



Joanne and Matthew's hopes and expectations were greatly exceeded after their son was offered a place at Thorpe Acre Infant School

Difficult choices

Although for various reasons Thorpe Acre Infant School was not their first choice for Jack, Matthew and Joanne are now delighted that it is the one at which he was allocated a place and they could not have hoped for a better setting for their son. "It had been in our top three but not number one," she says "Because Jack had been at the Nursery of a different school we wanted him to move up with the friends he'd already made there so when he didn't get in I was a bit concerned how he would settle elsewhere."

Matthew and Joanne Pullen live in Loughborough with their sons Jack, five and Luke, three.



New ideas, new friends

Jack had been quite a quiet and withdrawn child, shy amongst people he didn't know well, so Matthew and Joanne were understandably worried that he might feel out of place at a school where he knew no-one at all. However, they are now convinced that Thorpe Acre was absolutely right for their son and have no regrets at all. "What particularly impressed us was that the teachers were not only understanding of Jack's feelings but were willing to do what they could to encourage him to make friends and to fit in with the others. They came up with ideas to help him integrate, such as focussing on his love of Thomas the Tank Engine: they got him and some of the other children to help make and paint model of Thomas so they were all doing something they enjoyed together; a clever and thoughtful way of creating friendships."

Above target

This appreciation of each child's individuality extends throughout the curriculum, explains Joanne, such as in the way Jack's reading and writing have been encouraged to the stage where he is now exceeding his expected targets. "Again, they used Thomas the Tank Engine books to make the most of his enthusiasm and that approach has worked very well. Before he started school, Jack was behind other children of his age but now he is doing much better than we had anticipated. I highly rate the teaching methods used and we really couldn't have hoped for more."

Addressing individual needs

Whilst class sizes are around the same as those of most other infant and primary schools, the allocation of teachers and assistants means that the children are often taught in smaller groups of about ten, so that they all get a significant amount of individual attention. In addition, at least once a week each child has a one-to-one session with a teacher to read or to go through something with which they may have a problem. "That way every child's needs are monitored and addressed so no-one should fall behind. It also means that the teachers have up-to-date knowledge of where each child is at, both academically and in terms of their pastoral welfare."

Personal approach

Joanne and Matthew very much like the fact that the teachers foster a close relationship between school and family, regularly inviting parents in to observe and take part in lessons, holding consultation evenings and events such as the recent Easter Egg hunt. "If I've ever needed to talk to someone about Jack I can easily do so and get an informed and sensible answer as the teachers take a genuine interest in every child," Joanne says. "I really like the personal approach and the fact that they treat each child according to his or her own strengths; at one Parent's Evening, I was very touched that Jack's teacher obviously had an insight into what makes him tick and that he was seen as a valued member of his class."

Active involvement

Because they feel so strongly about what Thorpe Acre has to offer, Matthew is an active Parent Governor of the school and both he and Joanne support it as much as they can in practical ways. "It's not possible for me to commit to being a Governor because of other demands on my time but Matthew attends regular meetings and we both help out on school trips and at activities, and if we can't, our own parents are happy to do so. We feel that because the school is doing such a good job for our children, we should make a contribution as well."



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