

TRANSCRIPT: Helping Harvey to learn

Simon, Harvey's father

They need to speak slowly, clearly, understand that he's five years behind in terms of his language acquisition. There are nuances to his speech and language that, I guess, only his family really ever see but when he's been in a school for seven/eight years you would think that staff would get used to it. But, as in any normal school, there's staff turnover and it's not convenient to keep the same teaching assistant with him all the time.

Having said that, they're very fond of Harvey and he's bonded very well there and the touchy-feely, self-esteem side is fantastic, which is why, perhaps, we haven't been as interventionist as, perhaps, other parents when they march in and insist their little Johnny, X, Y and Z happens to them. We haven't been like that because, at the end of the day, it's not just about academic qualifications it's about social relationships - how you integrate, how you communicate, how you bond with other people - and the school has been superb at that. Harvey's self-esteem and self-worth is very, very high and the school has had something to do with that.

But in terms of his learning, how could they have improved that? I guess, one way would be consistency of staff - to have the same people go throughout his school career with him, with training in deafness. But at the end of the day, it's money. Everything, everything, everything I'm saying boils down to money in school and if you haven't got the money you can't buy in the expertise.

You've got to live your life and you can either allow the special need to dominate your life or you can live your life and accommodate the special need. And I've met families who uproot and go and live in another part of the country just because a certain school exists for their little Johnny who needs X, Y and Z, and there are families who get on with it, and I think there's a balance. You can't allow it to dominate because there are other children in the family and who may suffer if you do.