

CherWellBeing

Stories of Change and Understanding



3 Tips to Help With Transition - How to Deal with Change: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqBJheLJaEQ>

Coping with change is not always easy, whether it's changes to physical or mental health, changes in environment or changes in our relationships. Even a positive change or transition can be incredibly stressful to deal with. In particular, it's important to acknowledge the difficulties and anxieties that come with transitioning to a new place or school and to address them. Although transition can be isolating, it's something that many people struggle with at some point in their lives - so there is always somewhere to look for advice. The video above perfectly describes the emotion that often accompanies transition – “with change comes the feeling of being powerless”. However, it goes on to give some small, but powerful, ways in which we can make life adjustments a little smoother for ourselves.

2
PARENT
 Cherwell or Lump It

3
STUDENT
 Moving Quietly

4
STAFF
 Hello From the Other Side

Whether in Year 7 or about to retire, we all have stories of how we have dealt with life's challenges.

CherWellBeing is a space for us to share them. Here you will find interviews and articles written by staff, students and parents. Stories can be anonymous to allow us to write freely.

The aim is to gradually populate the Wellbeing tab on the school website so that when we are feeling as though no-one understands us or we can't deal with an illness or difficult situation, we'll see stories of people who may have dealt with similar experiences, as well as tools and links to help us.

If you would like to contribute or link us to online content that you found helpful, please contact cherwellbeing@cherwell.oxon.sch.uk.

Cherwell Or Lump It

I went to Cherwell Upper School 30 years ago in Year 9 as a stop gap, as my parents had separated, my father had moved back to the country I grew up in and I decided I wanted to go back there too. It was in the early nineties and the school term started in January back home, so my Mum petitioned the local education authority and I got a place at Cherwell last minute for the new school year in September. There was no choice. It was Cherwell or lump it. The idea was I'd go back to my Dad's country in the December and just be there for one term. I didn't know a single person and was apprehensive.

Oxford had a three-tier system - primary, middle and upper. I'd been at a private school for three years and so missed out on St Frideswide's Middle School (now south site - Cherwell was on what's now called North Site). I wasn't conscious of going from a private school to a state school, but I do remember four bigger girls spitting on my coat and bullying me. It felt like a rough place after my previous school.

Year 9 was bad, because I was adolescent, because my parents had just broken up and I was ready to rebel. I made the wrong friends to begin with. My very first friend had a totally different upbringing and lifestyle – he stole bikes and smoked drugs. He came from a poor house and had a very different life to me, but we were friends. He didn't know anyone either as he'd come from a different middle school. Through him I met a whole bunch of other guys who were the misfits.

In the end I stayed at Cherwell due to inertia. Once you're in, it's harder to move and my mum was never keen on the idea. I think she was happy to have inertia.

The first year or two was not a lot of fun as I was with the wrong people, angry and acting up. I'm sure I was a nightmare to teach, but I was super-smart, and I think teachers find it very hard to teach children with behavioural problems. All the letters would say I was not a good student, but I'd write back and say I'm getting 100% so that's clearly not the case.

I see teachers as equals. I think that was a problem when I was a kid as I always saw them

as equals and they hated it; that was the fundamental thing. I thought they were awful, noticeably dim and mediocre. I always challenged the teachers and some hate that and some quite enjoy it. I certainly didn't take anything lying down. I remember getting into trouble in French class because I corrected the teacher about when to use être for self-reflexive verbs and she went crazy, there was a big flare-up in the classroom. Later on, I made very good friends with teachers and there were some I did respect, but at the beginning, not so much.

My art teacher was a stand-out and although I hated my history teacher – we had personality clashes - I remember everything he taught me, and it's quite interesting when you look back on it – the syllabus was fascinating and he taught it so that I remember it all. The art classes were also brilliant with a truly comprehensive education in Art History. You couldn't pay for that kind of education.

After Year 9 I made a conscious decision to change friends, to not to be a s**t anymore. I was on holiday at my Dad's and decided this was what I was going to do. I realised that my friends weren't very nice to me and you realise it's not a place you want to be in. I'd got a girlfriend and all her friends seemed very nice, so her friends became my friends. I'm still friends with them now.

I don't regret that I went to Cherwell, but I'm not glad either, there was never another option and it did its job okay. I was quite mellow by the end. I didn't get into trouble apart from being a truant. I wasn't disruptive in lessons. I was very engaged when I was there.

Now I'm here as a parent. I'm a bit apprehensive, but as my child is still on south site I have no bad or good memories. My hopes as a parent is that my child is happy there and learns something. They went to Cherwell knowing a lot of people and joined in with stuff and are going to have a totally different experience. So far so good.

To find out more about our school and meet other parents, come to the Parent Forum on 30th October and/or email cherwellbeing@cherwell.oxon.sch.uk

Moving Quietly

I started in a later year than normal so moving schools was hard, especially because I am quiet person.

I remember my first day. I was so nervous I quickly started talking to the person next to me during the first lesson; so that was my first friend. After a relatively short time I met her friends and their friends. I guess you could argue I was lucky, but it was very hard making my own friends because everyone was already in established friendship groups that they'd had at least since Year 7. I felt like the odd one out at times. To socialise, I just kept interacting with other students as much as possible, even though it felt awkward. Now I feel happier because I am more settled in.

Talking of friends, my first friends were not ideal but we still hang out together as we get on, but it pushed me into making other friends.

I had to find my way around the school, which was mostly fine as my friends knew where most of my classes were, but some things they didn't, so I had to ask other people.

Some were understanding, but others just laughed and made me feel humiliated. You just have to ignore it as they have never been in a new student's life.

The hardest thing for me was the expectations, because I felt like people expected more of me than my old school did. Having new teachers was hard as well as I was quiet in class. I almost always knew the answer but never put my hand up because it made me feel awkward and then someone else would give the answer instead. It was so frustrating!

I remember at parents evening, this was highlighted as one of my issues. However I think instead of it being an issue it's more of a personality trait, which is fine if that's who you are. My message is that if you are quiet and a teacher says so, don't worry. Change it if you want, but you don't have to. You are just as successful as anyone else. If someone is new, welcome them and if you are new, don't worry because things will soon just fall into place. Just give it time because everything takes time and moving schools is no different.

Moving to Secondary School

Top Tips for Parents

Key points

- Make a note of key dates
- Rehearse the journey
- Be positive
- Appropriate school wear
- Build independence
- Create a homework space
- Keep their confidence up
- Encourage friendships

More at [Parentkind](#)

Moving to Secondary School

Top Tips for Students



Luke Kornis: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPYVIKaQy9Q>

Hello From the Other Side

Cherwell has played a big part in my life as I came here as a student and am now a teacher. For me as a student, Cherwell was a very good experience in every way. When I first arrived, we were in a 3-tier system, it was a combination of two big middle schools meeting at one bigger Upper school, where you were encouraged by the classes that you were put in to make new friends from different schools. At first I was anxious, but over time I was able to make friends because everyone was in a similar boat to me. It was a challenging process in terms of it being so new as a student, but I was encouraged and supported enough from peers, parents and staff.

I was keen to try all the opportunities available and did. I managed to get on with lots of staff – I wasn't a perfect child and got myself into trouble now and then, that looking back was just silly. My parents instilled in me that in life manners cost nothing and mean everything and so I was always polite to the teachers and this paid dividends. I was an average student but found I could really progress in this school because staff were looking for a willingness to learn which ultimately would improve my ability.

When I left school and entered the real world, I felt well prepared for university. I kept links with Cherwell but didn't know what I wanted to do when I finished, so my parents and staff members encouraged me to come back and work here in some capacity.

Within ten minutes on the first day, I stopped an altercation between two students and was able to resolve it for both parties who were then able to be civil and move forward. It was a life-changing moment, because right then, I knew I wanted to influence children's lives for the greater good, to help them succeed in whatever they wanted to be. This is because I am a true believer that you can never put a cap on someone's learning and that everyone just needs one person to believe in them to make the difference. I was sure from this moment that I was in the area where I wanted my career to blossom. This is partly because I saw students who reminded me of myself and I wanted to support them because I definitely felt supported here by staff members.

Having been a student here means I can see Cherwell life from both sides. I see what students go through on a daily basis, but also

understand the demands on staff. For example, as a student I had lots of teachers to get to know with different teaching styles and as a teacher we have to teach 250-300 students a week, so you understand why the job is demanding and testing and equally why it is so rewarding and satisfying.

What I've learnt along the way is that we're forever evolving. Every child is different and unique and understanding this can help us to support them and make a difference to their life. Ultimately the goal is to influence children to be the best they can - through classroom teaching, valuing them and ultimately trying your best to help educate them and grow.

It's two-way. Every day I feel inspired by children, their answers, my colleagues and their answers. Every day is a different challenge, but every day you learn. Then there are times when children surprise you beyond measure. When their world comes crashing down, but you show them they have someone who believes in them, and their whole attitude to life and school shifts and they go on to achieve whatever they want to achieve. They sometimes come back to shake your hand. I had a student recently come up and say: "Thank you very much for teaching me. If it wasn't for you I wouldn't have achieved the grade I did." That means so much and that's why I do the job!

Although structurally the buildings are the same, bar a couple, the whole school culture has shifted since I was a student, particularly as the generations changed and so did government outcomes. The school is bigger, stronger and everyone has this buy-in culture to get educated in life and be a good citizen. I call it a "with-us" culture – the kids are with us, not against us.

Meanwhile, the new Headteacher is a visionary and has a clear idea of where he wants the school to go. He and Barb Timms, in particular, have kept me grounded and supported me all the way through my career.

When you find a job you love, it becomes a passion. There's no greater feeling than helping someone else – just the satisfaction on someone's face when you've helped them achieve; that eureka moment as they've realised they can do something. I owe this school so much and that's why I'm trying to give back. In fact, I'm so happy doing this job that I don't class it as one.