

Welcome to the Illustrated Edition of The Small Fish Podcast. What began as something for you to listen to in the few minutes it takes to eat your breakfast has now grown into a watchable feast of words and pictures from your school life, for you to enjoy on your own or as a whole class.

Today is question 1: How do I get there?

Arriving at school on time might take a bit of getting used to, especially if primary school has been close to your home. You might have to catch a bus for the first time with people you don't know. Some schools send out all the information about busses to help you plan alternative routes too, but Abi came up with a great idea:

During the summer holidays, try out the journey you will take to your new school. Take a friend with you if that helps and then you won't feel so worried on your first day. Work out how long it takes you to get ready in the morning and don't forget to have a good breakfast. Then work out what time you will need to leave to walk, get in the car or be at the bus stop. Set your alarm and get up early so you have enough time to get everything ready.

I like that Abi, having a rehearsal so that it all feels familiar when you come to do it for real. And she made a good point about breakfast which fuels up our bodies and minds for that journey and any lessons until morning break. Now what about when you actually arrive in the building? What should you expect?

Hopefully you will get a chance to have a look round your new school and spend a day there with other new pupils, sometimes called a step-up or a taster day. If you are able to go to one of these, it will help you feel more confident about when you start. But there will be lots of signs and people to welcome you.

Thanks Adam; seeing the building, the classrooms, the library, the canteen, playground and where my locker is really helps me to feel at home. Lots of schools have virtual tours and they always give out a map for your first day. Getting to your locker with your own key gives you a place to dump all those heavy bags, so that you can have a hands-free experience looking round and arriving on time for your first lesson. Sounds good to me.

Before we wrap up session one today, each episode has a free take-away; *it's a task not fish food!* Your job is to plan your route, perhaps test it out, or write a list of jobs (or draw them if you prefer) for the first morning when you wake up before you leave the house – simple!

Finally, what does the Bible say about going to new places? Joshua was leading a group called the Israelites to a new land, standing at the water's edge with the Jordan river to cross. He felt afraid, a bit anxious, yet was looking forward at the same time. A mixed bunch of feelings but he sensed God saying this: *I will not leave you. I will never leave you alone... So don't be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.* (Joshua 1: 5 and 9, ICB)
And that is what God wants you to know; He's with you as you travel to school and find your way.

So until next time, remember that you're never alone in the big pond, especially if you're a small fish.

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Today is question 2. What if I get lost?

It's never nice to feel lost, especially when you don't know many people to ask for help. I can remember sticking with others when I started secondary school (they called us a tutor group instead of class) and we were trying to find the toilets, so at least we arrived late to the lesson together. We even had the map in our hands that the school had given us, but I think we must have been holding it upside down! First advice then; finding your way around *with others* might make life a little easier, so here's Bella:

Starting secondary school felt quite scary. I was worried about leaving my friends, my teachers and everyone I knew. I thought I would get lost in my new school, it looked that big! But I soon realised that I shouldn't have worried, the teachers were nice and most of the older pupils helped us new students as well.

It's great to hear that Bella's teachers were helpful; they know that you are a small fish in a big pond so they are bound to be understanding if you swim in the wrong direction in the first few days. She also mentioned the older pupils, and lots of schools buddy-up new children so that you always have people to help you get around.

It still sounds a bit confusing though, because you will have 5 or 6 different lessons every day, with different teachers in separate classrooms – that's way more moving around than you're probably used to. During the first few weeks it can be quite easy to get lost when moving between lessons as the school sites are so large, but your class are likely to stay together most of the time and there will be signs in corridors and labels on doors, so swim with the pack. It sounds bizarre but did you know that when sea creatures swim in a group it's called *a school*? Here's Ben with his thoughts on getting used to moving around:

I'm nearly at the end of my second year now and I have had so much fun in secondary school so far! I still miss having one classroom and one teacher but you get used to all the different teachers and classrooms really quickly.

Thanks Ben. As you get used to school, lessons may not always be with the same people who are in your tutor group, but that's a good chance to make some more new friends! But don't panic, remember we're all in this together and we're all learning at the same time. When you do make it into the right room at the right time, the lesson might actually take your mind off things for a while. Your teachers want you to get involved in class discussions and if you're not sure of something, just ask. Chances are you'll be helping another student who was too scared about getting lost a few minutes ago. So arrive and relax, don't forget to breathe, you've made it.

Before we wrap up session two today, each episode has a free take-away; *it's a task not fish food!* Your job is to take a look at a map of your next school and find the places you think will be important to you; toilets, dinner hall, for me that was always the football pitch.

Finally, what does the Bible say about getting lost? I forget things pretty easily, especially Bible stories, so we'll always spend two sessions on the same bit of the Bible. Joshua was leading a group called the Israelites to a new land, standing at the water's edge with the Jordan river to cross. He felt afraid, a bit anxious, probably because he'd never been that way before, but he sensed God saying this: *I will not leave you. I will never leave you alone... So don't be afraid. The Lord your God will be with you everywhere you go.* (Joshua 1: 5 and 9, ICB)

And that is what God wants you to know; He never gets lost, so if you do get lost, He's with you all the way. So until next time, remember that you're never really lost in the big pond, especially if you're a small fish.

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Today is question 3. Will I cope with homework and tests?

You will probably get more homework in secondary school than you did in primary and at first it might feel a bit overwhelming. BUT there is a good reason for it – to make sure you have understood something that has been taught or to help you learn some skills of independence and organise yourself for when you become an adult. So those teachers aren't just being horrible, even if they seem a lot more strict about handing it in. My golden rule is to keep a diary and write tasks in it. Then you don't need to use valuable brain space remembering everything - especially when you have different subjects going on at the same time. Here's Charlotte...

Keep a homework diary (some schools will give you one of these) and note down what homework you have been set and when it is due to be handed in. Plan time during the week for homework, and avoid doing it on the bus on the way to school! The amount of homework was a big jump when I moved up to secondary school, but I got the hang of it pretty soon, and I found out that it's best to get it out of the way so that you can do the things you enjoy.

I like that Charlotte, especially the bit about the bus. Those journeys are for catching up with friends, staring out the window or daydreaming in the winter in that warm seat while you watch the world outside.

Now to something else which will come your way in the big pond: tests or assessments; they will feel like a regular part of school life. They range from mini class tests to check you've understood something to those that will put you in different ability groups in subjects like maths. I wouldn't bother being competitive, it's not even worth knowing what your neighbour scored (unless they are your friend and you want to encourage them). Simply do your best. Even if at first they worry you, tests will become very familiar. Listen to Cameron:

In May or June, it can seem like schools go exam crazy. Every corridor has a sign saying 'Quiet please – exams in progress'. In your first year, you might have exams, class tests or even musical exams or sports trials. My tip: put the work in and don't wing it, so you feel confident instead of fearing failure.

Wise words there Cameron. Do you know, funny things happen in tests, particularly our answers. When asked in a Science exam about where mushrooms grow, someone wrote that *they always grow in damp places which is why they look like umbrellas*. Finally, in a Geography test about people and countries, one child answered that *The inhabitants of Moscow are called Mosquitoes*. One other funny thing that happens when we feel stuck in tests is the amount of praying that takes place when we don't know an answer, as if Jesus is just there to zap it down for you. If he did, everybody would score 100% but remember that God doesn't do magic; yes, there are a few angels in the Bible but we're not supposed to *wing it* in tests, so ask God to help you achieve your best based upon the revision you have done.

Before we wrap up session three today, here's your take-away; Why not take a look at a normal week and highlight those things you really enjoy? A sports session, a dance class, playing an instrument or watching your favourite programme. Having these things in place gives us something to look forward to and a kind of goal – so that after all the hard work you feel like you have earned it.

And finally, what does the Bible say about testing times when we might worry? When Jesus said goodbye to his followers, not everybody liked the idea of change. He said: *A time is coming when you will be scattered. Each of you will be scattered to your own home. That time is now here. You will leave me. I will be alone. But I am never really alone. Why? Because the father is with me.* (John 16: 32, ICB)

And that is what God wants you to know; when we do homework or prepare for tests, we're often on our own, in our bedrooms, doing our best to remember everything. Jesus knew that God was always with him, and God (the Father) is always with YOU. So until next time, remember that you're never out of sight with homework and tests in the big pond, especially if you're a small fish.

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Today is question 4. Will I like the teachers?

We've all had good and bad teachers, those we love for handing out sweets at the end of term who make us feel proud of ourselves, but also those we didn't seem to cope with so well. It's never nice if you feel afraid of a teacher, and if that ever happens to you make sure you tell someone. But these days, it's unusual to come across a teacher who doesn't treat you fairly, and that's because in school teachers are also known as 'trusted adults'. Any adult you feel comfortable talking to in your school is one of these, and it's part of their job to make sure that you feel safe, welcome and able to be you. Listen to Daisy:

'There's going to be one teacher you really like and get close to. You're going to be able to speak to them about things on your mind and they will always help you. But remember different teacher's personalities, whether they're strict or chilled. Don't answer back to teachers in secondary school as you'll get detention straight away.'

Thanks for that warning Daisy, but it really helps to know that we will find at least one trusted adult we can talk to. In the small pond of primary school it might have been a teaching assistant, somebody in the office or a playground helper. I know that the big pond will feel *much* bigger for a while and I want to find the teachers I get on with, but at least there will be many more adults around to help me and I will soon find the ones I connect with. It might be my form tutor who I will meet on the first day - who knows? Here's Daniel:

You hear a lot of rumours before starting and during secondary school; it's hard to decide whether you will believe them. But the thing that I found important is to talk about the strange things that are going on with a close friend. It is likely that a lot of the things you hear or think will be a bit extreme or just a load of nonsense, even if they worry you a lot.

Daniel says there can be a lot of rumours, and this is particularly true for teachers. News travels fast if somebody has given out a punishment to a new Year 7, but beware of the nonsense stories that sound more like a moment in the fantasy world of a Roald Dahl fiction book than something which actually happened. Miss Trunchbull doesn't really exist after all! Rumours are like snowballs, they roll around and and grow, and before you know it you have believed the rumour, you've played the moment through in your mind and it's become as real as that sandwich you're about to eat at lunchtime. But don't fill yourself up on rumours, be smarter than that. Of course, chat to a friend if you're worried, but take each teacher as you find them because that is what you want them to do for you. Go into class with a blank mind about who they are, be patient, even offer to help once in a while, and you might get a lovely surprise. Happy small fish learn, and if you're nervous because of what you've heard through rumours, your brain won't be able to focus. So remember this, the teachers want you to succeed in your new school; they are paid to do that. But they are your trusted adults too, so never be afraid to ask for help.

Before we wrap up session four today, here's your take-away; choose a trusted adult outside of school who you know you can talk to, like a parent, and agree three questions they are allowed to ask you for the first week in the big pond. YOUR job though is to give them more than one word answers! Instead of "fine, yes or no" try adding a "because".

And here's Jesus, the greatest teacher the world has ever known. His pupils loved him, those first disciples, and when they were nervous about him leaving, guess what he said? *A time is coming when you will be scattered. Each of you will be scattered to your own home. That time is now here. You will leave me. I will be alone. But I am never really alone. Why? Because the father is with me.* (John 16: 32, ICB)

And that is what God wants you to know today. Whether you like them or not, He will be with you as you meet every new teacher. Until next time, remember that you will meet some great teachers in the big pond, especially if you're a small fish.

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Today is question 5. How do I make friends?

Is my new school, the 'big pond' as we call it, going to be calm and prefect for me to sunbathe on my inflatable pelican or will it be feel rough at times? However old we are, we all need friends, and making friends is one way to ride the waves of the big pond, so let's jump straight in and listen to Emma from Year 7:

If you're worried about making friends remember that everyone will be in the same boat. They might not look it but even the most confident people will be feeling just like you on your first day...you'll get into class and someone is bound to say 'which primary school did you go to?' and after that, you'll slowly become friends.

Now that doesn't sound bad to me, in fact Emma has just told me what I can say to start a conversation. Perhaps I'll play a secret game in my own head and see if I can ask Emma's question before somebody else does it to me? Some of us might feel shy or we're just quieter characters and that's fine. It might be good to be ready though if anyone else asks us a similar question so that we don't blank them. You could even practice this type of conversation in front of the mirror at home.

If previous friends have come to the same school, it can feel awkward choosing which friendship groups to go with, but *you can* do both; staying with old friends from primary school and making new ones is allowed, you can even introduce your old friends to the new ones. Just be yourself, without pretending to be someone you're not – your old friends know the real you anyway! Social media can make new friendships a little tricky but don't feel that you have to accept every friend request that comes to you, because this can soon feel too much and take your time away from really chatting or noticing body language about how someone is feeling. So take your time. Elliott says this:

'I remember feeling very nervous about moving to secondary school, but also really excited! I was worried about not fitting in with all the new students and not being with all my old friends that I had been with since reception. Although most of my friends were going to the same school, I knew I wouldn't be in all my lessons with them. I also wasn't sure what the teachers would be like and how it would feel to have several teachers instead of just one. And I also worried that I would get lost as the school is so big!

Wow Elliott, I can see why you felt nervous! Secondary school has so many new things coming at you: fitting in, moving between lessons, having several teachers, getting lost, but today's episode actually helps us with all that. If we can make friends, we have people to talk to who are in the same boat as us and we don't feel alone. Getting lost might feel bad, but it's a whole lot better if you're alongside friends.

I've learnt that friendships often happen gradually. They start slowly, observing and listening to other people's interests. If you're into your sport and energised by people, you may not feel drawn to the non-stop readers who convince you that chess-club is the ultimate way to spend a lunchtime. BUT prepare to be surprised because if we're encouraging everyone to be themselves then a board-gaming rockstar poet could well be your next new friend! So don't judge too quickly, stay humble and just aim for an 'A Star' in being you.

Before we wrap up session five today, here's your take-away; list three main interests or hobbies that you would be happy to talk about with somebody new. If you're worried about forgetting them, note them on a post-it and put it in a uniform pocket. This will help you, even if you need a sneaky peek before a conversation if nerves get the better of you.

Finally, what does the Bible say about friendship? *Be happy with those who are happy. Be sad with those who are sad. Live together in peace with each other. Do not be proud, but make friends with those who seem unimportant. Do not think how smart you are.* (Romans 12:15-16, ICB)

And that is what God wants you to know today. Look out for other's feelings, reach out to them, stay humble and always be yourself. Until next time, remember that you will make friends in the big pond, especially if you're a small fish.

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Today is question 6. What will my uniform look like?

Have you ever tried getting ready to go out and not being able to decide what to wear? You end up with clothes all over the floor and then noticing that you're running late, which just adds pressure. Well here's some good news: School uniforms mean you don't even have to think about it. Uniforms are actually a good idea because they make us look the same so that we feel like we belong and help us to conquer some tricky skills like tying a tie. I can remember how much practice that took, so if you're wearing one, don't leave that until your first day.

Uniform can also feel odd, especially when it's new. You feel like everyone can spot the kid with the baggy blazer because the adults at home have said "It's got to last," so you can't see your hands for the first term while the arms are way too long. That's if you can move, because those new shoes are bound to feel stiff (until you've run around in them), so you end losing by hobbling around AND wearing cardboard. To be honest, it's not all that bad, and like with some of the other advice you've heard on Small Fish, while those adults at home are following school guidelines and getting name labels onto anything that doesn't move, practice wearing your uniform at home, even do a getting-ready rehearsal. Another good tip is to have everything out the night before so that first morning is nice and calm. Here is Faye from Year 7 with her thoughts about wearing a new uniform:

First impressions last a long time, so make sure yours are good ones – for organisation, presentation, and behaviour! This is your chance to make a fresh start.

She said it! Presentation. This is your chance to impress, and have a new beginning, so make sure that you are looking good on day one. Everyone is wearing the same uniform for the first time, so they will feel wobbly too. If you notice someone struggling, compliment them! The truth is that nobody really looks....You're so busy moving around, you don't really notice. Finn enjoys all the moving around:

Everything has been better than primary school – you get to change lessons and rooms every hour which is good for me as I have ADHD so I need a change of scenery and the chance to move around a bit...try to be yourself and people will like you. Don't try and be someone you're not just to fit in.

I like that, you will be on the move a lot and this will help you get your uniform to feel personalised. It's your private space so it's important it feels right. Get to grips with those pockets, especially the one you keep your locker key in! Just make sure you hang it up when you get home (once you've dived for the biscuit barrel) look after it like you would look after your new environment of school. Uniform can show how you feel about yourself and it's good to show a positive image. It will remind you to take care of what's around you too.

So what does the Bible have to say about uniform? Well, the Romans wore a uniform and Jesus was kind to them, but I don't think Jesus wore one. But the Bible *does* have a lot to say about the world we occupy. Look after it! This includes one another, made in God's image. (Genesis 1:26, ICB) *Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky.* Being made in His image means noticing God's stamp upon everyone, however our uniform looks. It also means caring for creation and making sure it stays looking great. You never know, you might meet others who really care about the planet and are into recycling uniform for others to use after you. It's a great idea that cuts down waste.

I think that's what God wants us to know today. As always, look out for other's feelings, especially if they are looking swamped or feeling awkward in that uniform. Reach out to them, stay humble and always be yourself. Until next time, remember that your uniform will look just fine, and if you're a small fish, that the person inside is most important.

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Today is question 7. What equipment do I need?

No doubt about it, secondary school is a place where you need to get organised. It's a step up and you will be responsible for your things which can pretty much determine how your day pans out. With more variety than primary school, you will need to arrive at lessons with the right tools to succeed; this is first base in you achieving your best. Listen to what it felt like for Grace:

I think the most challenging thing has been trying to be organised all the time. For me, having the right equipment means packing my bag with the right books, knowing what lessons are coming up tomorrow and making sure the grown-ups know my timetable too.

There are some good tips in there (perhaps having a timetable stuck where everybody can check it and packing your bag in good time.) Just imagine, if it's a bad hair day, a pet is poorly or it snows, you will want to relax knowing at least you are set up for the day's learning. Gavin agrees:

It's a good idea to make sure your bag is packed and you know what you are doing the next day before you go to bed so that you don't have any last minute panics. This is particularly important if you have a lesson like PE, for which you may need different types of kit on different days, or lessons where you may have to bring in things like cooking ingredients, fabrics, pictures and so on.

Gavin is right; joining the big pond involves a serious kit list of pens, pencils, ruler, pencil case, PE kit, PE bag, water bottle, calculator, and that's on top of those new uniform expectations. There may be things you have never needed before too like a bus pass, uniform card, library card, locker keys – all sorts of tiny equipment pieces that are really easy to lose if you don't get into good habits and delegate blazer pockets to certain items – you might need to plan this during a quiet evening.

But there are other good ways to cope with the demands of new equipment: perhaps write yourself a daily checklist (at least until you get into the routine of your new timetable) or under every subject of your week write the main things you need to remember. There might be some nights where you do things outside of school, so on those days you will be too tired to think about it when you get home, so save your brain and have everything written down. Then all you need to do is read down the list and tick things off – perfect.

The bits of equipment that might catch you out are the ones you don't always need then suddenly they are really important; a certain type of flashy calculator for maths, a protractor for geometry or a compass that isn't loose at the hinge so your circles don't have wobbly lines. Whatever it is, try to see it coming, think ahead, even pack the night before. It will help you to sleep well too.

Before we wrap up session seven today, each episode has a free take-away task. Today's job is to have one area in your house or your bedroom where you keep all your equipment- perhaps in a drawer or under a desk. I know it's easy just to dump it down when you walk in the front door, but if it's all in one place, it will save you lots of time packing your bag *and* getting that tricky homework done where you need to bring in a photo of a long-lost relative but the grown-ups keep telling you to keep it flat and very safe.

Finally, what does the Bible say about being prepared and using equipment? Well, when Jesus had risen and was preparing a beach-side barbecue for 7 of his followers, they had been fishing but not caught very much, so Jesus instructed them: *"Throw your net into the water on the right side of the boat, and you will find some."* So they did this. They caught so many fish that they could not pull the net back into the boat. (John 21:6) They needed a bit of guidance, but at least they had their nets *with them*; otherwise there would be no breakfast! You have similar power with your tools; I wonder what encouragement could come from your pen if you follow Jesus at school?

So until next time, remember to have the right equipment because you never know what you might achieve, especially if you're a small fish.

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Today is question 8. What are the rules?

Every school has rules. In primary, you might have even helped to write them, but it's likely that in secondary the teachers will tell you what they are. There might even be different rules for different teachers, but I would call those *expectations*. I wonder how you feel about rules? If you've ever fallen down on the wrong side of them, then a punishment doesn't feel too great. But if everyone follows them, they can create a good sense of harmony and a safer community, for example, everybody walking on the left. I can remember almost being flattened by a sixth former with their bag on their shoulder when I was in Year 7; we certainly needed traffic rules for our corridors!

Abbie makes a good point about the expectations of teachers: *Remember different teachers have different personalities, some are strict and some are chilled. Don't answer back to teachers in secondary as you'll get a detention straight away.*

She said it, the *dreaded detention*. These can be tough, whether they are in playtime or after-school, but if you want to avoid them by knowing the rules, then just find out. All class teachers will go through the rules when you start term and they are bound to revisit them during assemblies. You might be able to have a look at the school's website with a grown-up who can search for something called 'Policies' which is simply the flash name for written down rules on things like attendance, mobiles and social media. Adam agrees:

Make the most of the school website to find out information, such as important dates, school trips, sports fixtures, homework expectations, how to wear your uniform correctly and behaviour policies. They will go over the rules again in the first few days but it's good to find out whatever you can.

There will be very strict rules about keeping you safe, which is good to know, for example about bullying. One teacher said to me:

Schools are places which want children to feel safe and secure. In the rare instances when bullying does happen, it will be dealt with straight away. You will be told that if you ever feel concerned about the way you are being treated (by staff or pupils) you must talk to a trusted adult. Make sure you speak out about bullying if you ever see it.

Did you hear those important words, *trusted adult*? Remember, it is every adult's job to look after you (schools call this *safeguarding* if you ever you hear somebody say it) because they want you to thrive in the big pond. One of the best trusted adults will be the teacher who leads your class when you arrive. You might have a class called a tutor group or form with a teacher who is your 'tutor'. They are your first point of contact for any information about rules or to share any worries; above all, their job is to guide you into the new waters of the big pond and they are chosen because they are good at caring.

Before we wrap up session eight today, here is your free take-away task. Jump online and find out three rules about your new school. Have a think about why those rules might be important, grab a grown-up and chat them through or contact a friend who starts a different school and compare their new rules with yours. A popular one is, ask them what happens if they forget their homework!

As always, let's dig out some Bible wisdom which today is about rules: Did you know that God made all of us rulers in one sense: We need to look after this world, its climate and of course one another. Here's (Genesis 1:26, ICB) :*Then God said, "Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky".* Being made in God's image means noticing his mark upon everyone and everything, like an artist's signature, and he wants us to rule things through care, with kindness, so that we can continue to appreciate the beauty of nature, which of course includes every small fish out there.

So until next time, remember that when you are keeping the rules, you too are a ruler in the big pond, and with that responsibility, God trusts every small fish.

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Today is question 9. How will I stay organised?

I've learnt that some people *seem* organised and others don't; you know, those friends who just react at the last minute, shoving in a piece of toast and running out the door to school wearing one shoe but realising they're still wearing pyjama bottoms. They can add stress to your day when you've done your best to be organised, especially if you're walking to school together. But let me tell you a secret, the organised ones probably have top tips to being that way, like me: I have a poor memory so I have learnt to write down lots of notes. So this episode is great news: Being organised is about finding a strategy that works for you, and your school will help you out here:

One of the first pieces of information you will be given will be your timetable. This tells you which lessons you will have on each day, which classroom you will be in and the name of the teacher. Sometimes schools have a two week timetable, and you will need to remember whether you are on week one or week two.

That advice from Bella reminds us that your school will give you something called a School Diary, Homework Diary or Student Planner – a very important booklet which will need to be with you every day. This guide will be your best friend. It has your timetable and lots of helpful information, including space to write down homework and when it is due in. The grown-ups at home might also be asked to check it and write inside any notes to communicate with your teachers. After checking *his* diary, Ben recommends getting everything packed:

It's a good idea to make sure your PE bag is packed and you know what you are doing before you go to bed so you're not scrambling around in the morning. PE may need different types of kit on different days and you don't want to arrive with last week's dirty kit or stinky socks!

No-one wants smelly socks in their bag Ben, but once you get used to your timetable and into the rhythm of school, this will be less likely. At first, your brain might feel frazzled because you are having to check everything all the time, and this will make you feel tired and maybe a bit agitated – you might need a snack especially when you get home.

But one more thing. If you like your social media but often feel inundated with notifications, this can add another level to your life which needs organising; when it's not just about homework and equipment, but you feel like you are missing out on friendships, it can get a bit overwhelming. So organise it, put some boundaries in *for you*. Decide what time you're going to stop checking notifications (switch them off during homework) and leave your device in an agreed place overnight (not your bedroom). Being organised means controlling this part of your life, which can sometimes become confusing when messages are easily misunderstood. Don't accept every friend request (it can be awkward leaving a group) and don't let tech run your friendships. A true friend tries to understand others when they are together, in person, so be aware of body language and facial expressions: what experts call 'non-verbal cues'.

Before we end session 9 today, here's your take-away task: Score yourself out of ten for organisation and compare that with a score for being a true friend who reads other people's emotions. Share your thoughts at home and hatch a plan. Could a small improvement in one improve your score in the other?

Does the Bible have any useful words about being organised? I think it does when it comes to remembering what is important and that our priority as small fish is people. Paul says: (Romans 12:15-16, ICB) *Be happy with those who are happy. Be sad with those who are sad. Live together in peace with each other. Do not be proud, but make friends with those who seem unimportant. Do not think how smart you are*". Staying organised means that we will be able to make time for other people because they will sometimes need us, like we will need them. When you're feeling down or need to ask a question, there's nothing like a friend. Actually, in the good times too, having space to celebrate and laugh is equally important.

Until next time, remember that organisation might give you more space to make friends, especially with those nobody notices, and being organised could be the best thing you can do for them (and for yourself) as a small fish.

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Today is question 10. Will PE be OK?

PE is one of those subjects that has lots of stories attached to it, which is probably because having the right kit for the right sport on the right day can be a bit of a minefield. You don't want to end up as the only person wearing your spotless gym kit when it's your turn to be outside battling against the muddy cross-country course. It can also feel a bit divisive, either because you have had a bad experience at primary school and convinced yourself that even running for a bus is beyond your ability, or you have never experienced the joy of winning anything or being part of a team.

Becoming a small fish is your chance to change all that. You're moving on, so you will have the opportunity to reinvent yourself as someone who always gives things a go. You don't have to be Usain Bolt (not everybody enjoys running) but you will certainly be able to try out a variety of activities. Here's Charlotte speaking after she had a taster day at her new school.,

Step Up Day helped me to feel less worried about getting lost and I got to do some science experiments and other things I hadn't done before, so that helped me to feel excited about going to school. I really like PE now because at my primary school we didn't do much PE, and if we did it wasn't very physical or competitive.

Who knew? Charlotte has discovered that she actually likes the competition and physicality of PE! As you experience a whole new world of Big Pond opportunities, there's bound to be something you discover you are rather good at. Remember what we said about form tutors who are there to help you? Well secondary schools are also equipped to give you extra support if you have any special physical needs, so make sure you let your school know what help you might need (perhaps get a grown-up to drop them an email); after all, it is their job to be inclusive of everyone. Oh, there's something else worth mentioning. Everyone has seen those fierce PE teacher caricatures in films, people who seem more at home barking military orders than nurturing young lives through physical exercise. Cameron says this:

Don't listen to gossip or rumours that judge other people. Get to know them yourself and learn who they really are, not what others think of them. PE can also help you make friends because it puts you into teams and then your friendship group will grow easily.'

So don't think scary teachers, think new friends! And finally, if you want to *keep* those friends, be hygienic. Just as you would brush your minty-fresh teeth every morning, so deodorant is probably as important as packing your trainers because if PE is to be OK. no-one likes a whiff of BO! That's enough pairs of capital letters in one sentence before we blow the whistle on episode 10 today.

So here's your take-away task: List any PE wobbles you might be having and come up with some coping strategies to help. For example: always have a friend in mind if you have to pair up during the lesson. If you feel afraid of an activity, walk towards the fear (often, the thought of a head-over-heels is worse than actually trying it and discovering that you can do one). And as always, try on all your kit so you feel comfortable and that it's not the first time wearing it when you step out of those changing rooms.

What does the Bible say about PE? Well one man, Saul who became known as Paul, mentions running quite a lot and he really hated Christians. He was near a place called Damascus when a bright light shone and he heard Jesus ask 'Why are you doing things against me?' It was so bright he could not see for three days and lost his appetite. Eventually, somebody called Ananias came to his house and prayed he would be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:18, ICB) *The Bible says that "Immediately, something that looked like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes. He was able to see again"!* It's funny that fish scales are mentioned. But maybe we need to look at PE in a new way too?

Until next time, remember that for a Small Fish wondering if things are going to be ok, it might be a case of being prepared, ignoring the rumours and changing your outlook, whatever the subject is.

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Today is question 11: Why should I join a club?

A lot of us are either introverts or extroverts: we like our space or we like being around other people. Some people are a bit of both, but would you say you're loud or quiet? In public, are you happy to dance like no-ones looking or on a lazy Saturday afternoon would you rather choose headphones and a good book?

One of the key themes of The Small Fish Podcast has been meeting new people, because in the Big Pond there will be lots of them that you have never seen before; it's an ocean of all shapes and sizes out there. But depending on your personality, today's topic might take a bit of work. Joining a club means putting yourself out there: others may not be interested but if you think you might like extra art, dance, boardgames or music then you will have to find out when these are happening and get yourself *to them* to see if you want to join. You don't know unless you try right?

The big pond is amazing because it is a land of opportunity. Clubs give you the chance to try new skills in your new place. It makes sense, as you get to know where things are, why not improve your confidence in that setting by going to an activity in school? You don't have to travel far, you may not have to pay for it and science shows that learning a new skill gives a good balance to your wellbeing. Daisy proves the point:

'I'm really excited about going to secondary school, making new friends, meeting new teachers and seeing the new building. I can't wait to see what clubs I can join like gymnastics, music and drama.

She has also revealed one of the main reasons people join clubs. It's not an excuse to stay inside the warm school building when the rules might say you have to be outside; the real attraction is that you make more friends AND they are interested in the same thing as you! Teamwork always feels great and reminds us that we're not alone. It's like this podcast; we might never meet all the other Year 6 and 7 listeners but for a time we've become The Small Fish podcast *club*. It's also good to have different groups of friends at a club, just in case you fall out. Here's Daniel:

I have enjoyed having the variety of lessons that my secondary school offers. I have especially enjoyed PE, DT, art and science. Also I have enjoyed making new friends and being part of school teams... Join an after-school activity such as the football team, drama or music club. Make friends with people from different backgrounds or even meet up outside of school and do non-school things together.

It is so encouraging to hear Daniel and Daisy talking about the benefits of joining clubs in the big pond. There may be so many more on offer than you ever had at primary school, and if they don't provide the one you really want to go to – perhaps you could start it!

Before we end session 11 today, here's today's club take-away task: Are there some things you have always wanted to try but never had the time? Or were you worried about what people might think of you? There will never be a better time to join clubs than when everything and everyone is new at school, so whatever they are, write them down, stick them on the fridge, and when your school releases the clubs information, compare it with your list and take the leap.

Every week we close with some words from the Bible. In today's story, Jesus has risen from the dead and is preparing a beach-side barbecue for seven of his followers. They have been fishing, but not caught much. (John 21:6, ICB) *He said, "Throw your net into the water on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they did this. They caught so many fish that they could not pull the net back into the boat.*" What I like about this moment, as well as it being about fish like you, is that they were working together and they got to experience this joy as a team.

Until next time, remember that doing things with other people can make you feel much happier, so whatever your personality, dive in and give a club a go. Who knows what might happen, especially if you're a small fish?

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Today is question 12: Is it worse being the youngest?

If you are in a family with older brothers or sisters you might feel like you can already answer this question. Perhaps you wore their old clothes or in the pictures, were you always the cutest because you were younger? In families, once you are the youngest you can feel a bit stuck but some Small Fish good news is here! At school, this only lasts for Year 7, then next September you will be the confident ones showing *them* around. Being the youngest at school can feel a bit strange. You've gone from knowing everything and everyone at your primary school, where you were the big fish in the small pond, but now everything is about to reverse which can make you fear the worst. But things never turn out as bad as we imagine. Nowadays, many schools have vertical mentor times (which is when a mix of age-groups get together to chat things through and introduce you to much older children who will always look out for you). The other thing to remember is that time will fly by because you are getting used to so many new things around you. Listen to Emma:

Starting secondary school may feel really scary at first but remember to take a deep breath and enjoy every second of it, because before you know it your first year will have gone and you won't know be the youngest year group any more. The most important thing to remember though...never put your hands under the desks as most of them are covered in chewing gum!

Lovely, a hand full of dry chewing-gum, that's disgusting! But that's probably not a bad example of some of the things you might come across in the big pond. It's not nice for anybody else, but let's remember that we live in the real world where people might try to bend the rules to get noticed. You might feel the pressure to go along with what others do, being the class clown or using rude words to show off, just because you're the youngest. But this is time to be you; I've never met anyone who enjoys school when every moment is spent trying to please other people; that's exhausting. You may not believe it now, but there will be a person or group who are just perfect for you to get along with. With so many children in the big pond, this is much more likely to happen than at primary school, so begin looking forward to meeting them! Elliott agrees:

The change from being the biggest in the school to being the smallest was hard to begin with. The other students seem so large and scary at first and their language and behaviour can be challenging.

Thanks Elliott. You may also hear occasional stories about who is the strongest, the fastest, the coolest kid, even rumours about bullying which can make you feel frightened when you're the youngest. Don't let the rumours scare you; Nine times out of ten that's all they are. Every school has an anti-bullying policy so tell a trusted adult straight away and get the problem sorted out. Here's a teacher:

A lot of young people feel worried about bullying, especially when moving to a school with students who are much older and they are the youngest, but these days, no one wants to be labelled as a bully.

Wow! I'm actually really surprised that nobody today wants the 'bully' label; That really helps, especially because teachers know from experience.

Before we end session 12 today, your take-away task is to come up with 3 benefits about being the youngest in school: things like 'you're allowed to make mistakes like getting lost, some sixth formers will take you under their wing which feels great – and you've got the longest time ahead of you out of everyone in the school!

The Bible reminds us that the youngest were sometimes the problem solvers, prepared to be generous and trust that God would make everything ok. When there were 5000 hungry people, one of Jesus' followers said: (John 6:9, ICB) *"Here is a boy with five loaves of barley bread and two little fish. But that is not enough for so many people."* But then look what happened: (Mark 6:43, ICB) *"The followers filled 12 baskets with the pieces of bread and fish that were not eaten."* Until next time, remember that it can be amazing what Jesus does with the youngest small fish.

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Today is question 13. Are school dinners good?

Now this is a tricky question because everyone has their own taste, so what makes food 'good' is personal. In our culture, we enjoy a huge variety and you may well have a clear favourite: A full English breakfast, a home-made curry, a drive thru to the big yellow 'M' if you're 'lovin'it' or your basic fish and chips. Whatever you love, we need to remember that having a decent lunch at school is important. Especially if you're a small fish, you will be using lots of nervous energy meeting new teachers, making new friends and taking on new information, so you are going to feel pretty hungry by lunchtime. Food is fuel in the tank for your brain and your source of energy to get you through the afternoon, so don't be tempted to skip it.

To avoid that, we need to feel *confident* that there is something we will want to eat, so what can you do? Many schools advertise their dinner menu online, so you can take a peek with an adult and decide if you are going to take your own lunch or give the new set-up a try. If you choose packed lunch, make sure it's filled with things you like, maybe pack it together the night before, so you can look forward to eating it - like a reward for getting through half the day in the big pond. One Year 7 loves her new school dinners, here's Faye: *'The food is better because the cooks are better. I like the variety and there's always healthy choices and vegetarian options'*.

It's great that schools cater for all diet options and schools have smooth systems in place to make sure everyone gets fed. They might do this with a pre-loaded payment system or a thumb print which you scan each time you visit the canteen; it's very easy and teachers will get you set up during your first few days. BUT I think this episode hides a deeper question. Perhaps it's not about whether the food will be good, but more about *how we will spend* our lunchtime – you're in a bigger place, there's quite a long gap between lessons, what if I'm the only one staring at my phone or with my head in a book, pretending to look busy, but really wishing someone would talk to me?

Finn feels like that: *I will miss my primary teachers and the jobs they gave me like lunchtime play leading, but I've heard that school dinners are better which will help me halfway through the day. I'm a bit worried about getting lost in the new building but I really can't wait to go!*

So instead, we might want to ask 'Are school *lunchtimes* good?' They can be daunting because the amount of people around, the noise of the dinner hall, the jobs to remember - it can feel like swimming against a strong current where everybody else seems to know what to do! You will come across older students, wait in a queue for lunch, try to find a seat in the canteen, refill your water bottle – the list seems long. But if you feel nervous, my top tip is to stick together with some of your new class during lunch and find yourself a quiet place to hang out. There you can just gather your thoughts, ask each other questions or talk about how you are finding it. Remember, you are all in the new big pond and this is your unstructured social time. Hopefully, you'll soon feel confident enough to elbow your way through the crowds!

Before we end session 13 today, here's your take-away task: Think about how you will spend dinnertime, not just the dinner. This is a breathing space for you.

Looking at the Bible, Jesus often enjoyed meals with others; in fact, it helped him to get to know them. It was a bit different when he met Saul. We've mentioned fish and chips today, so it seems good to return to the 'fish scales' on the eyes of Saul, the man we met in Episode 10 who disliked Christians, saw a blinding light on the road to Damascus, heard a voice, couldn't see for three days and lost his appetite. Somebody called Ananias came to the house, explained that it was Jesus challenging him about his attitude and prayed that God's Holy Spirit would help. The story ends: *'Immediately, something that looked like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes. He was able to see again!'* (Acts 9:18, ICB). I love the fact he then had a bite to eat and regained some strength. Perhaps we need to change our view of school dinnertimes, not just the dinner.

Until next time, see it as moment to look after YOU and get to know others – and you never know, as a small fish, you might even be doing that over a plate of vegetarian lasagne in just a few weeks' time.

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Today is question 14 and our final episode: How do I thrive?

Interesting fact: did you know that when fish swim together in a group, it's called a school? They can confuse predators and use less energy by working together! So here we go, knowing that everybody in the school wants to settle and do well, but today we move from hoping to survive to preparing to THRIVE. With the knowledge of some Year 7s (and a few teachers), we've given you some practical tips and Christian wisdom to do just that. Thriving is about you flourishing, so here's the spoiler alert: thriving as a small fish is about getting the highest grade at simply being you! It's tempting to look sideways and compare ourselves to others but like an athlete on a track, stick to your lane and run your own race. There will always be taller, faster, louder, funnier people than us, but there's not another YOU heading for that school; and that is simply amazing; you're the only YOU!

We've spent these 14 sessions learning that tests and assessments might be a regular part of Year 7 but they are not the ONLY part. There will be new friends, new teachers, new subjects – and as we heard last time – new school dinners. YOU will have your own private thoughts as you go through these changes, which is why Small Fish has tried to help you reflect. We call this our spiritual life, and everyone has one! That hidden place nobody sees where you daydream and secretly think about life's big questions: who am I, who are they? where do I belong and is God really here anyway? You may even talk to God; after all, thousands of grown-up men pray when their football team have a penalty kick, and Grace prays too:

I think that praying with others like my parents has helped me have that feeling that I am not alone, that God and they are there for me. I have a card on my wall that says 'Nothing's going to happen to me today that God and I can't handle together.' This really helped me through the first couple of weeks when I faced new things.

Did you know that the first followers of Jesus were fishermen? That was their skill, and Jesus took it and used it; he taught them their purpose was to fish for people – making an impact on the world by remembering that *people* matter most. I wonder who you will turn out to be (if you join that team or attend that club)? Will you become a dancer or drummer, actor or athlete, musician or mathematician – finding YOU helps the whole world because you have a purpose. These first followers even gave Christianity a logo you may recognise, as common as a Nike tick or an Apple; two lines making up a small fish. As you live the Small Fish life at secondary school, God may give you a gift of peace we can't really understand. Others might wonder why you are not always anxious – then you know you are having the peace of God. It works for Gavin...

I often say a small prayer to God under my breath when I'm scared or confused, which helps my confidence. During lessons such as Religious Studies, talking about God has made me feel happy because I know that he is there with me. It doesn't make you any different; it just means that you have God there as your friend too. Now that I've been in secondary school for a while, I'm really enjoying it and I probably wouldn't return to my primary school. It has been such a great change that I can't wait to see what else will happen.

That is such a positive note for us today. We can stay calm as we step into the big pond because God is there and we can ask Him for help. How you thrive may not stay a secret strategy; someone may notice. So your take-away task today is to think about who you will meet in the big pond and start to pray that you might meet other Small Fish too.

Our final Bible story today goes back to the child who knew that thriving meant sharing his packed lunch of 5 bread rolls and 2 fish with 5000 hungry people. The maths doesn't work but the thinking about the needs of others does. The child could be a Year 7 pupil, it could be YOU, giving Jesus all you have and hoping he can make something out of it. We know at this particular dinner time, everyone ate and *"The followers filled 12 baskets with the pieces of bread and fish that were not eaten.* (Mark 6:43, ICB). I'd say that child made a difference; they thrived on that day. So this has been Small Fish; here to help you make that step into Year 7. Thank you for tuning in for some practical tips and time for reflection. From the team here at The Salvation Army, we wish you well as you begin this new chapter in the big pond.