

7 years ago I was in your shoes, choosing the school for our eldest son. I remember one of the deputy heads at another Seaford school telling a group of parents that within Seaford you cannot really make the wrong choice of school and to a great extent this is still true. So I'm not going to tell you why you should choose this school, I am simply going to tell you about my experience as a parent here and why I am so pleased with the choice we made.

I have 3 sons who are now aged 11, 8 and 4. They are all current pupils of this school, Tom in year 6, James in year 4 and Daniel in reception. We moved to Seaford about a year before Tom was due to start school so had very little previous knowledge of the schools in the town. Looking back I think that was an advantage as we weren't swayed by any preconceptions or previous reputations of the schools.

When we started to visit the local schools I remember worrying about what to look for, or what questions to ask, because it's so difficult to imagine your playful 3 or 4 year old maturing into a schoolchild who can read, write or even get themselves changed for PE!

Our decision to choose this school over the others in Seaford was largely based on the overall impression we got from visiting and listening to the various presentations, it just felt right. This is my 7th year as a parent at the school and there has never been a day when my sons have said they don't want to come to school.

The Reception year provides the children with a gentle introduction to school life. They spend the majority of their time within their own classrooms and playground, and are gradually introduced to assemblies and larger gatherings when they're ready. The children are introduced to the Golden Rules and the basic routine of the school day. Daniel has settled in well and despite being one of the youngest in his year group has learnt his first few words and is enjoying reading his school books to us at home.

Right from the start the children are rewarded for good behaviour and achievement, this might be helping with tidying up, going into school without the aid of a grown up, or good reading. Stickers are the usual reward, and this continues up the school where there is a more formal reward and recognition system with certificates earned for every 15 stickers.

Another form of reward is the Merit Certificate. Children are nominated for these by their teacher and they are presented to the children in assembly. This can be for a specific piece of work or for always displaying a particularly good style of behaviour. Getting a merit certificate is relished at any age, Tom and James still rush out of school with a huge grin if they have a letter inviting me to see them get a merit certificate in assembly.

Thankfully, I've seen and heard of very little 'bad' behaviour at this school but as we all know, children can be volatile and don't always manage their emotions well. There is an excellent behaviour management policy in the school, that all staff are aware of. Most minor incidences are dealt with at the time with verbal intervention from staff, but more serious breaches warrant a letter to the child's parents and I don't mind admitting that I've had at least one of those letters. At that time my son's teacher knew this wasn't his normal behaviour and by talking to my son at home, and meeting with the teacher we got to the root cause of the issue and with a little support from his friends there was no further recurrence.

While talking about behaviour, I should also say that my children have not experienced bullying at the school and always feel safe here. My own experience of primary school was not so happy so I wouldn't hesitate to take action if I thought my children were exposed to any form of bullying.

With regard to the teachers at this school, I have found them all to be very approachable and when it comes to parents evening, they often have a very perceptive impression of your child. The teaching staff range from newly qualified teachers to those with considerable career experience, and the teachers in each year group work together to plan lessons, homework and school trips to ensure consistency within that year.

When your child reaches year 2 they will be expected to take SATs tests. The teaching staff introduce the idea and format of the tests in a discrete and subtle way so that the children are not overly anxious about the tests – in fact, my sons were barely aware they were taking tests at that age! The year 6 SATs are lengthier, but again the children are given lots of preparation and practice before the tests take place.

Once Tom got to about year 2 we found that the opportunities to participate in inter-school sports and other after school clubs really opened up. He's quite sporty so will volunteer for anything and everything so has represented the school at many events, including football, tennis, cross country, and an Olympics themed sport tournament. I'm particularly pleased that participation is encouraged for all children irrespective of ability or past experience. At all of these events the winners are recognised but all participants are rewarded for taking part.

The school runs a multitude of clubs & activities, both at lunchtime and after school. Over the last few years my boys have attended wildlife club, art club, football, cricket and even the female dominated dance club! The older children in the school are also allowed to establish clubs if they identify an idea that would be popular. In these cases there is always a member of staff who oversees the activity, but it is the children who plan and run the sessions. Last year Tom ran a

lunchtime club called the 'Secret Boys Secret Reading' club, so secret that even I didn't know about it until recently!

The school also has an exceptional music department, and anyone who attends an assembly will witness the fun and enthusiasm there is for singing. All year groups have music lessons on a regular basis and there are opportunities to learn musical instruments with external tutors holding lessons during the school day. Our family is not musical but James has been learning to play the keyboard for just over a year now, both Tom and James are in the main school choir, and Tom is also in the Chamber Choir (and they say that you can't make boys sing!). One of the highlights of the school year is when the choir sing in a concert at the O2 as part of the series of Young Voices concerts. Even for those of us in the audience, it really is one of the most inspiring and fun events you are likely to experience.

When your child reaches years 5 & 6 there are various positions of responsibility that they can volunteer or be nominated for. This could be a regular shift as a librarian, providing lunchtime help to the reception children, or being a playground mediator. Tom has relished these roles and the sense of maturity he gets from having these responsibilities.

I'm coming to the end of my notes now, and I've not touched on the amazing PTA we have here, or the school lunches that have resulted in my sons trying and enjoying many more foods than they would own up to at home. Neither have I mentioned the Christmas plays, the talent shows, the Proms nights, the school discos, the themed days or the sports days you will find yourself attending in the coming years.

To sum all this up, I'm so pleased and proud of my children's' achievements and the characters they have developed into, and this is due in no small part to this school. I had no idea of the opportunities that would be open to them when we first started bringing Tom here 7 years ago, and look forward to 7 more years here with Daniel. Your child's school experience goes way beyond those first few months in Reception and I hope I have given a glance of what might be in store.