

Luke's Story

Our son, Luke is 13 years old. He suffers from a syndrome known as 18-p translocate 15p. This basically means the p or small arm on his 18th chromosome has detached itself and joined onto his 15th chromosome. He is the only known person in the world to have been diagnosed with this condition. Geneticists are still fine-tuning exactly how genes are affected with this disorder but in Luke's case he is intellectually delayed, his fine and gross motor skills, as well as his speech, have required many hours of work. He needed growth hormone injections from the age of six and only stopped these 12 months ago.

Luke started at Mater Dei in August last year, after attending Cawdor Primary School. Cawdor had done an excellent job through his early childhood years but, as parents, we were not sure about whether a mainstream high school could meet Luke's specific needs, eg; availability of special needs teachers, social skills and making new friends. While mulling over this decision, I played in the Mater Dei Charity Golf Day and after my round of golf found myself talking with Pamela Templeton and realised that Mater Dei could be an excellent option for Luke. After visiting Mater Dei, we realised they had a wonderful program in place and enrolled Luke. Luke was lucky enough to start immediately which meant us taking him out of Cawdor but we thought this would be the best option for him. In hindsight, we believe this was one of the best decisions we have ever made.

Every week, Luke is learning new skills that a mainstream school could not provide. An example of this is the Residential Program that Luke attends every Wednesday and Thursday night at Teralba House. Not only does Luke learn independent living skills such as washing his hair, using the hot and cold water shower taps and making his own lunch (*pictured*), he also looks forward each week to activities such as shopping, ten pin bowling and swimming. Luke also enjoys going to St Gregory's for sport every Thursday – a number of boys who went to Cawdor with Luke now attend St Gregory's, so this is a great opportunity for him to catch up with his old school friends. We are very grateful to Mater Dei for providing an individual life skills program for Luke and with the current progress he is making, we feel confident that Luke will become a valued member of the community.

Nichola and Brett
Luke's Parents



***This story appeared in Matters
Magazine November 2003***