



Joanne believes Hope School offers children fantastic staff who couldn't be better, even if parents handpicked them personally

Joanne Breen lives in Dovecot with her son Tony 13 in Year 9 at Hope School. Tony has been diagnosed with Attachment Disorder and Asperger Syndrome.

Tony started at Hope School whilst in junior school. Joanne explains: "Tony has been to a number of different mainstream schools and the staff would exclude him saying they were unable to manage his behaviour. He would be violent, scream, hit out and answer back which led to him being excluded," says Joanne.

Big difference

After a turbulent time in mainstream education, Hope School was recommended to Joanne and she was urged to consider it for Tony's education. "I was reluctant initially, it was a very different environment to mainstream school, but it's the best thing I ever did," says Joanne. "It's a good job there are schools like Hope School. If it wasn't for them, Tony wouldn't be in education. They have made such a big difference to Tony and to us as a family."

Just like extended family

Joanne has seen some big changes in Tony's behaviour, personality and social ability. "Tony has learned how to communicate. He participates in banter now, something he couldn't do before Hope School, and he's much more able to mix with other people now," says Joanne. She feels many of the changes she has seen in Tony are down to the caring and patient staff at Hope School.

Nurturing environment

The small class sizes at Hope School mean that staff have the capacity to really get to know each individual child and their unique personalities. "It's such a nurturing environment. You can see that staff really care about each child."

Joanne also believes the small intimate class sizes have really benefited Tony. "We have been made to feel part of a family at Hope School. The staff don't look down on you or judge your parenting in any way. They are amazing."

Managing behaviour together

Hope School has a strong policy of working with parents to make sure everything remains consistent. "They'll call me and talk to me about Tony's behaviour and explain how they've dealt with it," says Joanne. "They talk through the techniques they use so you can use them too. I love how they don't talk down to you or judge you as a parent; it's all about managing the behaviour together so things are the same at home and at school."

Amazing support for both parents and children

For Joanne, a big positive of Hope School is the parental support it provides. She speaks very fondly of the family work days: "They're a great opportunity to meet other parents whose children have similar behavioural problems and diagnoses. You get to talk about the problems

you've experienced during the week and you realise you're not alone," explains Joanne.

Family work days offer a great way to spend time in school with your child and provide an opportunity to do a focused activity with them. "Tony loved these sessions," says Joanne. "I think he has been very happy there and Hope School has played a huge role in him moving back up to mainstream school."

Transition to mainstream

Tony has progressed so well at Hope School that he has recently re-entered mainstream education four days a week. "Hope School has been amazing at easing his transition back into mainstream school. They've ensured it has been a gradual and smooth process for Tony," says Joanne. "It's been a big change but he's coping well thanks to the support of Hope School."

Joanne adds: "I can't recommend Hope School highly enough. They've really helped Tony and I to communicate better with each other. His confidence has grown hugely and he's more outgoing. I am so proud that Tony has been part of Hope School."



Children say:

Tony says: "I like Hope School because teachers are always willing to listen to you."