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Aoife's Journey

16-year-old Aoife has the most infectious personality! She is an amazing advocate for Paces and her journey is truly inspirational.

Aoife didn't have the easiest start in life. Born at 32 weeks and 3 days, she and her sister Tilly are two of surviving identical triplets. Sadly, Orla passed away at just one week old. Aoife and Tilly also have a proud big sister, Maisie.

Aoife's mum, Jude, told us: *"Aoife spent the first two months of her life in hospital and at one point the doctors told us that she was the sickest child on the Neonatal Unit. She was on oxygen and had a number of complications including chronic lung disease, reflux and feeding difficulties. At 7 months, we were given the news that Aoife had a diagnosis of Cerebral Palsy.*

"No one gives you a handbook on how to care for a child with a disability and we were told that Aoife may never walk, eat or be able to speak, which was an incredibly scary and worrying time for the whole family".

Aoife's parents heard about Paces through a friend at playgroup and at age 3, Aoife started at Paces School. Jude said: *"Paces was the best kept secret in Sheffield*

and we are so pleased that awareness has been raised so that more families like ours can be supported. From the moment we came to meet the staff, we knew this was the school for Aoife! We loved the 'can-do' approach they have and the focus on what our children can do, not what they can't do. We were worried that Aoife wouldn't be able to walk but on her first session, the Conductor took hold of Aoife's hands and helped her to take her first steps. It was such a special moment and we love the positive attitude which the staff have.

"The combination of access to all elements of the National Curriculum, along with learning physical skills is just amazing! Thanks to Paces, Aoife is able to walk with sticks and has been taught many valuable life-skills such as brushing her teeth, fastening her shoelaces and especially how to eat.

Outside of Paces, Aoife enjoys wheelchair basketball and also attends a local dance class each week, which her parents are super proud of. She is such a kind and caring girl with a heart of gold and has overcome so much to become the lovely young lady she is today. Aoife has aspirations to go on to college and to become a teacher. Aoife particularly enjoys supporting and working with the younger pupils in school, which she does so well.