

## ILYA UPDATE



Ilya is now 8 years old and is living in an Internat (boarding school) in a town called Vileika.

Ilya has thrived as a result of his relationship with befrienders Tanya and Zhenya. He is bigger and brighter than his peers and he is very confident now.



Vileika is a good 2 hour drive from Minsk and therefore impossible for Tanya and Zhenya to see Ilya every weekend. His visits are now limited to holidays.

Initially I was hugely concerned about the restrictions on his relationship with Tanya and Zhenya the move to Vileika would



have. So I approached our partner Belarusian NGO, BelAPDiMI, and asked the social workers if they could find a foster family for him. I truly believed that by working with Tanya and Zhenya in the transition Ilya would settle well. Tanya had other ideas.

She researched the Internat and found it to be a very good school, ideal for Ilya's needs. We have to remember that at

Zhordina he had no schooling and, although Tanya did a lot of work with him, he would not cope in an ordinary school.

Our specialist social workers, Ira and Lena who are funded by the Prevention Project were brilliant. Working closely with Natasha Yanushkevich, our foster care liaison worker who links with the Minsk Association of Foster Carers, they found a placement in a large foster home in Zhordina almost immediately. Being a large group home with children of problematic backgrounds, Tanya felt it was not suitable and because Ilya is doing so well at his school in Vileika does not want to move him from there. It has been investigated and if Ilya can move into a foster family in Vileika, he can continue going to the Internat for his education. The team are keeping their eyes and ears open.



We all hope that a home can be found for him soon for he still has the ‘institution eyes’. That tell-tale blank look that is so distinctive in the eyes of all the children who live in orphanages.

Ilya has coped well with the transition from the orphanage into the Internat (going from 75 children in the home to over 200 and everybody is bigger than him). He is still with the same group of children that he was with in Zhordina, but the teachers are very kind and loving and Tanya rings to speak to him a couple of times a week.



He did initially get into a lot of fights, but one of his teachers, Andrei, has made him his ‘right-hand man’ and they tell him that Tanya will be upset and this seems to have done the trick to calm him down.

We will continue to follow this special little boy and keep our fingers crossed that a home can be found soon for him.

