

Here some Year 8 students talk about what they wished they could tell themselves when they started in Year 7.....

### Chelsy, North Cambridge academy

"I was worried about making friends and finding my way around. But my older sister gave me some advice: not to think about all the negative stuff, but to think instead about the good stuff, like how I will find new friends and meet some nice new teachers.

All my teachers were encouraging, but there's one who sticks out: Miss Bailey, my RE teacher. She always had a smile on her face when she greeted us. She's really calm and kind and the work she gave us wasn't too overwhelming.

If I were to go back in time, my advice to myself would be: don't overthink the whole process of making friends. I thought it would be hard for me because normally I like sticking with the people I know. But friends I knew from primary school introduced me to new friends they had made, who were really encouraging. I'd meet them and we'd just sort of click. Within a couple of weeks, I realised I'd made all these new friends all by myself."

### Douglas, Oxford Spires in east Oxford

"I don't think you need to actively try hard to make friends. You'll be in classes together and so will have to talk to them, out of necessity. And if you don't make many new friends, it won't be much of a problem. You don't need 20 people you can reliably talk to. You'll be fine with a few that you like.

The simple solution if you get lost is to ask an older child to explain where you should go. Often, they will be perfectly friendly. Unless they're terrible people, they won't be saying to each other: let's go terrify those year 7s.

Some teachers can be quite strict, but I get a lot more done in the lessons I have with them. Besides, if you don't disrupt a lesson, it doesn't really matter whether the teacher is strict or not.

The one thing you have to worry about is the long-term homework projects. The general rule I've found is: if the teacher thinks the homework will take half an hour, it will take less time. But if the teacher says it will take an hour, it will probably take longer."

### **Tyler, North Cambridge academy**

"Before I arrived, I thought I would get homework every single day and everyone said it would be really difficult. But I discovered that the homework was actually quite easy and it can be really fun.

People also told me the teachers at secondary school are horrible. But they were really kind – especially Mr Kelly, my head of year.

I think sometimes older kids try to make you scared of year 7, so that you don't want to go. I told my mum how worried I was feeling and she said: 'You'll be fine.' She told me that if I went, I would start to enjoy it – and she was right."

### **Grace, North Cambridge academy**

"I was most worried about getting lost. If I could talk to my younger self, I'd say: it will be fine. You can just speak to teachers and older kids if you get lost and they will help find your way. And actually the school isn't even as big as it seems from the outside.

One time, I came out of class and made friends with this girl because we had the next class together, and we thought we had got completely lost on our way there – but we hadn't. We just had to go up a few stairs. It was really funny and that helped us to bond. We're really good friends now – and that was the first time we spoke."

### **Isabelle, Chauncy School in Ware, Hertfordshire**

"I was quite upset when I discovered, on the day I started, that I wasn't in a set with all my friends from primary school. I thought that meant I wasn't going to stay friends with them. But in fact, I made new friends in my set, and I still get to see my other friends at lunchtime.

It's not difficult to make friends. You just say hello and ask questions like: which classes do you have, what primary school did you go to, and how many siblings do you have. And then you can ask them if they'd like to sit with you at lunchtime.

My advice is: put a checklist on the door so you remember the things you need to take with you in the morning. Because at secondary school, you get detentions and if you do something bad, they will shout at you. In primary school, they didn't do that."

### Gregory, St Mary Magdalene academy, north London

"My advice to someone starting year 7 is don't think how scared you are of secondary school, think about how you can help other people who may be feeling scared. Try to be nice to everyone. Tell yourself it's going to be a positive experience. Soon it will feel completely normal, like primary school was.

What I did to make friends was to play the same ball game, Champ, a lot at lunchtime, so then I got to know everyone else who played that game quite well. That way, I didn't have to walk up to people and say: hi, I'm Gregory."

### Riaz, North Cambridge academy

"If I had to go back in time to the first day, the advice I'd give myself is: pay attention more and don't do things that other people tell you to do for their own amusement. I wish I'd known, on the first day, which teachers have high expectations and which ones have low expectations.

My brother always got in trouble at school, so I asked my three older sisters for advice. They said: 'Don't be naughty and don't muck about.' They also told me which teachers were their favourites. I looked forward to starting, thanks to them.

My top piece of advice would be to get involved in clubs, because there are people there you wouldn't normally interact with – but as they go to the same clubs, you might have a lot in common."

### Tyler, North Cambridge academy

"I wish I'd known, on the first day, that everything was going to be OK. It took me less than a week to settle in. I remember my teachers telling us not to be afraid to ask if we get stuck during a lesson. They said not to worry about doing that, because the work was new to us. I asked quite a lot of questions at first, and they helped me, and now I feel more confident.

It's good having multiple teachers teaching different subjects. It was getting boring, having the same teacher all day every day at primary school."

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