

Alison believes in helping children towards independence and maturity – and Worthing High School is doing just that for her daughters

**WORTHING
HIGH
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Leading Learning



Alison and Chris Jackman live in Worthing with their daughters Jess, 15 and Millie, 13. The girls currently attend Worthing High School to where they moved from The Vale Middle School.

BIGGER IS NOT NECESSARILY BEST

Alison and Jess had different ideas on what they wanted from a school. Jess wanted to move up with the majority of her friends but Alison preferred a smaller environment and in the event, Jess was allocated a place at Alison's choice of Worthing High. "Jess was disappointed at first but she acknowledges now that Worthing High was the best option," says Alison. "The school was very understanding and arranged to move her to a class with another girl she had known quite well at The Vale, but it only took a few weeks before she felt like she had always been there and had made a lot of new friends and she is glad now that we decided not to try again for her initial choice."

In fact, Jess now describes her school as 'perfect'. "Before I visited Worthing High I had liked the thought of a bigger school and, if I'm honest, I was attracted to a more modern environment. The buildings at Worthing High seemed to me a bit old fashioned but now I can't imagine liking anything better; it's not your surroundings that make the difference but the people you are with, and they are all so lovely."

LIVING IN THE REAL WORLD

One thing Alison was sure of was that a mixed-sex school was the more sensible option, believing that as young adults children need to learn to live alongside both boys and girls. "My view is that single-sex secondary education can be a somewhat artificial environment and that it can be socially limiting," she explains. "When they start college they need to know how to interact with both boys and girls as this is part of the real world and we have never seen any evidence of distraction. School should be more than somewhere to achieve academically, and a place where they have the opportunity to learn the life lessons they will need as they get older."

Jess's view of mixed-sex education is that it is actually a real positive in terms of learning. "It might sound stereotypical but boys tend to be more science-orientated and I have found that my male friends have been a great help to me in that area," she says. "I am really interested in practical science and it tends to be the boys who I can relate to in that particular subject. What I like is the variety of subjects we have the chance to study and that they are made so accessible to everyone." Jess is also consistently achieving top grades in History and Spanish amongst other subjects.

INDEPENDENCE AND INITIATIVE

Alison feels strongly that children should learn a degree of independence at school and that Worthing High encourages this. Jess is a Peer Mediator and a Student Leader, both of which roles require initiative and responsibility. "It's all part of growing up and learning about life beyond the classroom, and by treating young people as adults they will gain maturity. Jess and Millie have been encouraged to manage their own time and trusted to complete their homework without constant reminders - another skill which will stand them in good stead later."

This is an aspect of the school that Jess also appreciates. "Worthing High really does stress the importance of independence and I have had to learn to revise and research a lot by myself. Having said that, if I ever do need any help I can't think of any one of my teachers who is not fully prepared to make time for me. They are always willing, accessible, encouraging - and just lovely!"

PEER SUPPORT

When Millie started at Worthing High she was not in a tutor group with anyone else from her middle school year group. However, she did know one of the older girls which is an advantage of the vertical tutor groups. Millie says: "I feel that we are encouraged to be independent and find solutions ourselves, rather than going to teachers as a first port of call. I have made a lovely group of friends since going to Worthing High and everyone was very welcoming.

I like the fact that we have a lot of freedom during break and lunchtimes so we can catch up with friends and visit the Library etc. It is also very convenient that the library or LRC (Learning Resource Centre) is open before and after school hours."

With Millie having recently joined the school, Jess can see, at a more personal level, how the linear form system can benefit all the year groups. "Millie knew hardly anyone when she started but now she has a fantastic friendship group with students from every year. I know how intimidating it is to be one of the youngest in a school but as a Peer Mediator I've been able to help resolve issues which could have escalated into a difficult situation. Because all four years are brought together as a form unit there is a greater understanding between us and that helps to make Worthing High the friendly, family-like place it is. I might have had my doubts before but now I am so glad I'm here."

As both the girls are doing well academically and enjoying school, Alison knows that Worthing High was the right choice. "They are happy to work hard to achieve their goals and to me that speaks volumes about a school environment. If they are happy, they will learn, and that is what matters."



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