

CASE STUDY

A parent's experiences of accessing childcare

Provided by: Emma, Hawthorn Primary School, Doncaster

Emma shares her experiences of accessing childcare in the North of England.

Q: Tell me about you and your family.

'My name is Emma and I am mum to Liam (aged 5). I work part time in the evenings for 21 hours in a local supermarket. I would like to find another job during the day when Liam is at school, as I don't have much time to see him in the evening when I go to work. I have a partner who works full time as a joiner.

Liam is our only child and he has a mild form of Autism, which was diagnosed in July 2015. Liam accessed his 3 year old entitlement (15 hours) at Hawthorn Nursery from September 2014. He now goes to the same school and is in Reception at Hawthorn Primary School.'

Q: Tell me about your experiences of accessing suitable childcare so far.

'Liam attended a private nursery for a time. The main challenge for us was paying for the childcare as we were both working, but were not entitled to any tax credits as we did not fit the criteria. We couldn't rely on extended family to look after Liam, as I moved from another part of the country to be with my partner and there was no one able to help us.

It was when Liam was at the private nursery that I began to notice that he was showing signs that I thought weren't quite right. I felt his speech wasn't as good as it should have been for a 2 year old. He was also banging his head, flapping and had a fascination with lining cars up. I took him to the doctor and, after being assessed by two paediatricians, he got his diagnosis in December 2014.

We then decided to move area to have a better house and schools for Liam. It was when we moved that a friend of mine recommended Hawthorn Nursery at Hawthorn Primary School for Liam to go to. We decided to send Liam to Hawthorn Nursery as we had heard how good it was.

The private nursery that Liam attended put together a box of little things that were his when he attended there and passed them on to Hawthorn Nursery.

When Liam first attended the school nursery there was a quiet area that he could go to if he felt the need, which really helped him to settle in. He had one-to-one support, which was funded by the school. The school offers parents the opportunity to top up their child's hours if they so wish, which caters more for the working parents.'

Q: How did Hawthorn Primary School support you and your child with the transition from Nursery to Reception class?

'With the transition to the school's Reception class, the support was done gradually.

- He was taken into his new room for short periods of time over a few weeks to get used to his new teachers and surroundings.
- The school held an open day for parents and children to go into the Reception room, where we stayed until dinner time.
- All Liam's records were transferred over to his new teachers.



- The school gave me photographs of the setting and staff so that I could keep showing them to Liam over the summer holidays.
- On the first day of term, Liam attended for half a day, and then from the second day he went full time.

He was a little unsettled at first but now he goes in to Reception with no problems at all. The support the school gives Liam is fantastic. There are 25 children in the class, with two main teachers. Liam has one-to-one support throughout the day. The staff can identify early triggers from Liam that could escalate, so they have various techniques that they have put in place to stop him from having a meltdown.

- Liam has a visual timetable for each day's activities.
- The school has also introduced an egg timer, so when it runs out Liam knows that it's his turn to give a toy or object to another child.
- He is also learning some British Sign Language (BSL) and being supported well with his phonics writing.

We very much want Liam to access mainstream provision, and it is lovely that he is integrated with the rest of the class. We can't possibly think of any way that the school can improve on the support they give Liam, and us as a family.

The school is not afraid to ask for support from other professionals when it comes to Liam's needs. I know that they have accessed support from a specialist on Autism (John Broome), who has come in and given strategies to the staff to work with Liam.'

Q: How does Hawthorn Primary School encourage you as a parent to get involved in making the setting more inclusive and welcoming for parents and children with SEND?

'As Liam has got a diagnosis he does have an EHC (Education, Health and Care Plan) in place. We have termly meetings at the school, which I attend alongside the Reception teacher, the headteacher, his health visitor or school nurse. It is important that we come to these, along with key people, as an action plan is put in place to support Liam while he is at school and also for us at home.

As a parent with a child with SEND, the school always ask me on a daily basis before Liam enters the class how he is and do they need to be made aware of any issues that may have occurred. I know that if I have any issues I can just pop into school, and I will be seen by the SENCO or headteacher.

The school is great at sending out consultations to parents to get their views and feedback. They hold regular coffee mornings for parents to attend. We also get text messages to keep us updated on school issues.'

Further information

Thank you to Emma for supporting Family Action's Childcare in Schools team to develop this case study. We will be revisiting the family over the coming months.

- Family Action is funded by the Department for Education (DfE) to support school-based childcare providers to develop high-quality and inclusive childcare for 0–5s with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Find out more about the project, and download a wide range of free resources from: www.learning-exchange.org.uk
- Our Learning Exchange Facebook page gives links to events, suppliers, equipment, training and venues that might be of interest to school-based childcare providers: www.facebook.com/pages/Learning-Exchange/904749822892733?sk=timeline

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