



KEY FACTS:

Name of Son: Matthew
Year Matthew joined Mary Hare: Year 4
Current Year Group: Year 6
Local Authority: Cambridgeshire
Hearing Loss: Profound sensori-neural

Background

Matthew had a late diagnosis with a progressive hearing loss and by 22 months Matthew was profoundly deaf. Matthew had cochlear implants just before his third birthday. Matthew also has a twin sister who is hearing.

“Matthew being in the right setting completely overrides any worries we may have had.”

What was Matthew’s old Primary school like?

Matthew attended a mainstream primary school who were very experienced with special needs. He received full support from TAs, had twice weekly visits from his Teacher of the Deaf and weekly visits from a Speech and Language Therapist.

Matthew’s Teacher of the Deaf acknowledged that whilst the support was good, it wasn’t enough for Matthew. He did not have a peer group, he couldn’t cope in a classroom of 30 pupils and there was no interactive learning as Matthew was wearing a radio mic and could only hear the teacher and not his classmates. Matthew would be taken out of lessons for quiet time and would miss out on other aspects of school life. He also started to get picked on and so lost confidence in his learning and became more withdrawn and shy.

When Matthew was in Year 3, we tried to get him into another local primary school with a hearing impaired unit however we were told there were no spaces.



What was the process of getting Matthew into Mary Hare like?

I was always aware of Mary Hare Secondary and became aware of Mary Hare Primary when I was at an NDCS weekend and spoke to the Head Teacher at the stand. It all happened very fast! After being told that there was no room in the local school with a HIU, we came for a visit to Mary Hare. He had an assessment a few weeks after and Mary Hare produced the most incredible report that we presented at Matthew’s Annual Review.

The LA then tried to get Matthew into another mainstream school but this would not have fixed any issues. We had a funding battle that went on for some months but in the end the LA realised that there was no provision good enough for Matthew locally and fortunately we had a very supportive Teacher of the Deaf.

What has Matthew achieved here so far?

Matthew was made the Head Boy of Mary Hare Primary and there was absolutely no way that would have happened in his old school!

Matthew was also given the lead role in the Christmas play. He was very confident and even sang a solo which Matthew and the school kept a secret and surprised me at the production. In his old school, Matthew was given very small roles and never had the opportunity to try a bigger role.



How did you & Matthew feel about boarding?

I was terrified about boarding as Matthew was very young and it just felt awful. It was very hard for Matthew's twin sister too.

It was a very difficult decision however it was something that we had to do. Matthew being in the right setting completely overrides any worries we may have had.

I would never underestimate how difficult this process is but I know he is well looked after here and I have so much confidence in the care team.

Matthew was terrified about coming however it took Matthew only six weeks to settle in - much shorter than expected!

He loves it here now. Some weeks he rings me a lot, other weeks he is too busy to ring!

How do you feel Matthew has come on academically since being at Mary Hare?

Matthew now has the chance to be successful academically because he can hear and participate in lessons. He is fully engaged and part of the learning environment so his academic achievement has been astronomical.

Matthew now has the opportunity to use his ability and has the confidence to ask questions and doesn't worry. A massive change is that he is now happy to speak in front of people and will initiate the conversation.

Matthew has options for the future. He talks about how he wants to be a Doctor or Ambulance Driver. He is looking forward.

Do you wish you had sent Matthew to Mary Hare Primary sooner?

Yes definitely - I would have liked Matthew to have come to Mary Hare one or two years sooner as I feel he is still catching up from an education point of view. I couldn't see Matthew coping in secondary without specialist support from Mary Hare Primary beforehand.

Finally, what would you say to other parents who may be interested in Mary Hare Primary?

Come and have a look and see how well these children are doing. However, don't expect miracles and you really have to acknowledge that your child is actually deaf.

Think about your child in the future at the age of 20 or 30 and what they will be like. If you feel there are no doors open for them then seriously consider Mary Hare Primary.

Securing the future of deaf children and young people

