



Jaime and Lee Harrison's son, Austin, joined
Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship in January 2014

Jaime and Lee wanted a school that would bring
out the best in their son, and they found just that
at GANF

A good feeling

Making sure that you find the right school for your child can be a daunting process and doing it for the first time is particularly challenging.

Jaime and Lee were new to the area, so didn't have knowledge of local schools. It was when they looked around GANF that they felt they had found what they were looking for. "It was gut instinct really," says Jaime, "It felt friendly, the teachers seemed to know all the children, and the children seemed comfortable and at home. It just had a good feeling about it, and we definitely haven't been disappointed."



Beyond recognition

Jaime and Lee have seen Austin change and develop almost out of recognition during his 2 years at GANF. From being withdrawn and struggling to express himself, he is blossoming into a confident young man.

Austin's story started thousands of miles away from Grantham. Before his family moved to the town he attended several schools in Oregon in the United States. Back then the only option for him was a special needs unit within a mainstream school, where students take some or all of their lessons with a one-to-one aide. Jaime says, "None of the three schools we tried in Oregon worked for him."

Austin has Autism and Tourette Syndrome.

Lee says, "He has struggled with shaking, loud vocal outbursts and body tics every few seconds for years. Life was tough and he was unhappy at school in the United States which, in our opinion, offered him a very limited education. For Austin sports meant walking round in a circle for 45 minutes; Maths was colour-by-numbers on a computer and his books were old and out-dated. In short, we felt Austin was contained in the Oregon education system, rather than taught by it."

New beginnings

Austin was 13 when we arrived in England in November 2013 and once the paperwork and statement was transferred he came to GANF to meet the staff. He was offered a place at Ambergate at the beginning of January 2014.

Austin has been at GANF now for 2 years and we have asked him how he feels.

"It feels like home," he told us.

It's clear that he loves his new school, but what was so different? "I learn lots of subjects," was his simple answer. For a boy who struggles to express himself, these were two life changing statements for his parents and family to hear. Lee says, "The change we've seen in him has been extraordinary."

"The difference we have seen between our life here in Grantham and back in the States is very clear. Austin went to an American school until he was 13 but made little, if any, progress with his education. He didn't start learning until teachers at GANF gave him his first taste of a real education tailored for his specific needs. He has a real enthusiasm for learning - something he never showed in the US - and comes home every day sharing his successes.

Achievements

Austin has achieved entry level qualifications in English, German, Maths, Independent Living, Employability Skills and Humanities. He is now working towards the next level of qualification in all these subjects, along with a BTEC in Art.

Something Special

Jaime says, "There has been another happy side-effect to the care Austin has received at Ambergate; his tics have reduced dramatically. In fact you could say Austin is a different boy and we are so grateful for all the opportunities he now has to make the very best of his life."



"The change we've seen in our son since he has attended GANF has been extraordinary."

Grantham Additional Needs Fellowship -

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