

Kate Lopez recalls how her and her family adjusted to life in Hertford.

Were there particular challenges for your daughters, having lived their whole life in Spain?

Even though they're fluent English speakers, all their education until then had been in Catalan or Spanish, and it was a big jump. It really gave me an insight into how it must be difficult for people that come here as adults or as teenagers, and haven't got those English language skills, because actually, it must be so frustrating to come and have a double challenge of settling into something, but also learning the languages and things.

My eldest daughter understands both Spanish and Catalan, but she gets embarrassed to speak now, but what's interesting is she's started Spanish at secondary school, and I think she now understands that actually, it's quite useful to have another language.

What other differences are there?

Living is different in Spain. I think in some ways maybe in Spain its more old-fashioned, but its more tactile. In Britain, people are a bit more restrained and things. Also, both girls were very loud, they would play together in Catalan and be much louder than English kids and stuff.

We moved from a big city, and a very noisy city, so we moved here and I remember my youngest daughter saying, "Mummy it's so quiet here at bedtime, I can't sleep", she was so used to noise and often would have the window open in the summer and would hear people chatting and parties and fiestas and stuff.

One of the things we didn't realise was that it had been a long time since we'd lived in England, and also with me, I had done all those big milestones, like having children, in Spain, and so sometimes I felt like I was almost a foreigner here in some ways because it's just a different approach to bringing children up and things. In Spain, children would go everywhere with you, you take them out late at night and that kind of thing. The fact that the town centre come like quarter to five is pretty shut up. The day is longer in Spain and school finishes later. As a family, we all thought that "It's only five o'clock, why is everywhere shut?"

Did you find it easy to meet people?

As soon as we moved here, I got a real sense of community. I was looking for things to do, so we spent a lot of time at Leaf Café and a lot of time in the Museum, and a lot of time at Hartham Park and also the swimming pool. I joined lots of things at school, like the parents association, and I joined a book club and things like that. Having that community at school, you just kind of meet other people locally and stuff. Both of them joined stuff outside of school as well, and so one of them is part of a girl's football team in Hertford, the other's part of a Hertford hockey club, they joined Scouts and Brownies. Yeah, so I feel we quickly became part of the community really.

One of the first people I met, we were at Hartham swimming pool and my daughters were saying to me, "Mummy! Mummy! We can hear Catalan! We can hear someone speaking

Catalan!" It felt like a connection almost to home in some ways. A woman, who was there with her two daughters, she was from Barcelona, and she had two daughters exactly the same age as me, both the girls turned out to be in my daughter's class, and she's basically a neighbour so yeah, I still speak Catalan around Hertford, which is amazing.

How do your daughters feel now?

My eldest daughter, she's lived exactly the same amount of time in Barcelona and in Hertford. When we moved here, she spoke English with a slightly Spanish accent, but she quickly, if Hertford has an accent, she quickly adopted the Hertford accent, so yeah I definitely think that she feels part of Hertford.

I think they feel proud about the other life and their roots, but this is definitely home for them now.