



Savannah Stevens, five, lives in Sandhurst with parents Louise and Jesse and brother Jesse, eight.

Louise has total trust in the staff at Kennel Lane who care for Savannah's complex needs

Bright and spacious

Louise and Jesse had heard good things about Kennel Lane School, but a visit convinced them it was the right place for Savannah.

"I was very happy with what I saw," recalls Louise. "The early years area was all brand new, with two bright and spacious classrooms. The classrooms had large glass windows and an astro turf type floor covering so although the children were indoors it almost felt like being outdoors. It was a great place for children to play and learn."

Peace of mind

Savannah has Rett's syndrome and is completely dependent on her carers.

"I was initially worried about how Savannah would cope, but I needn't have been as the staff are great," says Louise. "She is unable to do anything for herself, such as walk, talk, use her hands to play, feed or hold a cup. She is physically very dependent and everything has to be done for her. However, with only seven children in the class she gets all the individual attention she needs."

Total trust

As Savannah is unable to communicate, Louise relies totally on the school to alert her to any problems.

"If the staff think she is not well or is in pain they ring me straight away," she says. "I trust them 100% with Savannah's life. She also has epilepsy and the staff are all trained to give her any necessary medication. However, I also like the attention to little things – for example they recently bought her some bibs to match her uniform, which made me realize they really do take her individual needs into consideration."

Big smiles

Although Savannah is unable to talk, Louise says she enjoys going to school each day.

"Every morning when I take Savannah to school she has a big smile her face," she says. "And she is often a bit grumpy when I pick her up as she likes being there so much! The staff do so much with the children, that they never get bored."

"For example, there is a forest school where the children do lots of outdoor activities, or sometimes she gets a one to one swimming lesson. If the other children are doing something that Savannah is unable to do the staff always think of something different to do with her, so she's never left out. There are also special events like assemblies, summer fetes and Christmas productions, which she gets involved with."

High tech

The school's speech and language therapist arranged for a high-tech solution for Savannah's communication problems.

"Savannah has an eye-gaze, which is an eye communication system that picks up where she looks and helps her to communicate," says Louise. "The speech language therapist really pushed for that and it's kept at school and is fantastic."

Caring staff

Savannah is encouraged to develop some independence.

"At dinner time at home I normally cut Savannah's food up and feed her, but at school the staff attach a special strap to her hand and do hand over hand to help her feed herself," says Louise.

"They also have special cups to help her take a drink herself. I've been given lots of ideas to try at home."

Superb care

Louise recommends the school to any other parent and says:

"I honestly don't think they could do any more for her and I'm really happy with the care Savannah gets. Because of her condition she's unlikely to develop full speech and may not walk, but the staff still keep pushing her to try. I hope one day she will be able to."



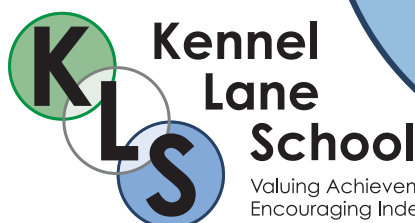
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