



MARY AND IAN LIVE IN SOLIHULL WITH THEIR DAUGHTERS, ELLA, AGED 12, AND LILY, AGED 7.

Ella has made new friends and learnt to be resilient and independent during her first year at Lode Heath School

Incentive scheme

Mary and Ian are delighted with the way the staff at Lode Heath encourage the students to try their hardest at everything. Mary says: "During Year 7, Ella has been able to have rewards such as chocolate, and free school trips, by earning credits for a variety of things. We are pleased the incentives offered are not just for academic success, but to encourage participating and trying hard, so that it includes everyone."

Helpfulness encouraged

Students can earn credits for things such as using the library, being punctual, volunteering around the school, or helping the teachers, Mary says. "If you are not given any debits, you become a Zero Hero and get a badge, so there is a big incentive to do well."

Settling in

Ella was the only one from her primary school to go to Lode Heath and she has settled in well. "We had moved house and were in the catchment area for Lode Heath during Ella's last few years at primary school. Because we had chosen not to move her from her primary school, she didn't know anyone else who was going to Lode Heath," Mary explains.

Friendly school

"When we went to the Lode Heath open evening we liked the school straight away. We were impressed with the opportunities on offer and felt it was warm and friendly," she says. "Although we viewed other secondary schools in the area, we got a good feeling about Lode Heath and felt it would be a nice environment for Ella."

Smooth transition

Mary says the summer school offered by Lode Heath for new students was absolutely fantastic and boosted Ella's confidence. "She met someone there who was in her class when she started. We thought the first day was

handled very well. They introduced the new students to the incentive scheme so there was encouragement right from the start to try to earn credits. They allowed Year 7 to get their lunches earlier than the other years so they could get used to the queuing system. Ella settled in quickly and enjoyed sampling new subjects, such as Drama and Catering, which she will get the chance to try again in Year 8."

Involving parents

Mary and Ian have found communication with parents very good. "After a few weeks we were invited to a 'Behind the Scenes' event for parents of new students to show us what they had been doing at school, which was very useful. The teachers knew Ella by name which showed they cared about students, and we even got to sample the cafeteria food," Mary says.

Student's viewpoint

"The other years started later than Year 7 on the first day so we were able to walk round the school without them there to get a feel for it," Ella recalls. "The teachers were all kind and helpful. On the first day we were all in the hall together and the teachers told us about earning rewards to go on free trips. We were also offered sports activities and clubs to try, such as netball, football, and trampolining, and we were able to use the library."

New subjects

Ella liked the way students got to try different subjects on a rotation basis in Year 7, such as Catering, Drama, DT and Music. She says: "I have enjoyed French because the lessons have not just been about learning the language, but also about the culture. I liked doing Catering because I enjoy making food and I look forward to doing it again. Since starting at Lode Heath, I have been encouraged to join in things and I have made a lot of new friends. I have also learnt how to be resilient and independent."