



Tait is flourishing and his talents are being encouraged by caring staff at St Mary's School and College



**Richard and Reama Shearman live in Henley-on-Thames with their son, Tait, aged 15. Their daughter, Ella, aged 23 and other son, Teal, aged 21, are both at university. Tait has been a boarder at St Mary's School for the last three years.**

### Encouraging progress

When your child is invited to have lunch with the school Principal as a reward for good work, it is made even more special if he is allowed to choose the menu and help prepare the food. For Richard and Reama, this lovely

occasion recently was just one example of how well the staff at St Mary's School understand their son. Reama says: "St Mary's have encouraged Tait to progress in subjects he is good at, such as IT and Maths. He loves to help with power point and lighting for events and enjoys cooking meals for his friends."

Providing specialist educational therapy and residential care for pupils and students with speech language and education needs.

## Great reputation

Tait was diagnosed with bilateral perisylvian polymicrogyria, a rare neurological disorder that affects his ability to communicate. He also has other health issues and can become frustrated because of his difficulties. Reama says: "Tait attended a specialist speech and language primary school and thrived there, so we wanted him to continue his education in a similar school. St Mary's was recommended by his primary school and we knew from other parents it had a great reputation. After we finally got the local authority to agree, Tait started in Year Seven. Tait's primary school had been incredibly good and we were worried about him moving up, but we have been completely satisfied with St Mary's."

## Expert therapists

"Tait settled in well as he knew other children there and he felt comfortable right from the start. They teach sign language and have speech and language therapy integrated into the curriculum in the same way as his primary school. The spacious environment and small classes suit him. The school is a community where everyone is supportive and there is no negativity. The children have a range of communication issues and the staff are experts on these."

## Special atmosphere

"When we first walked in we could tell it was a nurturing environment and that it was just what Tait needed. The staff are good at coming up with plans to suit each individual child. Everyone's education is specially designed for them and the staff have worked hard to understand Tait's requirements."

## Seamless working

"Tait attends hospital every six months and the hospital send a nurse once a term to visit the school to discuss how his medication is working and what his needs are. It is a seamless way of working that helps relieve our anxiety as parents. The hospital are informed about Tait's progress and the school know what's going on from a medical point of view, which I think is pretty impressive."

## Preparing to be independent

"Tait gets a lot of benefit from using sign language. Although he can hear what is said to him he can't process it well and signing is a great help. He has difficulty in pro-

ducing language himself, but the school have helped him embrace technology and he now finds email enables him to communicate with everyone. He enjoys his whole school day from breakfast club, where he makes breakfast with his friends, to cooking dinner for them in the evening. St Mary's is preparing him to be as independent as possible. He also loves playing football, running and swimming in the pool at the school," Reama says.

## Making good progress

"We would advise other families considering St Mary's to go and see the school for themselves. As soon as they walk in they will feel how special it is. The focus is very much on communication, inclusion and progression. Tait is being well prepared for the next phase in his education."

## Children say

Tait says: "I like the staff best about St Mary's because they are kind and I like living at North Lodge because I like all the things I can do and there is a cabin and hobby room."



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