

Autism brings many difficulties to families but Jenniver believes that St Luke's Primary School is doing everything possible to help her son



Jenniver and Derek Banner-Antwi live in Newham with their children Mark, 13, Maame, 7 and Kwame, who is 5.

A different set of needs

With two children who have, and still are, doing very well at school in every way, it came as something of a shock to Jenniver and Derek to find that their third, Kwame, appeared to be struggling. "St Luke's has been an excellent school for both Mark and Maame and we have been more than pleased with it," Jenniver says. "Maame especially is benefiting from the extra work she is being given because she thoroughly enjoys the challenge and we have always felt that St Luke's responds well to our children's own capabilities."

This confidence in the school's approach has now been reinforced by its support for their youngest child, Kwame, who has a very different set of needs than those



St. Luke's
C. of E.
Voluntary Aided
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of Mark and Maame. "Almost as soon as Kwame started at St Luke's Nursery I could see that there was something wrong," explains Jenniver. "He wasn't able to concentrate or to keep still and listen to his teacher and at times he was bossy towards the other children. The teachers did try with him but occasionally I had to go and pick him up early because they were unable to calm him down. Because no-one was sure at that time what the problem was, we didn't know how to sort things out."

New difficulties but positive results

Kwame's transition to Reception brought new difficulties. "His teachers were completely honest with us and suggested that he should be assessed so that his problems could be identified and he could be given the right support. This was very helpful for us, even though we were so sad that it was necessary."

It is only recently that Kwame has been officially diagnosed with ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) but because the Local Education Authority does not offer financial support for children with special educational needs until the school is able to evidence an exceptional level of need, the burden of cost fell upon St Luke's. "We were aware that Kwame needed extra support and were quite prepared to integrate him into the school on those terms," says St Luke's Inclusion Leader. "We have now applied to the LA for funding but we would not compromise his welfare for lack of funds; Kwame has the appropriate one-to-one and smaller group teaching which is already showing very positive results."

Focus on emotional intelligence

As well as providing the individual attention which is so effective in cases of ASD, St Luke's believes in helping these children to improve their emotional intelligence. This means that they are made aware of the impact of their behaviour on their peers, their teachers and their families. Jenniver has seen how well Kwame has responded to this approach, and the schools Inclusion Leader explains why this is: "Kwame has a great deal



of academic potential but he needs to learn that his behaviour can upset others, so we try to help him realise the consequences of his actions. He has come a very long way in a fairly short time, and we are quietly confident."

Family support

Kwame's condition and the effect it has had on their lives has, Jenniver says, caused much stress to the family but, thankfully, the school's Family Support Worker has been a constant presence. "It has been a difficult thing to accept but St Luke's has been very supportive and I know they are doing everything they can for Kwame and for our family. We cannot know what the future will bring but I do trust St Luke's to make sure that my son has all the help and care he needs."



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Children say:

Maame says: "In our school we are all treated equally and we all do the same activities and when Kwame needs help someone is there. All the teachers know about how he acts so they treat him equally but with as much help as he needs."