learning occurs through acquiring knowledge and skills through real-life, practical or hands-on activities. An offsite visit can help motivate learners and bring their learning to life. It can help individuals learn that the world is a bigger place than they experience at home or school, and teach them how to cope with new experiences and help prepare them for the transition from school and into independent living.

Regular visits

- Priorswood Library
- Priorswood Shops
- Hestercombe House and Gardens
- Local swimming pools
- Puxton Park
- Blue Anchor beach
- Bristol Hippodrome
- The Gruffalo Trail

Residential trips

Residential opportunities enhance learning, and in the past have included Kilve Court, Croyde Bay and the Magdalen project.

Visitors

Where appropriate we invite visitors to talk in school, either in classes or assembly. Visitors are able to bring expert skills and knowledge to a topic and add a richness of experience for our learners.



Gemma and Garryn Basson live near Taunton with their three children. Georgia is nine and twins Jaden and Brooke are five.

Adaptable, appropriate provision

Selworthy offers, and delivers, many things a mainstream setting could not provide. In addition to following the National Curriculum, adapted to each child's capabilities, the school has the facilities to address the requirements of children with wide-ranging and diverse additional needs. Teaching Assistants are always on hand to support the children academically and are also trained in personal and health care.

"Lots of things have been put into place for children like Georgia, such as EyeGaze software which means she can communicate via her laptop. She has a standing frame so she can get out of her wheelchair, access to physiotherapy and a defibrillator. The sensory room is amazing, a lovely, calming place where the children can take time out if they need a break, and Georgia even has her own sofa in her classroom – she tires easily and the school agreed we could put it there for her. They are very adaptable!"

Complete trust

Although Georgia is completely dependent upon other people for her safety she is perfectly aware of what is going on around her, so she needs to feel confident in the way she is cared for at school. "Yes, she is physically vulnerable but like me, she completely trusts her team. I know that everyone has a commonsense approach and that they will treat every situation as the circumstances call for, without risking Georgia's welfare and without hurting her. They know exactly what they are doing."

Home/school communication

As well as being able to speak to members of staff at any time should she need to, Gemma values the Daily Diary which is a comprehensive record of Georgia's school day. "It covers

absolutely everything; what she has learned, what she's eaten, her moods, her achievements, things she's done – it's invaluable as it helps us build a picture, and that was particularly helpful when it was the means by which her epilepsy was identified and subsequently treated."

Family support

Family support is a further aspect of the Selworthy provision, something Gemma has reason to be grateful for. "They know us very well as a whole family, and are great with us in lots of ways. They have offered occasional respite, and not only help Georgia to shower at school as we haven't the equipment at home, they even take her to a local facility so she can have a proper bath, which she loves. They really do provide a whole package, and go above and beyond for us."

A priceless feeling of freedom

What Gemma appreciates more than anything, however, is the hydrotherapy pool which gives her daughter a physical freedom she cannot find elsewhere. "I love it for Georgia; I love that it liberates her from her wheelchair, allows her the chance to kick her limbs without fear of hurting herself, and to feel weightless. She can play with her friends in a completely safe environment and for Georgia, that is something priceless."

The children come first

Having watched the staff with other children at Selworthy, Gemma knows how every child matters at the school. "I have seen how patient they are, how they instinctively know how to interact. I have seen them lying on the playground in the rain with a distressed child and calming them down, and how they so gently treat them. Everything I have seen has convinced me that Selworthy is absolutely right for my daughter."

Gemma and Garryn's daughter needed specialist care as well as the love and attention she gets at home, and that is why they chose Selworthy School

Care, consideration and kindness

Knowing that your child is safe and cared for at school is something every parent carer wants, but when that child has the extensive and complex additional needs such as Georgia's, it takes a very special school to reassure a parent carer. Georgia has quadriplegic cerebral palsy, partial hearing and sight loss, dystonia, epilepsy and a possible genetic disorder, as yet undiagnosed. She also has, says Gemma, a wicked sense of humour.

"I am very fortunate in that I trust Selworthy School 100% with my daughter's life, which they have several times helped to save. Given that she is at school for longer than she is with me, I really need to know that she is in safe hands but I have no doubts on that score. The staff really 'get' her; she is funny, mischievous and a very happy person but as she is non-verbal, alternative means of communication are very important. Her teachers and the support staff totally understand her and her personality, and they treat her just as I do, with care, consideration and kindness."

Inclusion: a curriculum for all

Removing barriers

One of the school's main aims is to identify and remove barriers for learners in every area of school life.

- We set suitable learning challenges.
- We respond to learner's diverse needs.
- We overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment.
- We offer a personalised curriculum that challenges our learners to achieve beyond expectation.
- We promote a culture where learning occurs beyond the classroom boundaries.
- We encourage our learners to take controlled risks, and have the courage to face the changes that lie ahead for each of them.
- We actively promote a community in which we help each other to achieve more, and to challenge the wider community about their perceptions.
- We help our learners to find their voice, develop learners' communication skills and offer a communication rich learning environment.
- We focus on developing creative thought in individuals so that they can look to the future with confidence, and live fulfilling and fun filled lives.
- We promote a culture of positive behaviour support.

The vital parental role

We acknowledge the vital role that parent carers play and the key information that they can provide in making judgements about the most suitable provision for their child. Parent carers are consulted and kept informed at all times.

Consult

Where appropriate, we consult with learners about any provision, including their views of their difficulties, what support they are receiving and how they believe this can be improved. We also encourage discussion with them about their targets, progress and choices for future action and ensure that their views are taken into consideration in our planning through school council events.



Sophie and Andy Horsman have three children. Gabrielle is 17 and twins James and Charlie are 15. The boys both attend Selworthy School.

explains: "Actually, I was quite excited about it and for a while it was ok."

However, the boys' behaviour started to further deteriorate and after a year, Sophie and Andy decided the arrangement was no longer working. "We started to get worried as very few schools were equipped to deal with their needs and we were determined not to consider residential care. Thankfully, at the eleventh hour Selworthy found places for them, and they started on a part-time basis."

Short-term intervention to long-term solution

Even at Selworthy, things were not ideal at first, but Sophie is full of admiration for how the school addressed the issues. "There wasn't the facility for the boys to be in separate classrooms but they were each allocated two Teaching Assistants and were taken out for lessons in local community rooms as a short-term solution and then an outbuilding in the school grounds was converted to provide additional classroom space. We were amazed at how determined the school was to provide what the boys needed and to accommodate them, and they constantly reassured us that they were on our side and would do everything possible to help."

A marked improvement

Since that time, Sophie and Andy have noticed a marked improvement in both boys, particularly in terms of their behaviour: "The patience and skill of the staff is second to none and their behaviour management techniques are fantastic. Charlie and James are big, strong lads and at one point they were constantly hitting us and each other, as well as hurting themselves but these episodes have decreased greatly since they have been at Selworthy. They like and trust their teachers and respond to them, so life has calmed down a lot!"

Close relationship

Despite their often difficult behaviour, Sophie says that the boys are funny and likeable, and she knows their teachers are genuinely fond of them. "Many of the teachers and support staff have been with them all through their time at Selworthy and have got to know them very well, and that consistency makes a big difference. They understand them, appreciate their best points, and know that they are trying their best, even when they are having a bad day. It's lovely for us as parent carers to know that they are being treated so empathetically."

Small steps to independence

In addition to classroom lessons, which are mostly sensory-based, the boys have PE sessions, music therapy and practical training in things such as personal hygiene, dressing and cookery, and Sophie was recently taken aback when Charlie put on his own shoes for the first time. "It felt like such an achievement! Even small moves towards independence are so encouraging and it proves that Selworthy is keeping the boys on track, and that's all I want for them."

A positive attitude

Sophie and Andy can rest safe in the knowledge that it is without doubt the best place for them to be in order to maintain the progress they are making. "Even if we have to consider residential care at a later date, we know that Selworthy is doing everything possible for them at the moment. The positive attitude has made their placement a great success and a fantastic difference, and we could not be more grateful."

It was a challenging task to find the right place for Sophie and Andy's boys but when they found Selworthy School they knew they were home and dry

Need for change

It took nearly five years for Sophie and Andy to feel they had finally found the right school for their twin boys. Although they had initially settled fairly well in their first setting, when a new management regime was put in place things started to unravel quite quickly: "Charlie and James don't get on together very well so separate classes were important," says Sophie. "When that changed at very little notice, the boys took to it very badly and we knew we had to find an alternative."

Limited options

James and Charlie have autism and learning difficulties, are generally non-verbal and can display challenging behaviour, and mainstream schooling was not possible. Unfortunately, the family found that there were very few options open to them at the time and they struggled on for a while until Sophie and Andy felt compelled to remove them and home school instead. "I have worked with children with special needs before so I felt equipped to cope," Sophie

Sport and music

Sport

Our high-quality physical education curriculum inspires all learners to experience, and be supported to develop, the skills required to participate in physical activity. It provides opportunities to develop physical confidence and support learners' health and fitness. Our aim is to ensure all learners:

- Experience a broad range of physical activities.
- Are physically active on a regular basis.
- Are introduced to competitive situations within sport.
- Are informed how to lead a healthy and active lifestyle.

Learners are taught to:

- Move in a variety of ways that can be applied in a range of activities.
- Move to music.
- Work in cooperation with other learners.
- Work safely in the P.E. environment.
- Enjoy physical activity.



Music

At Selworthy, we believe that music plays a vital role in children's learning.

Movement and expression

Learners engage with music through song, movement and sensory activities and as their skills develop, they learn about the musical elements and how they can be combined in expressive music making. They are encouraged to foster a love of singing which is beneficial for their physical and mental wellbeing.

Performances

There is nothing quite like a Selworthy performance! Every member of the school community is involved in a truly inclusive, immersive experience. The performance opportunities we provide help the learners to grow in confidence as well as offering life-long memories for parent carers!



Emma and John Gibbs live in Taunton with their five children, ranging in age from 18 to 11. Jack is 14 and attends Selworthy School.

and bounds, far more than we expected."

A complex situation

Emma describes Jack as being like a little doll as a baby. "He is a complex little soul and although we loved him, we didn't really understand his needs. Being so different from his siblings, we were unsure of how to treat him but obviously we just wanted the best care available and we feel so lucky that that is what we now have."

A remarkable difference

When he started at Selworthy, Jack was unable to interact with the other children, to form friendships or engage with school life but within a fairly short period of time he started to show more awareness and interest. "He certainly knows what he likes and will let us know what he is comfortable with, and he has come a long way. He's formed connections with his classmates and members of staff and is happy in their company, and if there is a school inset day he gets very upset that we drive past the school instead of going in. The difference is remarkable."

Structure vs flexibility

What Emma values about the school is that Jack is allowed to express himself and to be himself, with a tailored education to suit his particular needs and abilities. "Even though there is structure there is also a great deal of flexibility so that if one day he enjoys science but is less keen the next day, for example, he can move to something else. The teachers understand Jack's limits and don't push him further than his own capabilities but they encourage him constantly, and it's paying off. He absolutely loves being there."

Strategies

As Jack is non-verbal, he uses picture cards to communicate and Emma acknowledges how useful the system is. "It was something Selworthy

initiated and they showed us how to use them at home," she says. "We obviously know Jack very well but the school has been wonderful in giving us strategies to support him and it is very much a two-way thing. They have also taught us how to be patient with him; not always easy with Jack!"

Part of the family

Emma describes Selworthy as almost part of the family, somewhere she and John are always listened to and can turn to for advice at any time. "I can go in or ring them whenever I need to and they will make time for me. If we see a member of staff in the street, they will make a point of greeting us, and if I ever need a shoulder to cry on when things are difficult they will hand out tea and tissues and sit with me for as long as it takes, and I have done that on many occasions. All our children are very special to us but Jack's vulnerability makes us that bit more protective of him and sometimes we need that extra emotional support."

Absolute trust

Jack has very recently undergone major brain surgery to help limit his epileptic seizures and, thankfully, it appears to have been successful. He still, however, needs to maintain his medication so Emma is glad to be able to trust the school to administer it as necessary. "It is very hard to entrust your child's welfare to someone else but I have every faith in the school's ability and preparedness to undertake the appropriate action, and to keep my son safe."

"The dedication of the staff and their focus on empowering the children is what makes Selworthy School the awesome place it is," concludes Emma. "I could not leave my child in the care of other people unless those people were getting everything absolutely right. They absolutely are."

Emma's determination to find the right care for her son led her to Selworthy School. It has not let her down in any way

In denial

Emma freely admits that for a long time she was in denial about Jack's condition and remained determined to send him to a mainstream school. At two years old Jack was diagnosed with IP36 Deletion Syndrome and he suffers from a range of disabilities associated with this, including epilepsy, learning difficulties, compromised motor skills and heart problems.

Change of perspective

Nevertheless, Emma was reluctant to send him to a special school. "When a friend suggested that I at least went to look at Selworthy I was completely set against the idea but she persuaded me to go and I fell in love with the place instantly. I could see how the staff were with the children and realised that it would actually serve Jack better than anywhere else. We are so glad that we changed our view; in the time he's been there he has come on in leaps

Admissions and getting involved

Admissions

Admissions to Selworthy are arranged in partnership with the Local Authority (LA). Application is via the Somerset County Complex Case Panel. All children will have an EHCP/ Statement of Special Educational Needs or be in the process of being assessed for one.

Beginning of a term

Admissions will generally take place at the beginning of any term, with the exception of children coming from other specialist provision or in an extreme emergency or other exceptional circumstances. By admitting at this stage the learner might be enrolled early in order to start at the beginning of a term. If the learner has not yet started school, they may be admitted for a fixed period for assessment when Selworthy School is likely to be eventually named in a statement after referral by the DHA or NHS Trust.

In all such exceptional cases, the admission will have the prior written support of the Educational Psychologist, the L.A. casework officer, the family of the learner and the Headteacher of the previous school, as applicable. The governors, through the Headteacher, will be consulted prior to the admission of a learner. The L.A. will make the final decision on the placement.

Links with other Schools

We work hard to ensure that learners joining the school experience a smooth transition. This involves not only exchange of documentation but direct contact between Selworthy and the child's previous school or playgroup. When appropriate, arrangements are made for learners to attend some lessons at local primary and secondary schools. Selworthy looks to integrate learners into mainstream schools whenever appropriate for them. The

process of integration is supported by close liaison with the host school.

Contact details for Somerset Council School Admissions:

Admissions and Entitlements Team, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY

Email: schooladmissions@somerset.gov.uk

Phone: 0300 123 2224

Fax: 01823 356113

Opening hours: Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5.00pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm, Saturday 9.00am to 4.00pm, Sunday closed

Somerset also has an independent advisory service to support parent carers in sourcing special needs provision (including school places) in Somerset and this is:

The Choice Advice Service
Somerset SENDIAS
The Holway Centre
Byron Road
Taunton
TA1 4DY

Email: choiceadvice@somerset.gov.uk

Telephone: 07775 027442

Friends of Selworthy School

Friends of Selworthy School raise additional funds for the school. The funds are used to purchase equipment or provide experiences or opportunities that would not otherwise be available to our learners. Run by an elected committee of volunteers and governed by a constitution, as a parent carer or an employee at Selworthy School you are automatically a member of Friends of Selworthy School. This gives you the opportunity to attend meetings and help shape the future of our organisation.

Any time or support you can offer, no matter how small you think it is, will be of huge importance to us. You may be able to design posters, help organise events, help out during an event, sell raffle tickets or even promote us as a charity in your work place. If you would like any further information please do not hesitate to contact us on: friendsofseworthy@gmail.com

Governorship

We have a full and active Governing Body, which includes parent carer governors as well as representatives from staff, the local authority and the local community. The governing body has a range of duties and powers and a general responsibility for the conduct of the school. Vacancies for Parent Carer Governors are advertised as they arise.

Our onsite Learning Support Centre (LSC)

As a parent carer of a learner who attends Selworthy School, you are entitled to free membership of the Learning Support Centre (LSC). We have a variety of equipment and publications that you may have on loan for a small annual fee.

You can:

- Borrow equipment – switch activated toys, iPads, sensory toys and much more.
- Borrow books – we have a range of reference books covering a variety of disabilities.
- Have a chat and a drink.
- Get advice and support on a number of issues from our experienced parent carer workers via the LSC.



Michelle and Phil have discovered what makes Selworthy Special School so special

Specific and expert provision

Dan has attended Selworthy School since the age of five and, although Michelle and Phil had originally hoped he would be able to join his sister at her mainstream primary, they appreciated, early on, that the decision to place Dan at Selworthy was by far the right choice, offering him the very specific and expert care that his particular needs require.

A genuine commitment to each and every child

Born with Down's Syndrome as well as some physical disabilities, Dan might nevertheless have

been able to cope with a mainstream setting if provided with additional support, and both Michelle and Phil were initially concerned that a special school might not give him the stimulation and encouragement they wanted for him. However, they very quickly realised that Dan's special needs would be better addressed at Selworthy and that has proved to be the case, especially as he was later diagnosed with autism. "Many children with Down's can benefit greatly from mainstream education, but Dan's additional and fairly complex needs would have singled him out," believes Phil. "What immediately strikes you about Selworthy is the caring, nurturing ethos and the fact that all the staff

Michelle and Phil Bristow live in Taunton with their two children - Jemima, 12, and nine-year-old Daniel.

are genuinely committed to the children, not just doing a job of work. They recognise and cater for the individuality of each child, providing a bespoke learning and care plan for every learner, based on their particular needs. This holistic approach means that Dan is receiving an education which addresses his own capabilities, and it's working really well."

Resources and innovations

Michelle agrees: "Dan has come on in leaps and bounds; he regularly surprises us with unexpected achievements and we maintain confidence that his progress will continue. The resources and innovations the school has put in place for him have considerably improved his quality of life – the hydrotherapy pool and sensory room are wonderful – and his ability to communicate has been enhanced by his ProxTalker, which was suggested by the school's Speech and Language Therapist. Crucially, he is happy at school, and that is largely because he knows he is cherished and valued by all of the staff."

Invaluable support for parent carers and families

The Learning Support Centre has been a great asset to the family, for practical help in dealing with the bureaucratic requirements associated with additional needs, for equipment and written resources, and sometimes for a sympathetic ear on a difficult day. "Having a child with complex needs can be challenging and frustrating, so being able to drop in for a cup of tea and a chat with someone who understands is really welcome," says Michelle. "I've hugely appreciated not just the advice and information on offer but also the emotional support and empathy, and that's invaluable." The school also offers the support of the FAST Team, a group of parent carers who aim to support parent carers in helping their children to make the most of their school experience.

Tuning in to the individual

Small class sizes and a high staff/learner ratio mean that the children are given the individual attention they need in order to capitalise on their time at school. "Because the teachers and support staff get to spend a lot of one-to-one time with each child, they are in a better position to identify and understand their various personalities and needs. That is really important for a child like Dan, who is very tuned in to feelings and emotions and responds positively to people who he knows care about him."

Life skills

"Whilst Dan may never be in a position to live independently," says Michelle, "he will attain many valuable life skills, which are incorporated into the curriculum at Selworthy. "He loves his cookery class, and enjoys the social interaction within the community, which is promoted by the school. I like the fact that children at Selworthy regularly venture out of the school premises and are encouraged to play an active and visible role in the surrounding community; in doing so, they are welcomed and accepted, and their presence is helping to change preconceptions about people with additional needs."

A special place in the world

No-one can tell what the future holds for Dan but one thing of which Phil is certain is that Selworthy is giving his son the best possible opportunities. "Every person has something to offer this world, and every person has a place in this world. I believe that Selworthy School will help Dan to reach his own unique potential, whatever that may be, because they recognise, appreciate and foster my son's very special Daniel-ness."



Selworthy School

OFSTED 2017 SAY: “Inspectors received many positive comments, which include ‘We are so happy with what the school has to offer and we feel so fortunate to have this schooling available to us’, ‘The school is strongly led and all the staff are especially supportive’ and ‘This school is outstanding in its hard work, I have absolutely no reason to complain at all.’”



Selworthy School
Selworthy Road
Taunton
Somerset
TA2 8HD

Telephone: 01823 284970
Fax: 01823 336519
Email: office@selworthy.somerset.sch.uk
Web: www.selworthy.somerset.sch.uk

What do we want for our learners?

- To be as independent as possible.
- To be confident, self-assured and happy.
- To have good communication skills.
- To make excellent progress in key skills that widen choices in adult life.
- To develop talents.
- To play a part in a community.
- To make financially sound choices to the best of their abilities.
- To be creative and to manage change.
- To be able to work in a team.
- To be able to make safe and healthy choices.
- To behave in a safe and socially acceptable way.
- To be proud of their achievements.
- To respect all people and their views equally.