



**Kestrel House
School**

Ben



“Kestrel House has been amazing from the start: time with his team of holistic specialists is pure gold dust.”
Ben’s Dad

As soon as Ben’s parents realised how entirely unsuitable a mainstream nursery was for him, they embarked on an 18 month battle to obtain an accurate statement for his complex needs.

They put pressure on their local authority and sought meetings with their local MP David Burrowes (Conservative -Enfield, Southgate). They invested their own time and resources on professional assessments and were determined to find ‘the very best’ for him in terms of education.

Ben is one of twins, and was born with a congenital heart defect which required open heart surgery when he was only 6 months old. His parents wondered whether some of his developmental challenges were due to him being a very sick baby but a year later – at the age of 18 months – Ben was told he was on the autistic spectrum. Ben also has a condition known as Fragile X Syndrome.

His father, also Ben, shares the family's story....

"We assumed the diagnosis when Ben was about 18 months old meant support would automatically swing into action, but it didn't.

"We looked at five schools we could have chosen for him, but the only one which could have worked for Ben was Kestrel House. He's the first child from Enfield to go to Kestrel House and now we hope he'll blaze a trail for others to follow!



Well Resourced and Holistic Specialist Care

"Kestrel House seemed to be the only school that had the flexibility and the right resources and specialist care for Ben's needs. It was also so much calmer than the other schools, and it was important that Ben - with his Fragile X Syndrome - could have been knocked very easily.

"We had massive confidence in the Headteacher and the rest of the team. So it was easy to make the decision that we wanted him to go to Kestrel. The fight to get him there took a very long time, and involved a lot of anguish.

"During that 18 month period, the Headteacher and the Parent Liaison Officer, Lina Leandro were absolutely pivotal in their support. I don't know where we'd have been without them.

"From the moment Ben started to go to Kestrel he has really enjoyed it and there has been a profound change in his abilities.

"He has just thrived at Kestrel House and that's what any parent with a child with special needs is looking for.

We're looking for our children to want to go to school every morning and Ben is always waiting by the door with his coat on ready to go which is just brilliant.

"The level of care and development for him is important to us, and at Kestrel House it is very good - I can't fault them in any way.



"Never have we felt 'It's great, but...' It has been absolutely amazing from the start."

Bespoke strategy for each pupil

"The great thing about Kestrel House is that they develop a bespoke strategy for your child which means something to you as a parent. You're involved in that process and you're involved in the milestones of progress.

Involvement with Parents

“As parents we are far happier knowing that Ben is at Kestrel House School, and the engagement between Kestrel House and parents is first class.

“At his annual review I was impressed to see who was there. To have the Headteacher, Ben’s teacher and several of his therapy specialists there to talk to was absolute gold dust time as a parent. You don’t get that in a mainstream environment.

“I think the value of that session is the structured discussion with everyone in the room together with a holistic approach. It’s in Ben’s interests for everyone to work together and I felt it was very important to have that in school.



“When we had the initial diagnosis of autistic spectrum disorder the local authority were quick to tell us that ‘every child deserves a mainstream education.’ It pulls on your heartstrings and they convince you but I’ve actually realised the only way a child with special needs like Ben’s to ever have any hope of having a mainstream education is to go to a specialist school first. Ben really enjoys Kestrel, and we hope now he can stay there until he’s sixteen.



Impact on Family

“The expertise from Kestrel House has had a huge impact on our mindset in terms of how to support our child. We receive so much, because of their level of engagement in the relationship with us and also because of their very personalised approach with Ben. It’s made us feel as if we have far more tools in our kitbag to help him.

“It’s good for Layla - Ben’s twin - and she’ll happily come to Kestrel. She’s very good with Ben, she knows he has Fragile X Syndrome which isn’t going to go away and she is extraordinary helpful to him. As a child, she doesn’t carry all the emotional baggage which we do as adults, so she just gets on with it which is lovely to see.

“Overall, as you watch your child developing, as Ben has, you have a sense that he’s in the right environment and it means that you can get on with your own life a bit more because you’re not worrying and fretting.”

Fragile X Syndrome

...is the most common known inherited cause of learning disabilities, affecting around 1 in 4000 males and 1 in 8000 females. It can cause a wide range of difficulties with learning, as well as social, language, attentional, emotional, and behavioural problems. Many of the behaviours associated with FXS are autistic-like, such as: avoidance of eye contact, social withdrawal, communication difficulties and repetitive behaviours.

About one third of people with FXS have enough of these characteristics to meet the criteria to be diagnosed with autism, as well as FXS. This proportion of people with FXS who have Autism accounts for approximately 2-6% of all cases of Autism, making FXS the most common, known single-gene cause of the condition.

The Fragile X Society: Tel: 01371 875100 Web: www.fragilex.org.uk
Fraxa Research Foundation : www.fraxa.org

Ben's School Progress Report: OUTSTANDING

	Arriving at Kestrel 2013	2016
Engaging & Interacting	Ben could only communicate his frustration by trying to bite or scratch. He had difficulty in regulating responses to his environment and he showed no awareness of his peer group.	Ben is visibly happy upon arrival at school and is displaying increasing confidence in and engagement with his environment. He is also showing emerging independence in exploring his environment. Ben has increased his interest in looking at a book with an adult and has made progress with his participation in sand and water play. He is willing to try new things and is eager to take part in lessons.
Communication	Ben had no strategy to communicate his needs & displayed behaviours to do so.	Ben has made excellent progress with the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and is now operating on stage 2 at school and at home.
Motor Skills	Ben would struggle to navigate obstacles.	Ben is now able to walk more steadily and can negotiate stairs. His core stability has improved and he can now sit for up to 15 minutes in a chair. He can now feed himself with a spoon.
Music Therapy	Ben would push aside all instruments he was offered.	Ben has made exceptional progress with an ability to play a range of instruments including a keyboard, guitar, cymbals and other percussion. He is starting to understand turn taking.