

## Letter from a current Clarity parent to a prospective parent thinking about coming to Clarity Independent School

20.2.23

Dear parent,

*As the parent of a high-functioning autistic Son, one of the biggest and perhaps most important challenges I have faced is finding an educational setting that meets his needs. The importance of a positive schooling experience is paramount both for [name] and for the wider family including his younger brother.*

*Clarity Independent School is [name]'s 4<sup>th</sup> school. He previously attended a mainstream primary school which was too big and too noisy. He then moved to a private school, but unfortunately they did not have the capacity to either understand his needs nor support them. In 2021 [name] transitioned to Secondary school, again mainstream, but despite their best efforts the sheer scale, noise and chaos of over 1000 children was too much for him and although he completed Year 7, by the end he was on a significantly reduced timetable. This made working impossible for his Mum, and created difficulties for me focusing on running my business.*

*In July 2022 myself and [name]'s mum visited the school's peaceful setting in Sandon, just outside of Chelmsford. We had visited multiple special schools but none of those felt right. They felt a little too clinical and impersonal. At Clarity, I was immediately struck by the obvious expertise of the staff in understanding Autism. There was an instant feeling of calm, and a clearly fabulous dynamic between staff and children. I knew immediately that it was the right school for [name] and was ecstatic when he was awarded a place there.*

*Since joining the school [name] has flourished. We are fortunate to live close to the school so we do not yet use the taxi service, but the intention is that we will. What that means is that every day I see the children arriving in their taxis, and leaving at the end of school. I can genuinely say I have never once seen a child refuse to get out of a car, or look unhappy going into or coming out of the school. Indeed the opposite is true, with the children always coming out of school laughing with a happy disposition. In our household, the mornings are unrecognisable. Gone are the battles to get [name] out of bed, into uniform and into the car to be replaced with a confident happy young man who gets up at 7am, showers, gets dressed and gets his bag ready without any prompting. This is because he feels happy, loved and nurtured at Clarity school.*

*[name] began at Clarity in September 2022 on an initially reduced 3 day a week timetable. He had not been in school for more than 3 hours in a day for almost a year, so it was important that he transitioned to the school in a way that did not overwhelm him. In order to move to a 5 day week, [name] needed to work hard to achieve his Green Pass which allows him to join the group for activities outside of school (Outdoor learning and Swimming). [name] developed immediate rapport with his form tutor, his SLA and the other class teachers. Their absolute understanding of how an autistic child's needs should be managed, their friendly and caring disposition, and the facilities at the school that allow for sensory inspired breaks if things get too much have led to [name] being determined to attend full time which I am thrilled to say he has achieved.*

*Furthermore, as [name]'s confidence in the environment has grown he has made friends with fellow students and talks about them in very positive ways (at secondary school ALL of his classmates were in his words "stupid idiots"! ). He has forged a tight bond with his class-mate and regularly laughs in lessons, but maintains his focus to learn his favourite subjects – science and maths. He has also completed assessments that were at previous schools a significant trigger for him. No longer does he*

*come home saying he has been bullied, that he hates the teachers and he wont go back – in all of his previous schools this was an everyday occurrence. Perhaps the most telling example of how [name] has progressed is his willingness to join cookery class. His sensory issues around food have been extreme to say the least, but he now comes home on Thursdays with delicious cakes, cookies and other delights that he is proud to have made!!*

*The school was inspected by Ofsted in Sept 2022 and received an inadequate rating. This is the lowest rating for a school. My positive experience of Clarity is entirely at odds with this report. It demonstrates an incompetence within Ofsted regarding their understanding of autism and the techniques used to support children with the condition. This incompetence is only further highlighted through their “good” rating of residential schools that have failed the children in their care.*

*Along with other parents, we gave Ofsted positive responses about the school, but they appear to have been ignored by the inspectors whose tick box agenda marked the school down. I have seen nothing but caring, dedicated and experienced teachers all focused on providing a wonderful educational setting for the children.*

*I have absolute confidence that Clarity will continue to provide the perfect educational setting for [name]. He has never been happier. I would be delighted to meet with or chat to any parent wishing to discuss any anxieties they may have if they are considering a place at Clarity for their child”.*

Kindest regards

Parent of son, age 12