

DOUBLE TROUBLE? *Life with the Walsh Twins*

Gina & Michael Walsh have twin boys, Luke and James, who are turning 13 in September. They have been students at Mater Dei since 2006. This year the boys began a very special new adventure. We asked Gina & Michael to share their story.



Our boys have Down Syndrome and they are active and healthy. Luke and James are in Year 7 this year and they have entered the Family Resource and Residential Program for one night per week. The boys are in separate residences and they are apart for the first time in their lives. This was a very difficult decision for all of us to make, as the boys are so close and we were afraid that they may not cope with being apart.

Luke didn't cope very well in Term One and, to be honest, neither did we. However, we all persevered and he now loves 'residence'.

He knows the routines and with our boys, routine is a very important part of life. I've often said that Luke always pulls through most situations; he just needs a bit more time. James on the other hand, fitted in from the word go and he loves it. In such a short time, we can see great development in both of the boys.

Luke still won't speak to James when James telephones him from his residence and we think it is because he is still a little annoyed with him because they are not together. Luke does speak to us every night and every morning when we ring and he sounds so happy. He loves to hear from us and he positively beams when we tell him how proud we are of him. James has settled into his residence really well and he loves spending time with his new friends and learning new skills. They both feel like they are grown up and this program really has been a great experience for our boys.

Living with children who have a disability is like jumping on a roller coaster and going for the ride of your life. We have had some wonderful experiences and we have met some outstanding people. Our daughter Samantha, who is 9 ½ years old, is an expert in Down Syndrome and she is very quick to recognise the abilities of her brothers. She spreads the message constantly at school as

her teacher tells us that she always talks about her brothers and about how proud she is to be their sister.

We are so proud of Luke and James as they have come such a long way. Nothing has been easy, but looking back, we wouldn't change a thing. We have a loving family and are proud to be part of the wonderful Mater Dei community. What more could parents ask for?



James, left, with his fish, and Luke on holidays.