

**NORSACA**  
quality of life for people with autism

## Jack's Story by Sarah Swain

When my son Jack was a toddler I realised he wasn't learning to talk in the same way his older sister had done. The health visitors reassured me that he would talk when he was ready, but as his Mummy I knew something wasn't right with my precious boy. At first they thought he might be deaf, so we took him to Chesterfield Hospital to get him tested, but his hearing was fine.

We didn't know anything about autism but we had to face the reality of his diagnosis at the age of 2 and a half. We were both distraught as you can imagine. Every parent wants a child that will have a life that will be as normal as could be.

We took the diagnosis of our son very badly. The first few years were very difficult. We felt like we were on our own. We didn't go out and we didn't mix. It was hard on our daughter too.

We first heard about NORSACA's wonderful Sutherland House School in Nottingham, from another parent when Jack was around 4 years old. As soon as we made contact doors opened for us and it took a lot of pressure off us. It was a long difficult process to secure funding from the local authority to get Jack a place at Sutherland House School, but we persevered, they agreed and it was so worth it!

At 4½ Jack started at the Ravenshead site of Sutherland House School, from this day on our lives became a little easier.

Since being at Sutherland House School Jack's writing and communication skills have improved and he is noticeably happier. He's made friends, which is what every parent wants. He actually wants to go to

school, which is a great credit to NORSACA I must say! The teachers at the school have done so much to help him. One time, when Jack was 8, we went on a family holiday to Ibiza. People with autism like routine and don't like things to be chaotic or unplanned. The school worked with Jack to help him understand the process of going on holiday, going to the airport in a taxi, getting on a plane and taking off and landing. Every year he seems to become happier and as his parents, we do too.

Jack is now 15, he's a confident, good mannered, lovable young man. He's passionate about cooking, likes gardening, art and being creative. He's in the football team, goes to the gym and goes swimming once a month with his friends. He also loves his games console like most teenagers! Jack doesn't speak very much and has difficulties communicating, but he's a lot better than he used to be. He has some independence but always has to have someone watching him. I believe that without the staff at Sutherland House School he would never have achieved any of this! My daughter, Laura, Jack's sister, has helped a lot and I want to thank her for that.

NORSACA is a big friendly circle around you that helps you through the bad times and helps celebrate the good times.

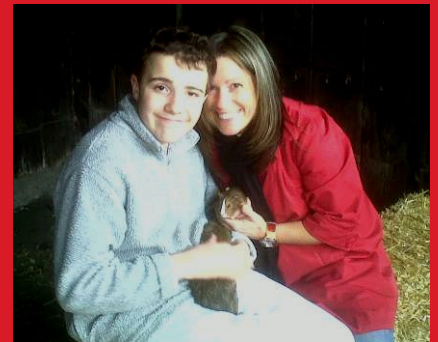
If other parents are considering sending their child to Sutherland House School I would say go for it, they are the best provider around.

**Jack Swain's story told by his Mum Sarah from Morton, Derbyshire**



**Jack showing off his artwork at NORSACA's Art Exhibition**

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**Jack and his Mum Sarah on a school trip to Lea Green**

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