



“I never thought something like this would happen, given all he’s had to overcome and the very difficult conversations I’ve had with doctors down the years” – schoolboy Bobby wins a national Inspirational Learner Award

An inspirational schoolboy with a range of complex health conditions has defied the odds to scoop a national education award.

[Bobby Bolton](#) has been receiving care from East Anglia’s Children’s Hospices (EACH) at The Treehouse since he was nine months old. The 11-year-old is non-verbal, on a ventilator 24 hours a day and relies on Optiflow (a high-flow nasal oxygen therapy device).

Despite these challenges, Bobby loves learning, attends Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy, in Ipswich, and has now won an Inspirational Learner Award, from the Ormiston Academy Trust.

After being nominated, he saw off competition from the trust’s other 42 academies nationwide and received his award during a glittering ceremony at Birmingham’s Grand Hotel on Thursday night.

Mum Sarah Shemmings said: “I was bursting with pride and totally overwhelmed.

“I cried as soon as I found out he’d won and it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life to see him receive his award. I was a blubbering wreck!

“I never thought something like this would happen, given all he’s had to overcome and the very difficult conversations I’ve had with doctors down the years.

“In spite of everything, he’s come on in such leaps and bounds and to now win a national award is unbelievable.

“He really is an inspiration and it’s hard to put into words how extremely proud and blessed I feel.”

Ipswich Town fan Bobby has Microcephalus (a condition where the brain doesn’t grow at the expected rate, meaning he has severe developmental delay) and Hydrocephalus (a build-up of fluid on the brain).

He also has Polymicrogyria (a condition characterised by abnormal development of the brain before birth), Global Developmental Delay (when a child takes longer to reach certain development milestones than other children their age), chronic lung disease, epilepsy and sleep apnea.

Nevertheless, he is passionate about learning and communicates by blinking, pursing his lips and closing his eyes.

Sarah said: “Bobby loves everything about school, learning and seeing his friends. He particularly likes music, science and maths.

“It’s been great for him and obviously I’m thrilled because this has happened to Bobby.

“However, I also think it’s great to see a non-verbal child being recognised for their achievements, because that doesn’t happen often.

“Just because they can’t explain themselves verbally, it doesn’t mean they can’t express themselves in different ways. Bobby’s proof of that.”

Sarah and Bobby were joined in Birmingham by Specialist Learning Support Assistants Zoe Knowland and Marie Murphy, from Thomas Wolsey Ormiston Academy.

Both have been instrumental in helping Bobby, who has two-to-one support at school and attends twice a week. He also does lots of home learning.

Zoe said: “Bobby’s a brave, determined, clever young man who enjoys every second at school, making every moment count.

“Despite the added pressures his health conditions bring, he’s always eager, positive and prepared to give his all.

“He’s made amazing progress and uses various forms of communication to make very clear choices.

“He’s an important, popular member of the class and both the children and staff can see how much bravery and effort it takes for him to attend and excel.

“He doesn’t let anything hold him back and he’s a very special, hard-working superstar. We’re very proud of him.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

“EACH is a place I’d recommend to any parents in our situation. Not just for the care delivered, but because it’s somewhere children play and have fun, where their medical needs are a priority but the children feel that living life is an equal priority”

- **We rely on voluntary donations for the majority of our income** and this year need to raise £6.7 million from donations and fundraising activities and £7.8 million in retail income. We only receive 15% of our income from the government, county councils and the NHS.
- **Our supportive care for babies, children, young people and their families is all-encompassing.** If required, this life-long support includes specialist nursing, therapies and ongoing wellbeing care through all the ups and downs.

- Depending on a family's needs and wishes, **we can provide care in one of our hospices, in the family home, in hospital or in the wider community**. This ensures every family receives care somewhere they feel safe and comfortable.
- **Our range of services is comprehensive**, for both bereaved and non-bereaved families, and includes expert nursing care and short breaks, symptom management nursing, family activities and events, physical therapies, wellbeing, care at end of life, bereavement support and practical help in the family home.
- **Our hospices are rated 'Outstanding' by the Care Quality Commission**. They are **fun, happy and homely** places for children to be children, and a **dependable, supportive and restful** space for families to be families. Parents and siblings are involved and supported throughout.
- **We work together with families and other care professionals** and have a reputation for excellence and working collaboratively, sharing skills and expertise within our teams and in partnership with healthcare colleagues across the sector.
- **EACH provides employees with the opportunity to make a real difference** to the lives of children, young people and families. To find out more about current vacancies and working for EACH, head [here](#).
- **EACH Royal Patron – HRH The Princess of Wales.**
- **For more information about EACH, including forthcoming events and how you can help raise funds**, visit www.each.org.uk or call our fundraisers on 01223 800 800.
- **Keep in touch:**
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