

Matthew was nervous about moving to a new school, but at Worthing High School he was made to feel comfortable, welcomed and at home

**WORTHING
HIGH
SCHOOL**
Leading Learning



Samantha and Nick Votta live in Worthing with their two sons, one of which Matthew, 13, attends Worthing High School.

APPREHENSIONS

Matthew was already familiar with Worthing High School as he had been going there for weekend music lessons since he was much younger. Nevertheless, when the time came to move there as a student he was very apprehensive indeed. "It felt to me like the best of the bunch but I was pretty scared about the whole transition to High School," he says. "The first few weeks were really difficult; everyone else seemed so big! I didn't know where to go for all the different lessons, who to ask about things or what I should be doing and I was way outside my comfort zone."

INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

This was something that Samantha had anticipated and, having talked to the school, she found that Matthew's Pastoral Leader was more than happy to provide his support. "He was extremely helpful and fully understood how Matthew was feeling. It's not uncommon for children to feel overwhelmed by the new responsibilities expected of them, especially if they have come from a smaller middle school like The Vale where Matthew had been. With the right intervention and support, Matthew's confidence grew and within a month or so he had settled and started to flourish."

HELPING OTHERS THROUGH PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Having overcome his initial apprehensions, Matthew soon found his feet and started to feel more and more at home. Appreciating the support he had himself been given, he is now in a position to mentor younger students with whom he can empathise. "I know what it's like to feel out of your depth so I hope I can help other pupils through my own experience," he says. "My school encourages positive interaction between year groups and recognises that we all have something to offer in our own way."

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Worthing High has also recognised Matthew's particular talents in maths, history and music and he was offered the chance of taking Latin as an extra-curricular subject as part of the Gifted and Talented programme. Having to get to school at 8am was not a deterrent and he will go on from there to take Classics as an additional GCSE. He is also an enthusiastic member of the school's Book Club which allows him and his fellow members to read and review new books as part of the Amazing Book Awards. "All the schools in the area are invited to take part and we get to meet the authors and vote for our favourites," Matthew explains. "We also have links with our Middle Schools and so I get to help pupils from The Vale with their reading and book choices. It's really great to be able to take part in something which means a lot to me."

FELLOW FEELING

Although Matthew is not a big socialiser, he has found a group of people at Worthing High with whom he feels completely in tune because of their mutual interests. He is also a willing participant in the drama productions, something which has pleased and surprised Samantha. "He's not usually likely to put himself forward as the centre of attention, but he played a lead role in a recent school production which was a real step forward," she says. "I love that the students are given these opportunities and feel comfortable in taking part."

EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND STUDENT

Both Matthew and Samantha believe that Worthing High achieves a balance between academic and social education, and that policy has worked very well for Matthew. "I like that everyone is considerate; the teachers are kind and approachable and I like the different relationships I have with them. The other pupils I generally get along with well; there is no pushing and shoving in the corridors or any unpleasantness of that sort. We all get along well."

Samantha agrees: "I feel able to talk to Matthew's teachers, his Pastoral Leader or to the Headteacher if I need to and I really like the fact that they all know my son on a personal level. In a school of over 900 students that is impressive."

NEVER GIVE UP!

Perhaps the best way to sum up Matthew's impression of Worthing High is his feeling about his Art Class. "I really am rubbish at art but I enjoy the lessons because my teacher makes them enjoyable! He doesn't discourage me from trying and realises that I can do much better in other subjects, but he hasn't given up on me yet!"



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