

# A big 10-4 for this Markham boy

**STEVE HOUSTON**  
Staff Reporter

Young Cameron Straughan just wants to be treated like everyone else.

Though he is an exceptionally bright child with a steel-trap memory for phone numbers, it's a constant battle to be considered that way.

When he chats on his mother's CB-radio with dispatchers every morning on her Travelways bus, he again tries to be a normal five-year-old.

But Cameron Straughan can't

really be the same as others his age — he's blind.

Cam's mother Moira, despite her son's handicap, wants him to be just like other children. That's why she sent him to William Armstrong P.S. to take Kindergarten classes.

"He's an exceptionally inquisitive boy and always wants to know more than what I can tell him," said Mrs. Straughan. "We didn't want to send him away to a special school."

Blind from birth, Cameron's

parents had considered sending him to Brantford's W. Ross MacDonald school for the blind. In his early years, Mrs. Straughan decided Cameron should be given the chance to live in the mainstream community. As he approached school age, she decided to enroll him in a local school. He's been there since last September.

"He's just a delight; a real charmer," said Ann Gordon, Cameron's teacher at William Armstrong P.S. "Cameron had no problems adjusting. He came in and became one of the group."

Though he has some different learning tasks, such as pre-braille and finger exercises, much of his day is the same as other children in his class.

Mrs. Gordon added that Cameron is a bright and independent student and easily grasps day-to-day instruction in class.

While in the Economist and Sun offices last week he managed to contact various people in the office and have short chats. His fingers moved expertly over the phone's digits, confidently dialing a number he's memorized. He phoned radio station CHUM-AM to get the latest concert listings.

Mrs. Straughan admits there were apprehensions about admitting him into a regular school, but said she had faith in his ability to fit in.

"I had the confidence in Cam," Mrs. Straughan noted. "I knew what his capabilities were and knew he could do it."

Once initial worries were put aside, officials at the school decided Cam's enrolment would be mutually beneficial to him and other students at the school.

"I thought it might open the

doors for other handicapped kids," she noted. "So far it's been a super experience all round for Cam, other children, the school and the community."

In the future, the Straughan family would like make sure Cam's life is as close to normal as

possible. Mrs. Straughan said she believes this will best prepare Cam for when he gets older.

"At first I thought 'why not give him the chance in a regular school,'" she said. "We did it to see how everyone would adjust and so far it's worked out well."



CAMERON STRAUGHAN

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