

## Case Study – St Nicholas Special School, Canterbury

St Nicholas is a community day special school providing education for 177 children and young people who have special educational needs aged between 4 and 19. The school caters for a wide range of physical and learning disabilities.

St Nicholas' School was one of the first to join the MOVE Programme in 1999. In fact staff from the school attended the original MOVE presentation after it was originally launched in the UK. They were impressed with what they heard, thinking the programme could make a real difference to the school's pupils, and so the school took its first steps by having two members of staff train to be MOVE Practitioners.

By implementing the MOVE Programme, the school has seen children with a variety of physical disabilities move on to greater independence and free movement as fully functional individuals. Some of their students are even living in their own homes, away from family - something that would never have been thought possible without the programme.

St Nicholas deputy headteacher Stephen King says, *“MOVE has worked not only for our most intellectually and physically disabled young people, but also with many of our more able students who had difficulties being independent on steps, slopes and uneven ground. They were part of the programme to focus on those areas of difficulty, and through meaningful practice of the skills needed (for a more limited period) they too achieved full functional independence.*

*“Since MOVE was established in the school, 75 students have accessed the programme. One-third of those individuals have now graduated, meaning they are now independently able to walk and even climb stairs. Even if students haven't reached graduation level, all have made steps towards greater independence and the maintenance of skills. Though some students are no longer alive due to deteriorations with their conditions, their quality of life had been improved whilst at St Nicholas' School due to the increased mobility the MOVE Programme provided. Just one example of the success we have seen is a pupil with Retts syndrome (a degenerative condition) who has maintained her skills and celebrated her 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday party – she is still going strong and has no chest infections due to her increased mobility gained under the MOVE banner.”*

The other students at the school see the progress and efforts of those on MOVE positively. They motivate and support their peers when they see people trying hard on their programmes. It has been found that it brings the pupils together and allows inclusion, especially in PE and playground games.

Over the history of MOVE at St Nicholas, the school has seen some very dedicated pupils on the MOVE Programme. One student with a regressive seizure condition graduated from the MOVE Programme three times. Twice since her initial graduation, major seizures and deteriorations in her condition left her unable to walk. However, each time the MOVE Programme was adapted to her changing needs and she buckled down to once more achieve functional independence. She has shown the determination to be independent and do things for herself which, is of obvious benefit to her ongoing health and future prognosis.

St Nicholas School itself has also gained much from implementing the MOVE Programme. The school received 'Outstanding for Care, Guidance and Support' on its recent Ofsted inspection, where its use of the MOVE Programme was mentioned in its grading as being a positive. As a group the staff have also benefited from the MOVE Programme. It is positive for the collective spirit of the staff to see the results of the Programme in the lives and bring the whole school together, helping to improve cross-disciplinary working! For example, at a firewalk fundraising day, 14 staff from across the school walked on hot coals, just for MOVE! The staff also show their passion for the

Programme and pull together each day, wanting students to show their skills in daily routines and performances.

The MOVE Programme at St Nicholas School has certainly been a success. But what has gone into ensuring that the programme at the school has flourished? Stephen King says, *“We have to believe in the ethos of the programme at all levels of the school, from classroom to boardroom. The school has been very lucky to have high levels of support and accountability from the senior management team. We worked bottom up with core staff in key classes and then have expanded training so that it is compulsory part of the induction for all people who work directly with children in the school.”*

Stephen continues, *“I have gained much by working in an organisation using MOVE. I have seen students of mine whose families were told they would not reach a particular age or make specific achievements reach and surpass those initial assumptions.*

*I would and do recommend MOVE to other schools in my work across Canterbury. I have seen it work in special schools, mainstream and adult settings. It is common sense and provides a person-centred goal structure within which all parties can work for the betterment of the child and their family. It is through the pupil successes that the school and staff achieve its actualisation. If people try MOVE they will see that it is different to other programmes and can make a real difference for these peoples' lives. The core themes of daily, meaningful practice and a focus on improvement rather than maintenance – all within the structure of a time focussed plan - make the chances of genuine and real progress and, at least, the very maintenance of skills concrete and very achievable.”*

In the last 10 years the school has, received Ofsted recognition for its work with MOVE and it was awarded status as the MOVE Regional Centre of Excellence for Canterbury. This means the school was recognised for its best practice in the MOVE Programme as a supportive environment where the whole child and their family is the focus. The School work together with them and other professionals in a trans-disciplinary team learning from each other. Over their years with MOVE St Nicholas School has trained almost 40 people on the MOVE Programme, highlighting its commitment to the Programme and its confidence in its ability to help the children in their area.