

Josh is just a regular guy in year 4 class

By Nicola Williams

Nine-year-old Josh Bradley beams when he's asked what class he's in at Cockle Bay School.

But for Josh, mainstream education would have just been a dream without speech language therapy supported by the UpsideDowns Education Trust.

The year 4 student has down syndrome.

While his mum Nicola Bradley "wouldn't change him for the world", she and her husband have always tried to help him to communicate better.

"He wouldn't be in mainstream school if it wasn't for our early interventions," Mrs Bradley says.

Josh was given speech language therapy from a young age which has greatly helped his development.

From learning sign language, he became the first child in his mum's coffee group to be able to indicate he wanted food or drink.

As a toddler Josh already knew up to 400 signs.

Through speech therapy he learned to speak but still uses signs when he's not being understood.

"He tries so hard to get small details out about his day."

In every other way, Josh is "just a regular nine-year-old" with an infectious personality.



Special bond: Nicola Bradley says her son Josh is able to attend mainstream school like his siblings thanks to speech therapy through the UpsideDowns Education Trust.

Photo: AMELIA JACOBSEN

"He gets no special treatment," Mrs Bradley says.

"We love him to death and wouldn't change him for the world, it makes him who he is."

She says it didn't take her and her husband long to accept his condition after it was discovered at birth.

"It opened up a different world for us. We meet people we never would have met and got introduced to

a whole different parenting style," Mrs Bradley says.

His parents wanted Josh to have the same education as his brother and sister and with the help of a teacher aide he's now "totally integrated" into his class.

Speech therapy costs more than \$3000 a year which can be a barrier to other children reaching the same potential as Josh.

The UpsideDowns Edu-

cation Trust helps 37 down syndrome children and has 20 on their waiting list.

It was established to provide speech and developmental programmes to children like Josh.

They rely on successful grant applications and like many charities are struggling financially.

Speech therapy gives greater independence in later life, helps in achieving

personal goals and becoming active and contributing members of the community.

The trust has a charity event in August called Share the Dream and would appreciate any sponsorship or donation of items for auction.

For more information and contact details go to www.sharethedream.co.nz.

