

# Patrick's story

Patrick first started attending Grove Cottage Nursery in March 2015 when he was 21 months old. He was already showing signs of having Autism and he was severely developmentally delayed. Patrick received his diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder just before he turned three. He also suffers from Epilepsy, global developmental delays, hypermobility syndrome and severe reoccurring infections.

When Patrick first started attending Grove Cottage, he was non-verbal, had extremely limited communication skills and hadn't formed any normal relationships. Since attending, he has come on in leaps and bounds, with the aid of the wonderful group of specialist workers helping him to grow on a daily basis, with focused one-to-one support. He is now able to communicate verbally and has developed a real sense of humour and a far greater ability to socialise with his peers than he previously displayed.

Patrick is always very happy at Grove Cottage, really looks forward to attending his sessions and is always excited about the various activities they allow him to take part in such as sing and sign and swimming.

As well as the support Patrick receives, as a family the support that we get from Grove Cottage is phenomenal. As Patrick's mum, I have been known to call up for a chat to offload some of the

stresses that come from parenting a child with additional needs. I think that the fact that all staff members are friendly, welcoming and greet you with a sense of humour, has helped us to become part of the Grove Cottage family.

As a family, we have also made close friendships with other members and their families, which have given us another line of support and another sense of belonging. Before Patrick joined Grove Cottage, I felt that parenting a child who has additional needs to be very lonely and isolating, but now I know that I have a boat full of friends who are in similar positions.

As Patrick is now four, he is due to start his new big school in September 2017, which is another setting that caters for children with additional needs. While I know that he will be fully supported there, I am going to miss Grove Cottage every day and cannot thank them enough for all that they have done for Patrick and our family.

Without everyone at Grove Cottage, I think that our world would be a much darker place and we will always be grateful to them for lighting up our world.

**Rebecca Doidge**

