

### **Taking the plunge: life in a British boarding school**

The way the sport of diving and deciding to attend a British boarding school are similar, is that in both cases you have to reach a certain height to be able to take the plunge. The ladder to the springboard can be used as a metaphor of a journey which a student has to embark on, in this case, going through the HMC selection, to get allocated to your new home for two years – a British boarding school. Now, when the last term of my first year is approaching, I reflect on my journey and realize that after taking the plunge, you are not out of the woods... or a pool. After taking the plunge and reaching the bottom of the pool, you remember you also need to resurface. Swimming up from the bottom to the top is, in my opinion, the best way to describe the first year at a British boarding school.

I must admit, at first I doubted my ability to resurface – ten days alone in the quarantine because of the Covid-19 pandemic gives one a lot of time to think, and whether you like it or not, negative thoughts start creeping into your mind. Luckily, I was surrounded by helpful and supportive staff members, who helped me to calm myself down and focus on the exciting part that was approaching – starting a new school year, with lots of new people and opportunities. I must also give credit to Ellesmere ravens, which by their loud croaks always reminded me that I was never actually alone.

At my new school, I do IB, instead of A-levels – a choice not a lot of people make. My classmates probably would not agree but I think that IB is so thrilling. I study diverse subjects and get to be academically challenged by interesting lessons. However, besides that, IB has also helped me with my adaptation process. As there are not many of us doing IB, over the time, a tight-knit class has been established and because of that I have at least several people who I consider my good friends.

Now that I have talked about the minority – the IB students – it is time to talk about the majority. From my experience, boarding is truly the best way to get to know other people. Being a full boarder, not that I have a choice in that as an international student, has allowed me to meet people other than my classmates and establish new bonds. You do not even have to look too hard – your roommate becomes a special person in your life, and gradually, your friend circle increases.

Throughout the time, I found myself smiling more and being happier. I got involved in the activities that I was always interested in but never brave enough to attempt, like the drama club. I also discovered my love for writing during my English lessons and whenever the British weather allowed it, I enjoyed the beautiful campus.

Now, travelling back to school does not even feel like I am going to a foreign place and I am confident that I have resurfaced. Going all alone in a different country to start a new life is not easy, however, as my housemother once told me: “it gets better.” And I agree. As long as you are ready to step out of your comfort zone and remember that you have already done the hardest part – taking the plunge – it definitely gets better, it actually gets so good that you wish time went by a bit more slowly.