

Feature Struggling with the small stuff

How Raviv method helps children with learning difficulties



TYING shoelaces is a skill most people take for granted. But teenager Craig Clement has learning difficulties, and this is just one of many everyday tasks that he finds baffling, and that eludes him every time. Now thanks to a new teaching method he's making steps towards being able to do all the small things he's always dreamed of. Reporter LIBBY JONES questions one practitioner on how the method works.

CRAIG Clement appears to be a normal teenager. He loves Chelsea football club, playing snooker and goes a charming shade of pink when you mention girls.

But the 13-year-old Queensmead pupil has spent years struggling with motor learning difficulties which nearly saw him sent to a special school.

Mother Margaret Clement said: "We first noticed at nursery when he was about three.

"His coordination and spatial awareness weren't great but then it continued to get worse until we were told he had mild to moderate learning difficulties."

The concerned parents struggled over the years to find the best learning environment for Craig and fought tirelessly to keep him in mainstream education.

But the light at the end of the tunnel finally came last year when Mrs Clement came across a revolutionary method to help those struggling with learning difficulties.

She said: "My sister saw an article about Usha and it just went from there.

"He started last April and by June we were already seeing an improvement."

Usha Patel has only been practising the Raviv method for a little under two years but has already seen several children come on leaps and bounds through the programme.

Previously working as an interior architect, she was intrigued by the way design could help people, particularly children.

"I worked on long projects like hospitals and schools and was fascinated by how design could aid children's recovery.

"I also realised that there were a lot of people who had learning difficulties but when it came to project work they were incredibly creative," explains Mrs Patel.

It wasn't until after the birth of her daughter though that she discovered the Raviv method and made the decision to dedicate her time to teaching.

Based on the findings of Israeli



HELPING HAND: Raviv method practitioner Usha Patel with Craig Clement, 13, and his mother, (above left); and Usha with her own daughter Nisha.

Photos: Libby Jones D14377-2 and Toby Vandevoroe D14305-1

Nilli Raviv, the Raviv method can be used to treat a range of learning difficulties including dyslexia, dyspraxia, Attention Deficit Disorder, speech impairments and motor coordination.

Children are given exercises intended to bridge gaps formed in the brain in the child's early development stages. It is these gaps which often scramble the way the brain receives messages and then sends them on to other parts of the body.

Mrs Patel, who is based in Northolt, said: "I assess each child I work with and tailor a programme to them. It's also about building their confidence though.

"A lot of these children have low self-esteem. It's about getting the best out of the child - not necessarily the

'His writing has really improved and his teachers have noticed'

best grades; they need encouragement and praise."

Conducted on a one-to-one basis, the courses last around six months and include homework and exercises which can be done at school as well as relaxation techniques.

Today Craig is still making incredible progress - something his parents feared might never happen.

Mrs Clement said: "His writing has really improved and his teachers have noticed.

"He's never been up to the standard to take SATs before but this year for the first time he will be sitting the exams with everyone else.

"It's a massive achievement. I wish I'd found this sooner."

Mrs Patel added: "Craig has made incredible progress but he's also got a fantastic family who give him so much support and that's one of the biggest things you can give any child, whether they've got problems or not."

For more information visit www.thelearningsociety.com or email ushapatel.raviv@gmail.com