

Tina and Darren are so glad they trusted their instincts and sent their son to Worthing High School

**WORTHING
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Tina and Darren Best live in Worthing with their sons Thomas, 15 and Max, 12.

CHANGE OF HEART

Although Tina and Darren had not initially considered Worthing High School as an option for Thomas, they changed their minds as soon as they walked through the door. "We had listened to what other parents had to say about their choices before we started looking around for ourselves," says Tina. "Nevertheless, as soon as we visited Worthing High School we knew it was the right one for Thomas."

Thomas felt very much the same. "I suppose I wasn't really sure what to expect or what I wanted from a new school but I relaxed when I visited Worthing High," he says. "It was obviously a big step up from Middle School but not as big as I had feared it could be and it felt like somewhere I could feel I'd fit in. It helped that I was put in a Form Group with several of my friends from the Vale so that in the period before I started to make new friends at Worthing I already had people around me that I knew well."

FRIENDLY, HOMELY AND WELCOMING

Thomas had been a pupil at The Vale, a fairly small middle school which suited his shy personality, so one thing about Worthing High which particularly appealed to Tina was the friendly and homely aspect it presented. "It felt like a bigger version of The Vale, very welcoming and somewhere he wouldn't be swallowed up as might have been the case elsewhere. I also liked the idea of the Buddy System, where the older students act as peer mentors to the pupils who have recently joined; it definitely helped Thomas to settle in and he is now doing the same thing for new students himself."

Having a trusted fellow student to turn to about any aspect of school life helps children who are new to the school feel more at home, Tina believes. "Thomas knew that there was someone to show him around, to ask about anything he was unsure about or, later, to talk to about subject options, for instance. It's good that the children feel they can look up to an older student for advice, as well as to their teachers." The school also helps to integrate the new pupils through their Community Groups, where students from all four year groups come together under a Pastoral Leader, further reinforcing the family atmosphere that Tina likes so much.

UNEXPECTED SURPRISES

Being a fairly 'sporty' type, Thomas appreciates the extensive facilities at Worthing High which enable him to play football and to take part in athletics disciplines in the school's own grounds. He is taking both these activities at GCSE and which, together with Orienteering and Fitness, should gain him a good pass grade, but it is in the academic subjects he has particularly surprised himself. "At my last school I was generally doing OK but since I've been at Worthing High things have changed considerably," he says. "When I first started I was actually quite shocked at how much work there was compared to Middle School, and how hard it was! But once I got used to it everything seemed to come together and my grades have improved hugely."

A WORLD OF POSSIBILITIES

Thomas believes it is because of his teachers' approach that he has done so much better than he expected. "Being put together with students of a similar ability is definitely a good idea as we can work together at a similar pace. It gave me more confidence in my abilities and that is reflected in the results I've been getting and I'm really pleased. Even in maths, which has never been my best subject, I have progressed a lot but I'm happiest about English and geography; the marks I've achieved so far have opened up a whole new world of career possibilities for me to consider."



NO REGRETS

As far as Tina is concerned, recent changes in staff and systems have gone a long way to bringing Worthing High School up to the standards she hoped for, and have certainly worked well for Thomas. "Having struggled in maths previously, since moving to Worthing High he's come on fantastically; he's predicted to get at least As and Bs, and is as happy at school as any 15-year old is likely to be! He is also more confident and a lovely young lad for which I largely credit the school. I have no regrets about our choice, and have already put Max's name down for a place there, too."

With so many more options open to him Thomas is very optimistic about the future. "I've been looking at a wider range of college courses than I expected to be able to, and I am grateful to Worthing High for showing me I am capable of much more than I thought I was."



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