

## MIDDLESBROUGH, November 2016

### INTERVIEW WITH PARENT OF RYAN

#### 1 FAMILY DETAILS:

Ryan lives with his parents, two older brothers and a younger sister in the town centre area of Middlesbrough. At the time of Ryan's birth, the parents ran a newsagent and bakery, and lived in a one bedroom flat. Both parents have degrees. Currently, Julia is undergoing school-based teacher training and Martin has since re-trained as a plumber, though they still own the paper shop. Ryan's maternal grandmother is unwell, with her husband in the main caring role, but there is a very close connection and involvement with Martin's grandparents.

#### 2. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND CLIMATE:

Ryan's father described a certain amount of stress related to financial worries and time constraints involved in running a business, but *"To my way of thinking (...) you tend not to show your kids that. They don't need to know that side of things"*. He described the parenting style of himself and his wife as *"very calm, very patient, very laid-back. I think that's a big part of it, not to be anxious and uptight"*. He emphasised that what-

ever stress the family faced, both parents would always find time for the children. *"I want them all to do well. I wouldn't necessarily say I want Ryan to go to university... I'd like to see him do something with his life. Whether he's a plumber or a joiner or an architect, it's entirely up to him"*. He explained that he will spend a great deal of time everyday talking to Ryan, answering questions and explaining things as fully as possible. *"We always involve the kids in stuff if they're interested in something. Trains, motorbikes, the countryside; all sorts. We always talk, always."*

Ryan has a close relationship with both parents and siblings, particularly his oldest brother, and his great grandmother.

#### 3. CHILD CHARACTERISTICS:

Ryan is described as extremely confident, sociable, curious and easy-going, never prone to panic or worry and not given to tantrums, except on rare occasions when he is very tired. He is inquisitive and loves to explore and ask questions about things he finds outside (e.g recently, frogs and other creatures). He is also extremely creative and will hap-

pily play for hours, building with Lego, making things or drawing. His father commented that Ryan will always find things to do: *"He'll never come home and say 'I'm bored'. Never ever."* At the moment his main obsessions are action heroes, trains and anything mechanical, such as old tractors, and he has developed a real interest in World War II which has been encouraged by handling artefacts left by his great grandfather. He also enjoys cooking and preparing meals, and loves measuring ingredients and other things for his dad. This summer he has expressed an interest in learning martial arts so his parents have booked him into a karate class. In all things, whatever he shows an interest in will be encouraged by both parents.

In terms of social competence, Ryan gets on well with others and will show awareness if someone is upset but will not dwell on it. Asked whether he has demonstrated qualities of resilience, his father gave an example of how he has coped well with his grandmother's illness.

#### 4. HOME EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

A lot of the family leisure time is spent in their caravan, at a local site, about 20 minutes from the family home. Here, there is a mixture of woods and grass, and an established, close-knit community, so that the children can have a lot of freedom and space to explore and use their imagination, without adult supervision.

On the caravan site Ryan enjoys climbing trees, bike riding, playing hide and seek, etc. He also enjoys swimming, tag rugby and many other physical activities. He has established firm friendships at the site but will also play relatively independently.

Reading is important to the whole family. Both parents read to the children and make sure that at least half an hour per night is spent with the whole family read-

ing together. The family also make a point of having breakfast and tea together, and conversation is always encouraged. *“You encourage your kids. If you don’t know something, you would look it up. I would never just fob them off.”*

#### 5. PRE-SCHOOL EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES:

Ryan was at home from birth to 3 while his parents ran the shop. The children had a relatively free run of the flat and were supervised partly by CCTV or involved in the shop, talking to customers. By the time they were two and a half, all the children could hold a conversation because of variety of their encounters in the shop. Ryan in particular loved the interaction and spent a lot of time counting with his parents, learning to recognise coinage, etc. However, a deliberate decision was made not to send him to pre-school: *“Kids need*

*to be kids. You’re having children to be with you and to bring them up. (...) I know they learn and interact (...) we just think that when they’re little, time with their parents, it’s something they don’t get at a nursery (...). They’re not getting the one to one they should.”*

At 3, Ryan began nursery school part time, for half days and his parents were very satisfied for the 2 years he attended, and with the transition to reception. He is doing well in Year 1 in school and his father attributes this to the high quality of teaching. *“He likes it. He enjoys school. His reception teacher made it as fun as it should be and he’s with a decent teacher again this year.”*

Ryan continues to thrive, with great progress in reading and all areas of KS1.