




NEW START **NEW SCHOOL**

Settling into Secondary School



Starting secondary school is a new experience for all Year 7 students. We've described some of the opportunities and challenges to expect as well as the mixed feelings any change can bring. Original drawings by Chioma Ince, an artist and illustrator, are included. You may wish to colour them in and bring her work to life!



Welcome

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NEW SCHOOL/ NEW START is designed for Year 7 students just like you. A very warm welcome to you and here we go! Beginning secondary school will be an exciting new venture that stirs up many different feelings along the way.

Returning to education this term may feel quite different. Not only will you be joining secondary school for the first time, but your final months in Year 6 will have been unique. No other students before you have been through such a long school closure! It is likely that everyone has had a mixed experience of this with some ups and downs. However, things have settled down now and life is slowly getting back to normal.

Living through a lockdown reminds us that we can all face unexpected challenges in life. When this happens, we learn to cope by sharing our difficulties with others and asking for help when we need it!

... Give some examples of unexpected challenges. What helps us get through?

... Now describe some good experiences. Remembering these can help when we go through ups and downs!



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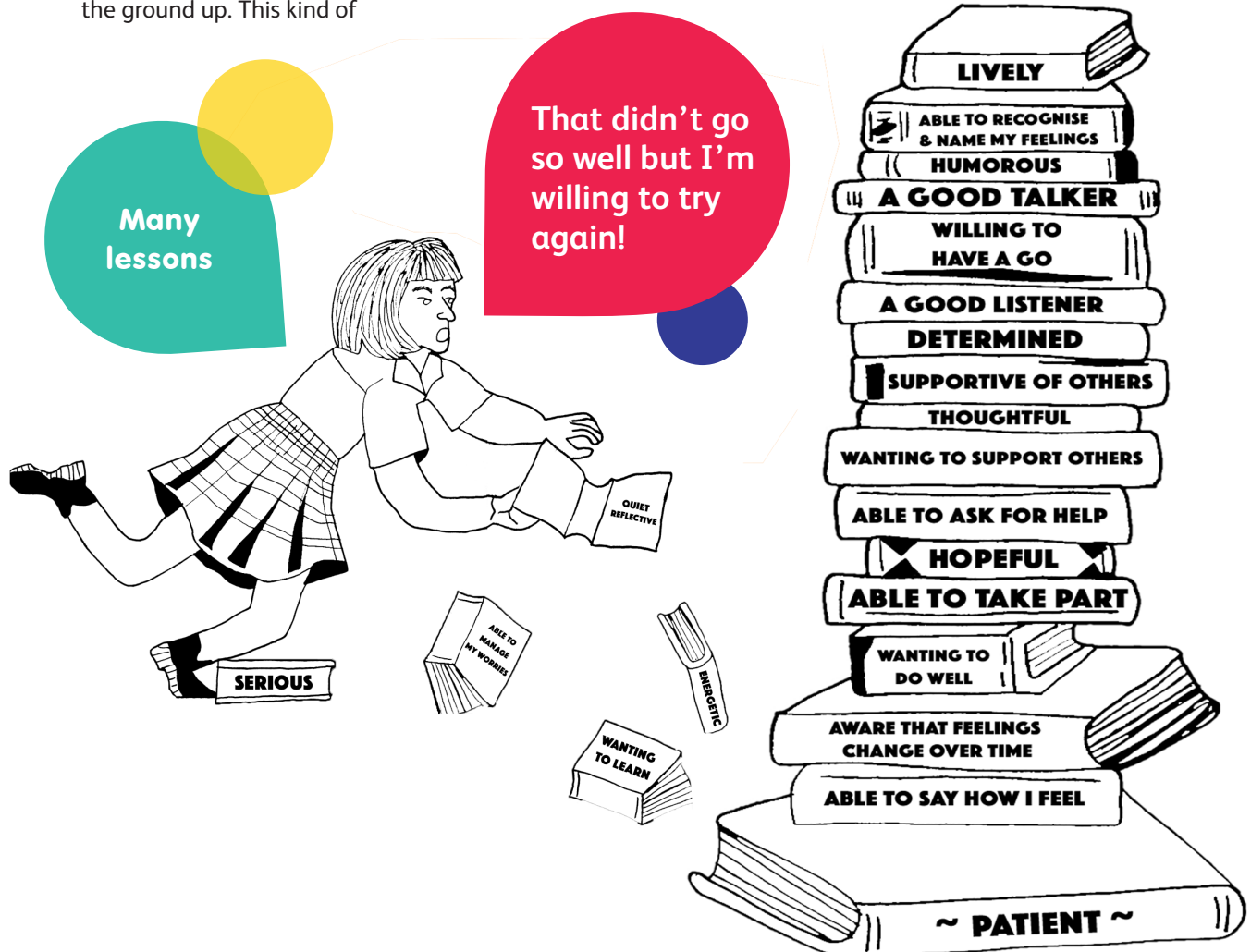
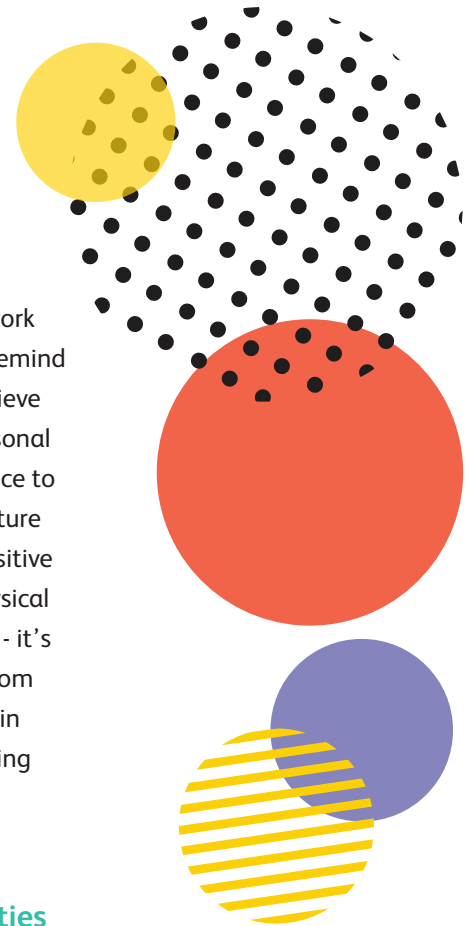
Building positive qualities

Your school has been working very hard to prepare for your arrival. Your teachers want to help you feel welcome and at ease in school as quickly as possible. The staff have been thinking about you and understand that after such a long time away from all the usual school routines, it will take time to settle in secondary school.

One way to feel more confident is to step back and look at some of the strengths and qualities we already have, as well as those we'd like to develop or even start building from the ground up. This kind of

self-reflection is a skill we all work on throughout life. If we can remind ourselves that we want to achieve the best for ourselves, our personal strengths can give us confidence to meet this aim. One way to picture this is to imagine building 'positive self-talk muscles'. Just like physical exercise, we have to work at it - it's not something we can learn from books! Some qualities to bear in mind are included in the drawing below.

... Select a few and give examples of these qualities



Understanding Change

Managing change is a life skill we all need to learn over time. A key part of this is coping with the feelings and thoughts that change can stir up in all of us. Starting secondary school is a big change. Along with feelings of excitement and looking forward to new experiences, many students quite naturally feel a little nervous or even worried about how it will all turn out. If you feel more worried than usual, don't be too concerned. It's normal! A good way to manage troubling thoughts is to find someone to talk with. As well, we can learn to pay attention to our thoughts and challenge those which are too negative. For instance, if we say to ourselves "I'll never get used to secondary school," we can practise adding another thought such as, "That's not quite true - it may take time but I will settle in."

... What do you think many Year 7 students might be most worried about when they join secondary school?

... What do you think they might be looking forward to most of all?

Youngest

**GIVE
YOURSELF
A CHANCE!**

Everyone is
different

Fitting in



Managing Uncertainty

We never know exactly what a change of school might bring. Along with excitement and hope, from time to time, most Year 7 students will have questions bubbling up inside such as the following:

- What if I get lost in the school? Who can I ask for help?
- Will I make friends here? Will I fit in?
- Will my teachers like me? Will they be very strict?
- Will bigger or older students pick on me?
- What happens if I make mistakes or mess up sometimes?

- Will I be able to manage and learn to organise myself?
- Where do I go if I feel worried or unwell?
- Who will really know me and listen to my concerns?
- Will I be able to keep up with the work?

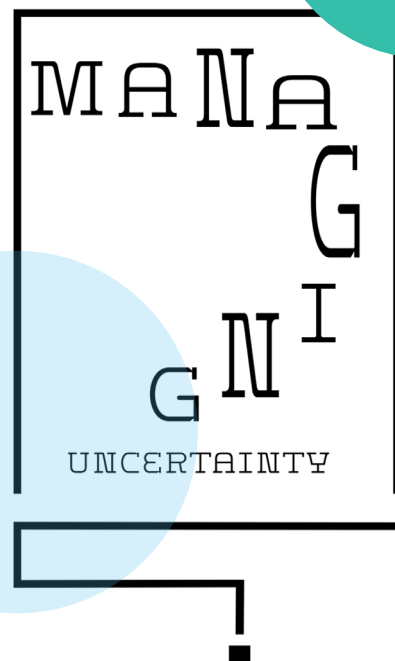
It's important to remember that all the adults working in school will be looking forward to meeting and getting to know the new Year 7s. They understand that you can be a little worried and will be ready to answer all these questions as well as help you with any concerns you might have. Never hesitate to find someone to talk to!

... Who might you ask for help in year 7?

... What do you think you can do to help yourself when you are feeling anxious?

Older

Younger

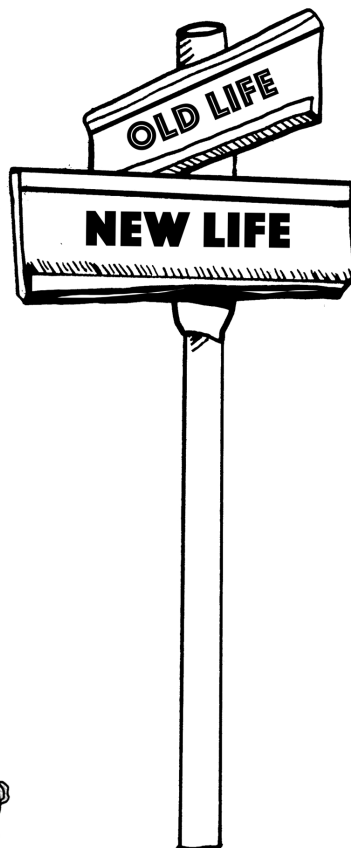


Settling in

In any new situation, it can take a while to get used to things. Some people adapt quite quickly, at least in some ways, while others may need a year or more to feel at home. There is no right pace for settling in. Our life experiences affect how we manage change; for instance, some students will have moved many times already while others may have been in the same neighbourhood and attended the same primary school with no changes. In both examples, the student could feel more or less comfortable about coping with change.

... In what ways does secondary school differ from primary?

... What might many Year 7 students miss about primary school?



Taking charge

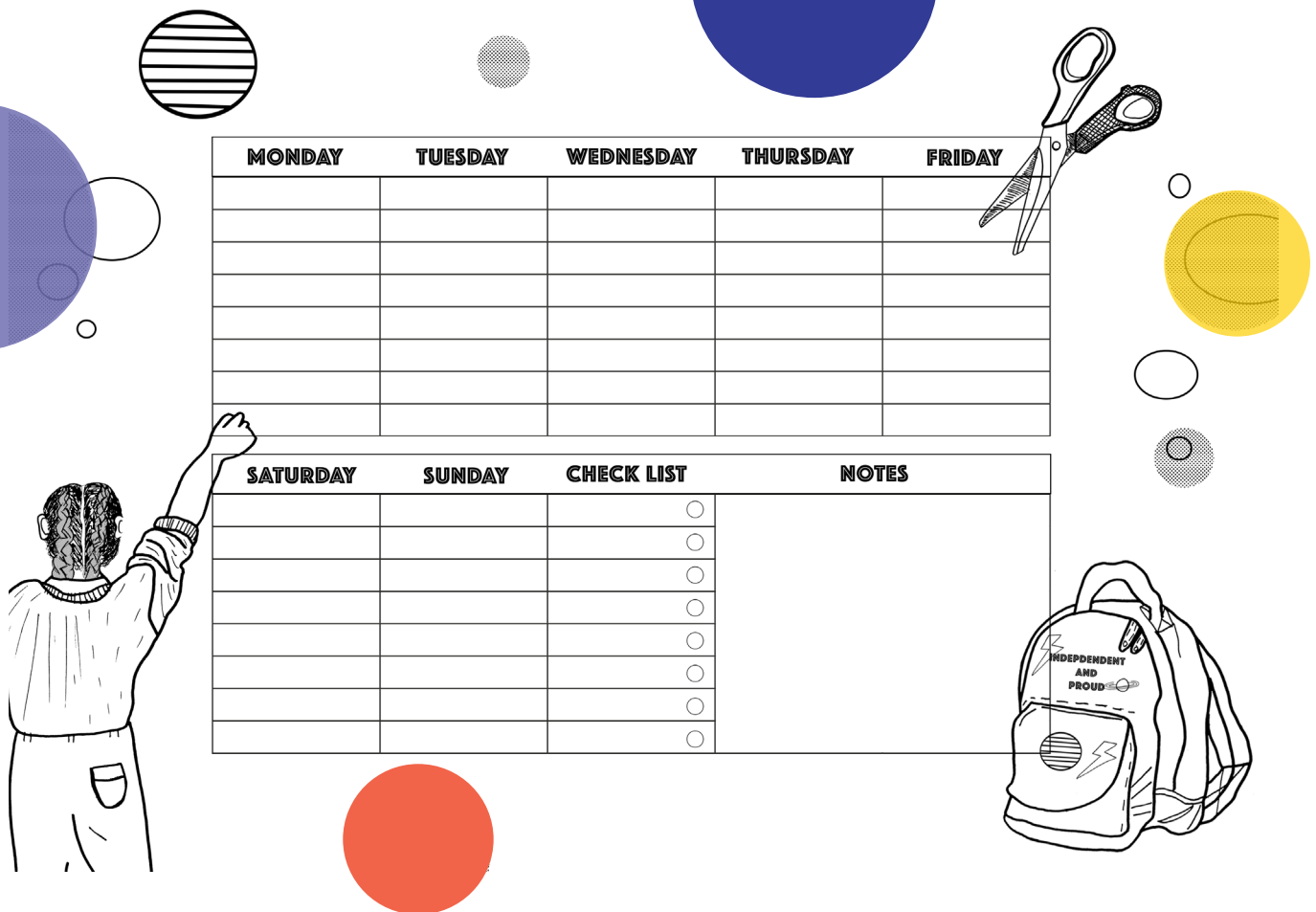
Moving on to secondary school is an important part of growing up. As we get older, we gradually learn to take charge of more daily tasks. At school, this means learning to follow a lesson timetable and organising what is needed for each day, perhaps packing a school bag the night before. Students also begin to take responsibility for home learning and for asking questions if the tasks don't seem quite clear. You can soon feel proud of remembering homework and books or packing kit for your PE lesson. Taking charge like this can feel good as it is a sign of becoming more independent.

It's normal to miss parts of childhood when we didn't have so many responsibilities but it can be exciting to feel a little more grown up too!

... What might Year 7 students miss about childhood?

... What do we gain from taking charge?

Many lessons



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Friendships

Students might transfer to secondary school with friends from Year 6 while some may arrive without knowing many others. Even those who come with classmates from their primary school could be grouped separately in different lessons. This means that everyone will have the chance to meet lots of new people and make friends.

All of us have our own preferences when it comes to friendships. For instance, one or two friends might

be all we need, or perhaps we like to be part of a larger group. Everyone is different and there is no right or wrong approach. When it comes to making and keeping friends, we may need to be prepared for a rollercoaster ride of ups and downs! It could go well for a while and then be more difficult. Along the way, most of us will have times when we feel lonely or left out. There are no easy answers. The best advice is to keep on trying and to remember that it takes time to make friends!

... What can students do to help themselves find friends?

... What are some good ways to start a conversation?



Changing friendship groups

The friendships formed early on in secondary school are not necessarily going to last forever. As groups change in school and classes are re-organised, Year 7 students will meet lots of new people so friends can move on or may just grow apart over time. It is always a good idea to get to know as many new people as possible. It can be helpful to think about what to look for in a friendship. If you practise treating yourself as you would a good friend, you'll develop personal qualities such as those outlined below. Not only will others be drawn to you, you'll also build your own positive sense of self along the way!

Kindness

Being helpful

Honesty

Looking out for others

Being a good listener

Being supportive

Keeps friends out of trouble

Bringing out the best in others

... What can cause problems between friends? How might you try to sort that out?

...What personal strengths do you have or can you practise that would help you become a good friend?



Hoping to fit in



My new friend



Fitting in

Year 7 students usually find it takes time to feel at home in secondary school. Even if some seem to quickly find their place, no one has a sense of belonging all of the time. Everyone has differences, even if they are hidden from view. These can make us feel as if we don't fit in which can be very painful. We need to be mindful of how easy it is to judge ourselves and each other, even if we don't realise we are doing this!

The following aspects of who we are can affect how we experience our place in the world:

- our skin colour, race, culture, religion or beliefs about life and the world
- our heritage (the place or countries we are linked with)
- the language we speak at home

When we can accept and respect ourselves for who we are, it is likely that others will respect us too.

... How we see our differences affects how we feel about ourselves. What can help us to feel proud of ourselves and most at ease with who we are?



Feeling Safe

When we are going through a big change, nothing is familiar. This can lead to a drop in confidence which may take a while to recover from. For Year 7 students, getting used to secondary school is a challenge, as almost everything is new. For a start, the school itself can feel huge compared to the size of a primary school! To feel safe, you need to know that there are adults who are looking out for you.

At first, it can be hard to trust that the adults in school are watching out for the new students and are thinking about you, but they are! All school staff know how challenging it can be for young people in Year 7 and everyone is here to help. Just as a lighthouse guides ships through unsettled seas, school staff are on hand to ensure you stay afloat!

... Describe some of the challenges Year 7 students face.

... Who or what might help?

Feel safe

HERE TO HELP

School
staff

Nobody's Perfect

Everyone enjoys feeling good about themselves and proud of who they are but of course we all make mistakes and 'get it wrong' sometimes. Part of the life-long task of growing up involves becoming more aware of ourselves and trying to do better. Becoming a secondary school student is a big step forward in growing up.

Noticing our occasional shortcomings, as well as our strengths and talents, is possible if we pause and step back to reflect from time to time. This helps us to look at our part if things don't always go so well. Beginning to take this kind of responsibility is a big step forward in growing up. A useful tip is to imagine what kind of adult you'd like to be and picture the steps you'll need to take now to get there.

... Give some examples of wrong choices that students could make. What changes might they need to consider?

... Imagine what kind of adult you'd like to be and picture the steps you'll need to take now to get there.



Feeling Supported

The majority of students worry about bullying at one time or another, even if it never happens – and usually it doesn't. It helps to know that there are always adults you can turn to for support. Being surrounded by older, bigger, louder students and feeling the smallest and youngest all over again, can make even the most confident Year 7 student feel a little nervous! Try to keep the following tips in mind:

- Most older students are not very interested in Year 7s; they are much too busy with their own concerns and with their own learning!
- The school is very quick to support students who feel they might have been teased or 'picked on' in some way and this can be sorted out very easily.

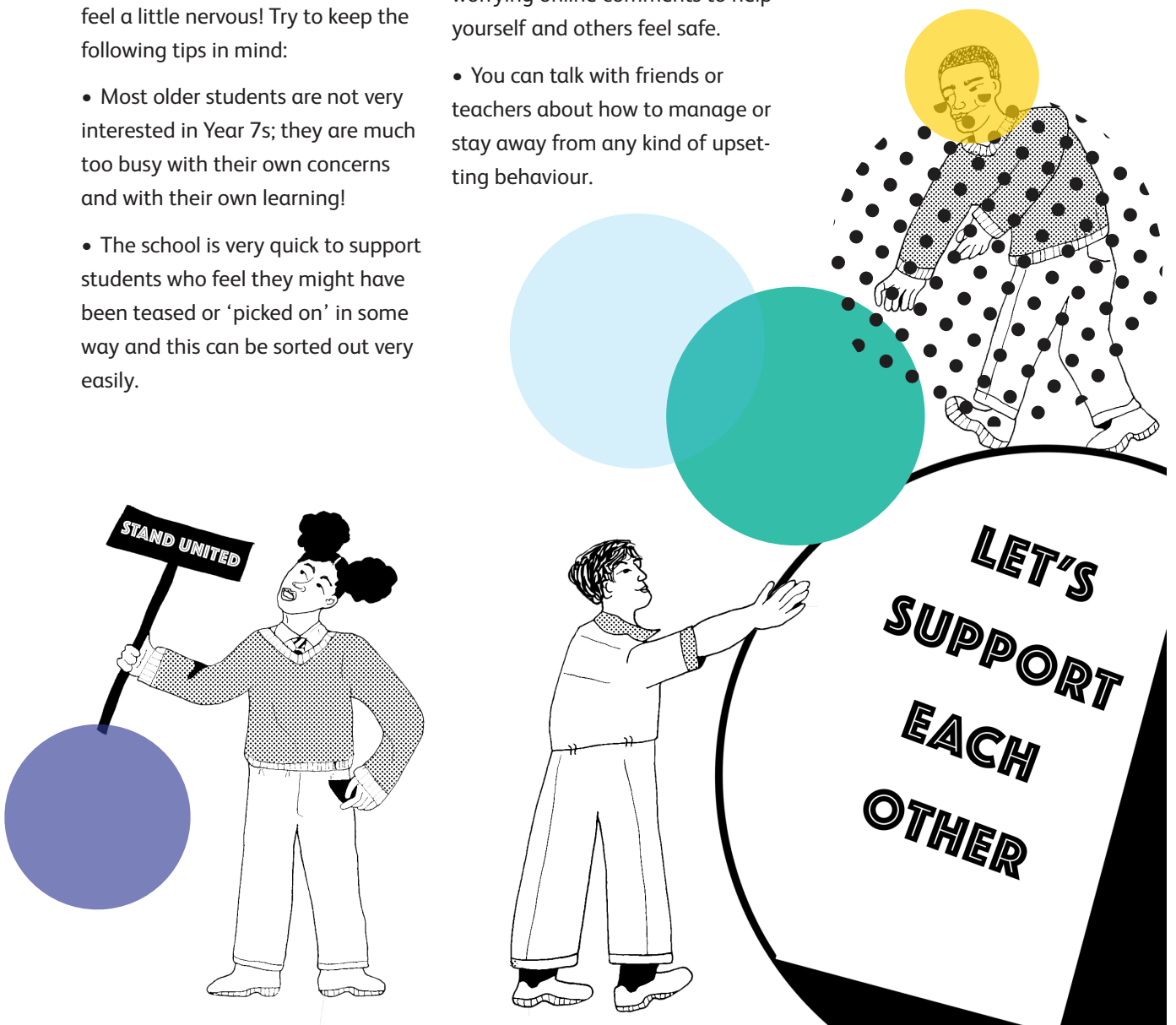
- It is very important to tell a member of staff if you feel bullied in any way or if you think someone else is being bullied. Some students are afraid of 'telling tales' in case others think badly of them, but the school has ways of managing this so that you don't need to worry.

- Always report any unpleasant or worrying online comments to help yourself and others feel safe.

- You can talk with friends or teachers about how to manage or stay away from any kind of upsetting behaviour.

... How do you help classmates and friends to feel safe and supported?

... Who has helped you in the past? What made them special?



Tips to help you settle in

Year 7 students may look back with fondness to Year 6 when they were the oldest pupil group and the most well known in primary school. It's hard being the youngest all over again! Don't worry - all of us go through this experience. Here are our top tips which might help you to settle in:

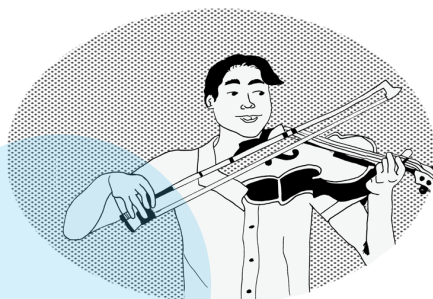
- Get to know as many Year 7 students as possible and try to be friendly, remembering names and telling others a little about you, so that they remember you too.
- Take time to enjoy chatting with classmates between lessons and try to be interested in each person you meet. If you feel a little shy at first, that's ok. Most new students do! Asking questions and listening carefully is a good way to get to know someone.
- Make a note of the teacher's name in each class; it can be a little confusing at first with a different teacher to remember for each subject.

• Also note who is there to help you, if you should have a question or difficulty.

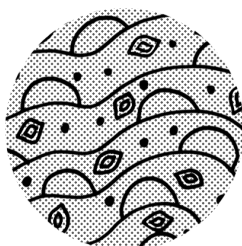
- Have a go at joining in during lessons; you will find that teachers really appreciate your efforts.
- In the first few weeks, try to become familiar with your time table and where the classrooms are located.
- Notice your feelings during the day and share them when you can; talk about your day at home.
- Try to organise and keep up with home learning; this might feel a bit hard to manage at first, but everyone gets used to it eventually.
- Don't worry if things don't go too well at first; it takes time to get used to a very big change. Feel proud of your successes, for example, arriving at lessons on time with all the equipment you need and taking part.

Most of all, enjoy this new beginning and have a good time!

... What clubs or groups could you join to meet new friends?



TOP TIPS



Wishing you the very best!

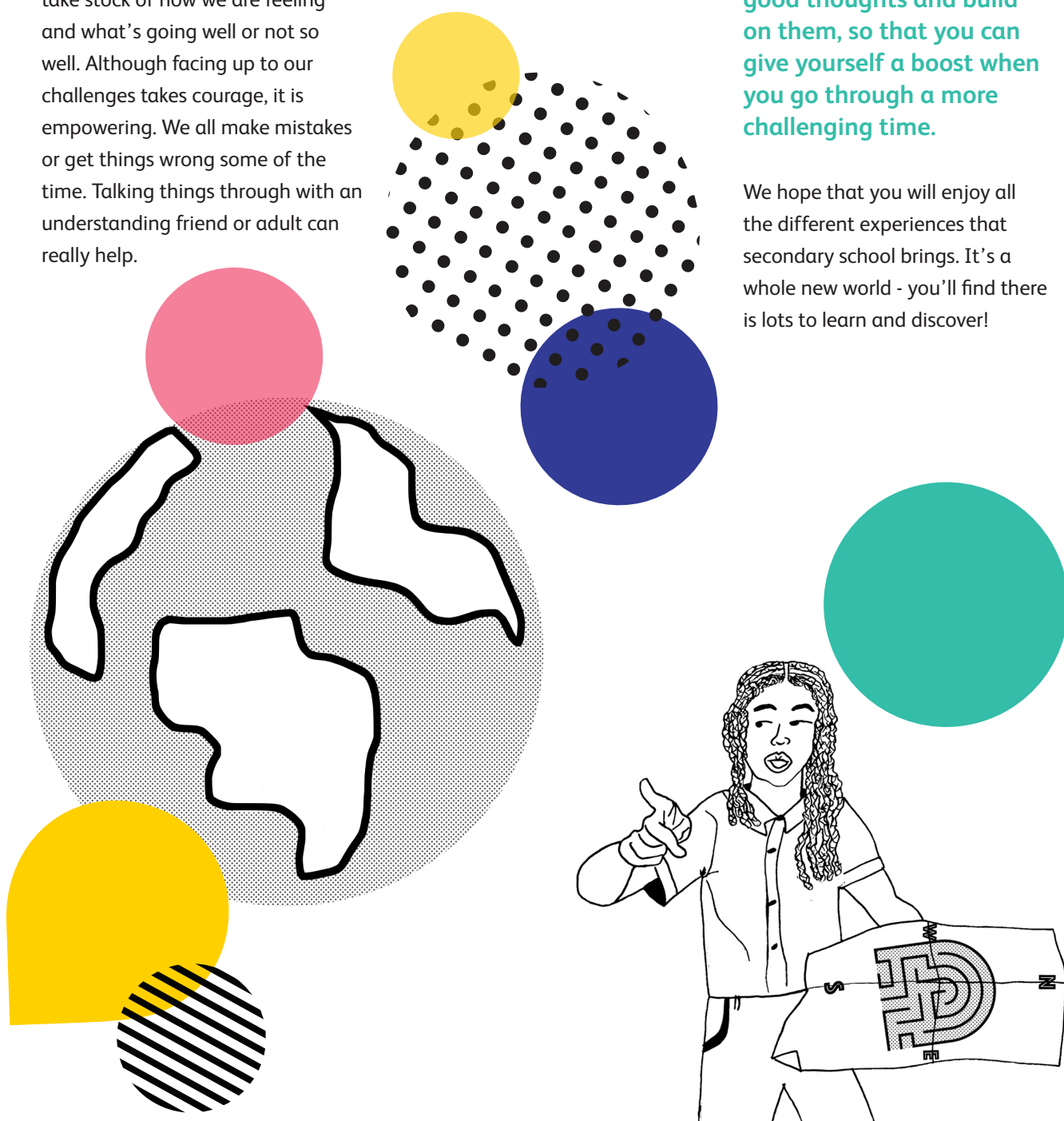
Being in Year 7 marks another stage in growing up. As we advance in years, we learn to reflect on our experiences. This involves stepping back and looking at ourselves to take stock of how we are feeling and what's going well or not so well. Although facing up to our challenges takes courage, it is empowering. We all make mistakes or get things wrong some of the time. Talking things through with an understanding friend or adult can really help.

Sharing our successes is important too. We feel more confident when we pause to note our achievements and give ourselves opportunities to feel proud.

... When have you achieved something big or small that made you feel proud?

... You can hold onto these good thoughts and build on them, so that you can give yourself a boost when you go through a more challenging time.

We hope that you will enjoy all the different experiences that secondary school brings. It's a whole new world - you'll find there is lots to learn and discover!



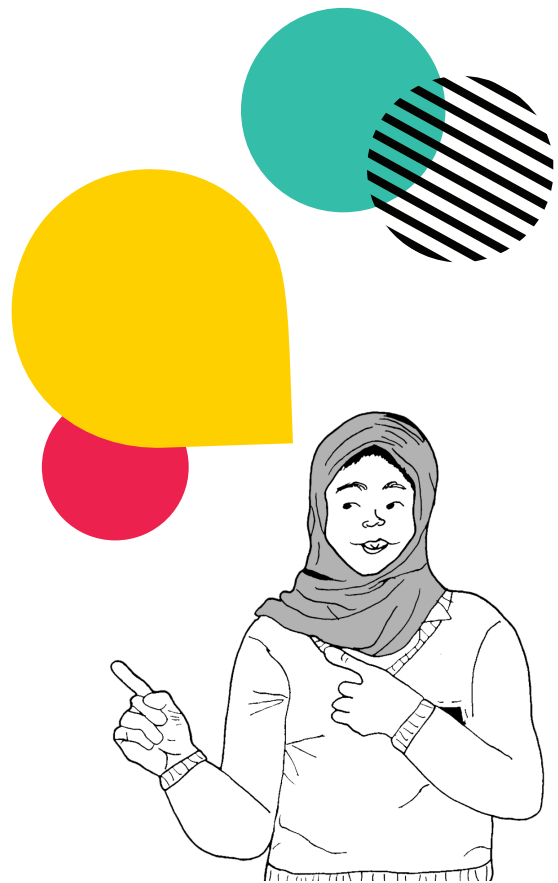
Who we are ...

The drawings in these worksheets were created by Chioma Ince who is an illustrator. An illustrator is someone who draws or makes pictures for books, magazines /comics and for online uses. These pictures are called 'illustrations'. Illustrators like Chioma need to be able to bring a picture alive and make it original. Illustrators train for their job. After Sixth Form they go to art college to study.

Chioma's pictures and the writing in these worksheets were laid out by Sonja Frick. Design is also a job that you can go to art college to train for. Good design helps us to better understand what is being communicated in words. It makes worksheets look attractive too!

The writing about leaving primary and starting secondary school was prepared by therapists at A Space for Support. A Space helps everyone in schools - children, young people and staff - learn more about emotions and make sense of life experiences.

Later on in secondary school, you'll be thinking about what you might want to study when you're older. Do you have any thoughts about this yet?



Find out more about us ...

Chioma	www.chiomaince.cargo.site
Sonja	www.3hcreate.com
A Space	www.aspacinhackney.org
Iniva	www.iniva.org

A Space and the Institute of International Visual Arts (Iniva) bring together art and emotional learning by creating resources such as these worksheets and our emotional learning cards shown below. We hope you enjoy them!

