

## Parent Story

### Working together

#### Parent

Our son was diagnosed with autism at four years of age and this was a most devastating time for us. From then until now, our journey has been one of immense grief, loss and headache, as well as those moments when we celebrate his greatness as he overcomes all the odds stacked against him. There are many wonderful people who have entered our lives and they continue to support, guide and cherish him, as well as us, his family.

Following diagnosis, the magnitude of the issues caused by his autism became clear – repetitive language, poor social skills, being stressed by noise, crowds and bright lights, not to mention him becoming an absconding expert and not yet being fully toilet trained. It also became clear to us that a mainstream school was not an option. This was to be another time of loss and grief for us as his parents, but also for his older brother who had talked for so long about how it would be when they were at school together.

After much searching, we decided that the best option for our son was an autistic school. From the moment he went there until he left a year later, his achievements were celebrated and our family so supported and loved. No words can express the gratitude we have for the school and the wonderful staff for supporting and teaching our child with such care and love.

We had originally planned for him to go there for the full seven years, but after one year there the school encouraged us to consider a mainstream school. As the time drew closer for him to leave, his teacher went with me to the two schools that I was most interested in and we decided on a mainstream primary school that was best suited to our son's needs.

He has been at a mainstream school for nearly two years now. It has been a journey not just for our son but for the whole team – the principal, assistant principal and student welfare officer, his teacher, education support staff and myself. My son's inclusion at a mainstream school would not have been as successful without each person's valuable contribution. Issues will always arise because of his autism but by working together and supporting one another we learn that in the end it is all about making his school experience as positive as it can be.

#### Parent

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