

Amanda has found exactly what she was looking for in Summerfields Primary Academy – a school where children are valued and always come first

Amanda and Stephen Foster live in Royston with their children Alex, Toni, Jayden and Troy who are 16, 13, six and five years old respectively.



Neighbours know best

The Fosters moved to Barnsley from Ireland when Alex was five years old and one of their main priorities was to find a school for him before the end of the summer holidays. Knowing virtually nothing about the area they had little choice but to rely on the advice of their new neighbours, many of whom highly recommended Summerfields Primary Academy. "Based on what local people told us, we applied for a place and when we went to look round we were struck by how friendly everyone was," says Amanda. "We were given a tour around and the staff made a point of talking to Alex, explaining where everything was and that he'd be having his lunch at school for the first time – In Ireland, first-year children finish at 1.30pm, so this was a very different proposition for Alex!"



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Exactly right

Because of the different education system in Ireland, Alex was slightly behind his peers at first but within a very short time had caught up. He has recently passed his GCSEs with grades of A*, A and B. "I really cannot fault Summerfields in what it has done for all my children," Amanda says. "They have all loved the school and academically achieved really well. It's exactly the small, welcoming village school that I wanted for them, where they have a great education and have made good friends – in fact, Alex is now going to college with children he met in Year 1, and that is lovely."

Moral support and practical help

Amanda particularly likes the way the teachers and support staff genuinely care about the children and make every effort to help them maximise their potential. She was gratified to be told by one of Toni's teachers how proud he was of her achievements. "At a parent's evening, it was mentioned that she was capable of getting better marks if she worked a bit harder and that comment made a real impression on her; the teacher was proved right and she did excellently in her SATS as a result. That sort of moral support as well as practical help such as the after-school Homework Club and Breakfast Revision sessions goes a long way."

Huge progress

Troy has also received very effective support, although for other reasons. Having been extremely ill at birth and undergoing open-heart surgery, he was significantly behind when he started school. "We had a meeting with the staff who were very helpful and assured us that they were prepared to put into place whatever measures might be necessary, and have since worked closely with health professionals and with us as parents. Without making a song and dance about it, they have helped him overcome his speech problems and given him extra help to bring his classwork up to standard. He's making huge progress and I have no doubt that he will leave Summerfields completely up to scratch."

A strong relationship

It is clear to Amanda that this caring attitude is at the heart of the school, and the relatively low staff turnover suggests that it is a happy place to work. "Many of the teachers have been there since Alex started and still remember him well. They are interested in how he's doing at college and if he comes into school with me for open days or fetes, he enjoys chatting to them. It's so nice that the pupil/staff relationship is such a strong one, and it makes the children feel valued."

Community spirit

Amanda herself has built an equally good relationship with both staff and other parents, and the community spirit really helped her to feel at home in the area. "Because there is a wide age gap between my oldest and youngest children I have got to know a lot of people well and it's lovely to be able to walk around the village and meet so

many people who have known Alex since he was little. I've recently joined the PTA, too, as I like to take part in the school's fundraising and social events, and it's a good way to become more involved."

"I would definitely recommend Summerfields Primary Academy to any other parents," concludes Amanda. "I think so highly of the teachers and support staff for the way they go to great lengths for the children. Everything they have done for us they have done willingly and we have never had to fight for the right help. Whatever my children have needed has been recognised and addressed quickly and effectively and I couldn't ask more than that."

Children say

Troy: "I like the teachers, all my friends and the sports leaders."

Jayden: "I love doing maths because we went outside with chalk and we did our tens and units counting."

Toni: "I feel that during my time at Summerfields both students and teachers helped in teaching. They made sure that all students were actively involved throughout each year group, the system of the Student Council and Sport Leaders was to me the most helpful as it allowed students from each year to do what they enjoyed and voice their opinion and their peers' opinions to teachers."

Alex: "I was made to feel welcome and settled into school very quickly with the help of teachers and students. The teachers made it engaging for us, which always encouraged us to be more enthusiastic about learning. Another point that made it interesting was the awards we were given like 'smiles' or 'special mentions', they made school more interesting and encouraged good behaviour, which meant there were more productive and enjoyable lessons."



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