



## Seth's Story

“ If you ever have the opportunity to go for a Hi5 Award with your child, it's something you need to grab with both hands... if we didn't have the opportunity for Hi5, Seth wouldn't be as outgoing and confident as he is now.”

Castle Douglass Primary School is a large rural school of 360 children, who are also the resourced learning centre provision for children with additional support needs in Dumfries and Galloway. They recently introduced a Hi5 programme for small groups, to accredit the wider achievement of pupils with additional support needs, develop their life skills and build confidence.

We sat down with teachers at the school, parents and students to talk about what the Hi5 programme had done for them – this is Seth's story.

Tara, Seth's Mum, describes how “before he started [Hi5] he was quite withdrawn, didn't really talk a lot.” He “struggled with being in the classroom full time.” She also explained how lockdown was not great for Seth. Pre-pandemic Tara had agreed with the school that Seth would be better off compartmentalising school and home, with adjustments made to his homework schedule. She said that when lockdown hit, “Homeschooling we lasted, I think, 2 months and... it was too much.”

Upon returning to the classroom, Tara said “Mr Whan came to us with the idea of the Hi5. We thought it would be perfect for Seth because he loved being outdoors, he loved having things that weren't quite as structured that he could perhaps lead himself.”





"It gave him that break from the classroom that he needed so it not only encouraged him to do some independent thinking with Mrs DeSilva, but it also helped in the classroom as well because he wasn't as stressed."

When we met with Seth later that day, he was excited to talk to us about his Hi5 and show off his work and certificates from his two challenges: re-introducing wildlife into the school's nature garden and making a clay sculpture of a Star Wars AT-AT. He told us "It was really fun to actually go ahead and participate in this [Hi5 Award] group."

"We set challenges like creating 3D models...I started designing it on paper and thought about doing the head and then the body" then, "we took them right up to the high school to get them fired which is basically what it is they go into kind of like a giant oven and they get like baked for a certain amount of time." Whilst proudly showing us his first model, he proudly said "I've never done this before" and "I definitely feel more confident"

When we spoke to him about the pandemic, he told us that "it wasn't really enjoyable for me, I actually started to feel a bit sad" but coming back into the classroom to do his Hi5 "made school way better."

"It made me feel extremely excited and awesome... I felt as confident as I could to myself for High School coming up... I was so determined because of that award."

Tara emphasised to us, "Seth did not get excited about school until Hi5... Post-pandemic, he did two years of Hi5 and you could just see he was more outgoing, he was a bit more chatty and instead of having to encourage him to talk, he doesn't stop talking, which for us was the main bonus because Seth was a late talker so it was nice to have so much communication with him."

Seth has just started High School, and whilst the transition still hasn't been easy, Tara said he was more outgoing, the Hi5 programme having helped him with that transition: "he will now communicate with staff more. In Primary School he only had one or two adults he would trust to talk to whereas in High School I've been told that he will stop and chat to any teacher that he finds going."

We can't wait to hear how Seth gets on at high school and how the Castle Douglass Hi5 programme impacts other children in the future.

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