

## Jessica at School

I first met Jessica while she was at [REDACTED] Pre-school. There was one thing that stood out straight away, the one thing that so many people say they remember most about Jessica- her smile. It was clear she was so loved at the pre-school and what a happy and contented child she was.

Jessica started in Reception in September 2016. She was the oldest in the year group. This made her very popular when she brought in sweets to celebrate her birthday in the first week of school. I remember her beaming smile as the class sang 'happy birthday' to her and then she curtsied, absolutely enjoying her special moment.

Jessica was a very bright girl. She loved learning phonics and was one of the first in the class to get a reading book. She loved to read and could often be found in the book corner with a friend engrossed in a book, or making up the story if they couldn't read the words. Princesses and butterflies were always the favourite. Jessica was in the top groups for all subjects but her joy was always reading. I think she did the rest of the work just to keep me happy.

Jessica was such a polite girl. She always said 'please' and 'thank you'. At lunchtime she was one of the very few children to try any food served and was always grateful, again with a beaming smile. Jessica's behaviour was always perfect. I don't ever remember a time when she had to be told off in any way, she did always give me a little cheeky smile when I was telling someone to sit down for the tenth time!

On days when it was too cold or too hot for Jessica to be outside at lunchtime she would sit with a friend and enjoy a pile of books or would be colouring. She was a fantastic artist. When I was talking to her friends about what they miss most about Jessica it

was 'chatting' and 'colouring with her'. Children longed to be the chosen one to sit with Jessica at lunchtime and enjoy her chats and giggles. It was always a joy to listen to the conversations. Party planning was always a hot topic.

Jessica tried hard with everything she did. She didn't let her 'special heart' stop her doing anything. It was only ever the adults who stopped her. I remember her being brought inside as her lips had gone blue. She ended up wrapped up in my coat as well as her own as we tried to warm her up with Jessica still insisting she was fine and wanting to go back outside. During PE lessons Jessica would always join in to the full. Many of her classmates saying they couldn't keep going as they were too tired! She loved the activities on sports day and cheered on her team so enthusiastically.

Jessica had a real flare for music. I was really quite shocked as I walked into a music lesson to find Jessica playing instruments and performing confidently. A girl who could be so quiet was really in her element. She loved to perform songs and rhymes on our stage outside. She enjoyed sharing songs she had learnt in church too.

Jessica's determination was shown on her last day in school. Despite being really unwell she insisted that she came in to take part in her year group production, she wore her butterfly head piece with pride and sang beautifully. She was keen to know when the Easter egg hunt would be but sadly wasn't well enough to join us.

We have had a display of Jessica's photos and work up in school for over the last month. They are on a board near my desk. The children often stop as they walk through the room at lunchtime and share a memory of Jessica with a friend. Some just stand silently looking and remembering. Yesterday we remembered Jessica at school by dressing up as Princesses and Princes. We released balloons to send her our love and to say goodbye.

There are so many things we will remember about Jessica. I can picture her so clearly doing a little jump for joy and waving her arms in excitement when we released the butterflies we had been watching grow from caterpillars. She was such a gentle, kind and considerate girl. She had a real sense of peace about her and was so proud to tell everyone about her special heart. She loved to tell her friends about her church and openly shared her faith.

In September we will welcome Sophie into the school to become as much as a part of our school family as Jessica was. Sophie will walk into the classroom where she hugged and kissed Jessica goodbye every morning without fail. Jessica will always be part of our school community and is missed so much.

Fly high beautiful girl.