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RUMOURS



Maybe you know some things about secondary schools already, good, exciting things ... or maybe you've heard some things which don't sound so good, maybe there are some rumours going around. There are a lot of rumours and misinformation about secondary schools. The rumours spread because the fear of the unknown is a common sensation. We worry about what it will be like. When lots of people are all worried together, the worries begin to feed each other, until they grow very large indeed. Do not be afraid of wedgies or being expelled for talking. That doesn't happen. Let's take some of the rumours and myths that my year sixes have heard, and address them once and for all.

Myth 1



"The teachers are gonna be horrible, like really strict. We'll get detention all the time."

It's true that secondary schools have different behavioural expectations. As you get older, teachers expect you to act a bit more like adults. Naturally, there will be less tolerance for the type of messing around that you got away with when you were younger. That makes sense though, right? None of this means that you are entering a prison situation, with guards and cells.

Teachers are humans (believe it or not) and have different personalities. Some teachers are stricter than others, just like primary school. Schools have what we call a *behaviour policy* and students are taught exactly what the rules are. If you slip up and get a detention, it's not a disaster, and it doesn't mean that a teacher is horrible, or that you have failed – it's OK – it can happen! All teachers want what's best for you and your education, but sometimes this just means reminding you of expectations.

When I got my first detention, I was terrified! I thought that I'd messed up big time. It brought back the feeling of fear and shame that I used to have in year two, when my teacher, the stern, grandmotherly Mrs Morris, wrote my name on the blackboard, with chalk (old school, I know). The fact is, detentions might happen, and if they do, it's not that disastrous. Just try your best to *do your best*, and that's all you can do.

The teachers at secondary school might seem different to the ones you've known at primary, but they are not. Trust me. I'm both.



Myth 2

"There's gonna be eighteen-year-olds, just like smoking around the place, and they might take my lunch money."

I feel like this happens a lot in American films and cartoons. Some guy called Chad, who has a muscle car, which he probably also calls Chad, pulls up at school, leaps out, and says, "Hey you, you little slimy slug, gimme your lunch money."

Yeah, this doesn't happen in the UK. For a start there's no parking space. Secondly, lunch money isn't really a thing, since most schools operate on a pre-paid system. I understand the fear though. My first time seeing a year six pupil (when in reception) was just like my first time seeing a year thirteen (in year seven). In both cases, they were giants who might tread on me, intentionally or not.

The reality is, in my experience, very different. The year thirteens in secondary school did one of two things: they were either kind to me and helped me with something, or they completely ignored me. Statistically, you are probably more likely to get ignored, but ... oh well. If a year thirteen ever laughs at you, it's because you are travelling at high speed, legs moving like pistons, with an intense expression and a backpack that is an equivalent size to you. At least, when I was in year thirteen, I found that funny, sorry.

As for the smoking, just don't go behind the bike sheds.





Myth 3

"There's gonna be fights all the time."

Secondary schools have more pupils than primary schools do. This does mean it's more likely that people might have disagreements. But that doesn't mean everyone's fighting all the time. When I was a student at secondary school, I saw three fights in seven years – that's not too bad, right? As a teacher at secondary school, I can assure you that any pushing or shoving will be over as soon as it starts; adults are on hand quicker than you can say, "Fight!" because it's our job to keep you safe. The corridors and hallways are not a no-man's-land where no teachers patrol; we're always on the lookout. Schools are places of learning and not training grounds for wrestlers. If you do want to be a wrestler, or the next heavyweight champion of the world, there might be an after-school club for that.

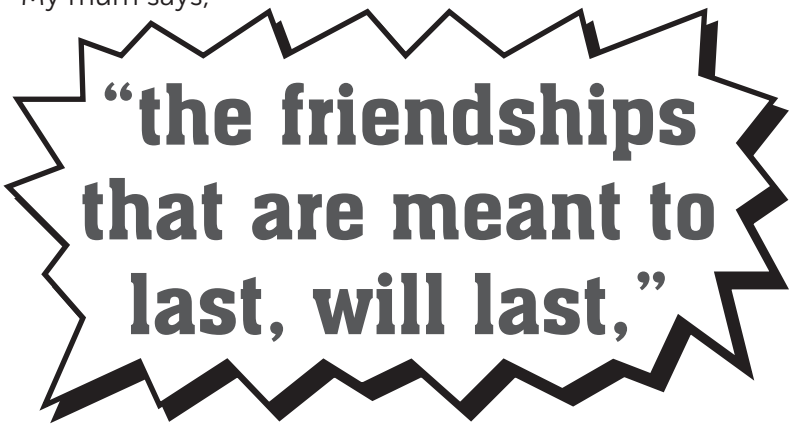
Myth 4

"I'm going to lose my friends when we move school."

I was worried about this when I left primary school. I thought my friendships would suddenly be thrown apart like flimsy boats in a storm, and we'd drift in different directions for ever. However, one of my best friends at primary was called Tom. Tom was cheeky and always had something to say. I would call him the class clown, but clowns aren't funny, and Tom really was (and still is). We left primary school in 2003, a long time before you were born. Now I'm writing this in 2023, and we are still close friends. In fact, I was with Tom today before I wrote this chapter. Our friendship has never drifted apart, and we didn't go to the same secondary school.



My mum says,



which is a very *mum* thing to say – but I agree with her. Perhaps you may lose touch with some of your class, that’s completely natural, but anyone that you want to stay close to, you’ll find a way. For your generation, it’s a lot easier to stay connected than it was for me, because you have social media (we are going to talk about social media later, because we need to). Anyway, when it comes to maintaining friendships, yes, it is more difficult when you don’t see each other every day, but if you want to keep a friendship, you will be able to. Like most things in life, it’s about putting in the effort. It’s worth it. It’s a great feeling to sit with someone and talk about how you met over twenty-five years ago. For example, in year three, Tom used to copy my answers in maths, and I let him. The system worked beautifully until the teacher moved us apart, and Tom’s test results went … sharply downhill. Our friendship never did though.

Myth 5

"The lessons are going to be way harder, and we'll get so much homework."



There is some truth in this myth. Some parts of some lessons will be more difficult. But you will also be older, your brain more developed, and your ability to work things out will have improved. I was really worried by the sound of new subjects. In science I had to ask, *what does physics mean? What is chemistry? Biology!?* I thought I'd never get my head round these complicated subjects. It took a bit of time to adjust, but I realized that it wasn't too different from what we were studying in year six. There were just some new terms to learn.

As a teacher, I think lessons must get harder as you progress through school, otherwise you wouldn't progress at all. Think of your brain like a muscle: the more you lift with it, the stronger it gets, as long as your brain

(and you) remember to rest as well.

As for homework, well, there's no avoiding it; you are going to have to do some homework. There are certain unavoidable facts in life: Earth orbits the Sun, the Moon controls the tides, water is wet, (healthy) grass is green, (clear) midday skies are blue and … secondary schools set homework.

Teachers don't want to assign so much homework that it stresses you out. It's meant to be a supplement to your classroom learning. Like a side plate with your main course, to make sure you get enough educational nutrition. Treat homework like broccoli, even if you don't like the taste. Trust me, you'll be better off having it.

Of course, we all have different homes. When I was a teenager at home, I felt my home didn't work as well as other kids at my school, and that made it harder to do homework. During my parents' divorce, I found it difficult to do homework, because my home was louder; there were arguments, reactions, and distractions. I didn't sleep as much, and it was a lot harder to concentrate because I felt upset. Teachers asked, "Christian, why aren't you doing your homework? It used to be on time!?"

I didn't know what to say. Now, as an adult, I am always thinking about how students' homes are working, and

how that might impact something like homework, so don't worry if there are reasons that you are struggling. And if you are struggling, do what I didn't do and tell the teacher. We are more understanding than you think. You never know, we might have experienced some of it ourselves.

So, there are five myths, and hopefully they've been busted. But just in case you need a reminder not to listen to all the rumours, let's put it in a rap.



I HEARD THIS RUMOUR, YEAH

I heard this rumour, yeah,
That the headteacher is a villain,
Her blood runs cold, and I've been told,
That when she shouts it's chilling.

I heard this rumour, yeah,
And it's one that I should mention,
That if you're not silent, it all gets violent,
And you're slammed into detention.

I heard this rumour, yeah,
The playground is the Wild West,
There are duels at school, it all gets cruel,
So, hide under your desk.

My teacher heard these rumours,
That swirled around my head,
“It’s not true, that’s not what they do!”
Now, finally the truth was said!

