

Beyond the Transition: Comparing Year 10 with Year 9

While the previous chapter dealt with the move from primary to secondary school, this chapter discusses how Emily and the other students found the step from Year 9 to Year 10 within the same school. In particular, it discusses how this step compared to the students' experiences of the Year 8 to Year 9 transition.

Anticipating the Move to Year 10

Emily was excited about moving on to Year 10.

At the end of their first year at secondary school, students were asked to describe how they felt about going on to Year 10. Emily's response was to say she felt "excited". An equivalent question one year earlier, about the prospect of going from primary to secondary school, had prompted Emily to say she felt "scared".

Emily's explanation for being excited about the prospect of Year 10 was:

"Not being the youngest of the group any more. [Will feel] settled in when you reach the fourth form [Year 10]. No more being called a 'turd'. When you're older, you know there's more [exciting things] coming."

They predicted Emily would take the step to Year 10 in her stride.

But when students were further asked if they thought Year 10 would be different from Year 9, Emily's response was:

"I don't think it will be — not different really."

And to a specific question about what she thought the 'best things' about Year 10 would be, Emily

'didn't really know', although she did repeat earlier comments that she would enjoy no longer being one of the most junior in the school. She further noted that while she would feel settled because she was familiar with the school and how things worked, she would also be feeling excited about the new experiences she expected to have.

In terms of any anticipated 'not so good things' about Year 10, Emily was simply going to "wait and see".

Parent and Teacher Views on How Emily would Cope with the Move to Year 10

Regarding her upcoming progression to Year 10, Emily's parents commented:

"She is looking forward to the new year for what awaits her."

And Emily's Year 9 English/form teacher was of the opinion that Emily would cope 'extremely well' with the step to Year 10.

All Students

Parent and teacher views on students coping with the move to Year 10

Students thought likely to cope best were described as:

- mature;
- well regarded by peers;
- well regarded by teachers;
- having done well in Year 9 in terms of their schoolwork;
- having engaged well in the wider life of the school;
- having a good attitude, and being motivated to do well;
- being well organised; and
- able to adapt well to change and/or enjoy new challenges.

Students expected to cope less well were described as:

- having social difficulties/being immature;
- falling out with teachers;
- not staying on task (being easily distracted and missing out on things because they don't listen);
- poorly organised, showing poor study habits;
- having difficulties in reading and writing;
- tending to struggle with harder work generally;
- feeling distanced from school — wanting to leave, not engaging in extra-curricular activities; and
- having limited experiences of the wider world.

All Students

Their thoughts about moving to Year 10

At the end of Year 9, overall, most students were considerably less anxious about the thought of going on to Year 10 than they had been the year before when thinking about beginning Year 9 (see discussion in previous chapter), often saying this was because they were used to how things were done at the school by now.

Asked in Phase 3 if they 'could think of one word that says how you feel about going on to Year 10', 41 percent of students said they were primarily feeling "excited", "good", or "confident" at the prospect:

- "Confident — can't wait until next year."
- "Overall, pretty excited. Will be older, more special."
- "Good' — because I know what it will be like. It won't be that much different from this year. I'll just be older."
- "I can't wait, won't be a 'turd' anymore."
- "Because it's going to be different: I'm a bit excited."
- "Looking forward to it because I won't be the youngest anymore. It will be good to be further up the school."
- "Excited, because I'm no longer a third former [in Year 9]. I know everything now: I know what to be aware of, so don't feel so confused."
- "Everyone (Year 9s) will look up to you. Won't be called a 'turd'."
- "Because I'm ready to take on more challenges."
- "Excited. There'll be a lot more subjects at Year 10 (more interesting). I was worried coming here [to secondary school] but there's nothing to worry about going to Year 10."
- "Confident: can't wait until next year. Because of the stuff you learn this year, it helps you for next year. I feel prepared for next year. It's a bit different, 'cause you're given more responsibilities I guess."
- "I've passed [this year now], won't be the lowest in the school, makes you feel more like an adult."

A few of the students who were 'excited' at the prospect of Year 10 did not perhaps have the best of reasons for this however, saying they felt this way simply because they would be closer to the time when they could leave school:

- "Only three more years [of school] left!! And can get a job after school [next year]."
- "Only got four more years of school."
- "Hurry up and finish school."

Responses from just under a fifth (18%) of students to the question indicated above were more 'neutral' in nature— that is, these students said they felt OK or 'didn't mind' about moving on to Year 10, again, often because they felt that after a year at secondary school, they were now well familiar with 'how things worked':

- "I don't really mind, I'm not really nervous or anything."
- "It's OK, feel all right about it."
- "Just go with the flow."
- "Just the same as Year 9 (familiar with the school now)."
- "Just another year at school."

continued...

All Students

Their thoughts about moving to Year 10 – continued

And two students said that they ‘hadn’t really thought about it’.

But the remaining 39 percent of students described themselves as “*nervous*”, “*scared*”, or “*worried*” about the thought of going on to Year 10, most often because they anticipated the work would be much harder (too hard for them personally):

- “*Harder work, more homework than third form [Year 9]. I can’t even handle third form work.*”
- “*It’s going to be hard. I don’t want to go.*”
- “*Anxious — I don’t want to be in the dumb class.*”
- “*Maybe the Year 11s will pick on us. There will be exams.*”
- “*Might not pass.*”
- “*Harder work — one more step closer to NCEA (nervous about NCEA).*”
- “*Don’t know what to expect — because I’ll be going to a new class and new teachers.*”
- “*Because all my friends will be separated from me. They are the only friends I have.*”
- “*There will be more responsibilities on me, will be exams to do.*”

Views as a Year 10 Student on the Main Differences between Years 9 and 10

Her view was that teachers expected more of students in Year 10.

Repeating our approach of the year before, once the students were in Year 10 we asked them to consider the **main** things they were finding different about school compared to the previous year.

Emily specified that the main differences for her about being in Year 10 compared to Year 9 were that:

“I’m not a ‘turd’ anymore. We’re not the babies anymore. [But] they expect a lot more, now that you’ve been here a year. No leeway now. Rules are tougher.”

The move to Year 10 did not represent a big change in Emily’s life.

To two further questions — ‘Is there anything about being in Year 10 that you are liking more or finding better than being in Year 9?’ and ‘Is there anything about being in Year 10 that you are finding not so good as Year 9?’ — Emily answered ‘no’, reinforcing her earlier comment that this move did not represent a big change in her life. Together with the way she rated the statements listed in Table 10, this response suggests that, on the whole, Emily was comfortable with being at secondary school, and well familiar with the way things worked, now that she was a Year 10 student. Data discussed earlier in

this report also lend weight to this, such as Emily’s reference to feeling much more confident and able to take on extra-curricular activities in Year 10 than she had in Year 9, when she felt she needed more time to adjust to ‘being a secondary school student’.

Further reinforcement of this perhaps comes from her ‘totally agree’ response (see Table 10) to the statement ‘I have more fun at school this year’ (compared to her ‘agree’ response to an equivalent statement in Year 9 — refer Exhibit G in the previous chapter), despite her reference to higher expectations, tougher rules, and her ‘totally disagree’ response to the statement that work was easier in Year 10 compared to Year 9.

Teacher Views on Emily’s Progress in Year 10

To balance the information from students and parents, we asked the students’ Year 10 form teachers: ‘Overall, how well do you feel [this student] is getting on so far this year?’ Emily’s teacher rated her as getting on ‘very well/extremely well’. (At the same time the previous year, Emily’s then Year 9 form teacher had described Emily’s early progress at secondary school in the same way.)

Table 10: Emily's views of Year 10 in relation to Year 9

Aspect of Year 10 being compared with Year 9	Totally agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Totally disagree
The work this year is more demanding or challenging (harder)		✓			
I am repeating work I did before			✓ ^a		
The work is easier					✓
The work is more interesting			✓ ^b		
I have more school responsibilities this year than I did last year	✓ ^c				
I am treated more like an adult than I was last year	✓				
I am now treated more as an individual			✓		
I have more fun at school this year	✓				
The teachers are nicer/they look after me better			✓ ^d		

a Emily added the comment "Some of it's a bit harder" to her rating here of 'neither agree nor disagree'.

b Explaining her rating on this dimension, Emily wrote "Some of it is interesting".

c These were: "More extra-curricular activities [such as role in school production]".

d The qualification "They are still the same" was added.

All Students

Teachers' feedback on students' progress in their first term in Year 10

The table summarises Year 10 form teachers' feedback to the question 'Overall, how well do you feel this student is getting on in Year 10 so far this year?'

Rating	Year 10 form teacher response % of students ^a
Very well/extremely well	33
Well	35
OK/reasonably well	24
Not very well	2
Not at all well	–
Not sure/don't know student well enough to be able to comment	–
Missing data	9

a Note that individual teachers quite often rated a number of participating students. (At this phase of the study there were 92 participating students.)

The present data appear to provide a quite global rather than more focused indication of how teachers felt the students had settled into Year 10 and were progressing in their learning in class, and overall. We know from other data collected throughout the study that more students than would be suggested by the data in this table were not doing as well in their learning and achievement as might be hoped, and that, although proportionately quite small, there were a number of students who were generally feeling more negative than positive about school.

Luke's Move from Year 9 to Year 10

In Phase 3, Luke was *"nervous"* about going on to Year 10. He was *"not too sure why— just going up a new step."* He had made a similar response in Phase 1 when anticipating the move to secondary school.

Luke considered that the main difference in Year 10 compared to Year 9 would be *"Harder work"*. But he also anticipated that the best things about going on to Year 10 would be:

"Meeting new friends, going on camp, having three options [rather than just two]."

Once he was in Year 10, Luke said that there was nothing he had found difficult to get used to so far that year, adding *"Not like last year"*.

Luke felt that his friends — both 'old friends' and new friends that year — had been what helped him most to feel settled and to enjoy school. As well, he stated:

"I just feel settled in [to school] from last year — used to it now."

Commenting in Phase 4 on what he was finding different about school compared to the previous year, Luke simply stated:

"Just feel different [more relaxed] about being in Year 10, and not being called a 'turd' is good."

Luke responded very similarly when reflecting on what he was currently finding 'best' about school. And there was nothing about Year 10 that he considered 'not as good' as Year 9. (Luke's mother also noted that Luke was enjoying not being one of the 'babies of the school' any more.)

Asked to compare some of his present school experiences with those of the previous year, amongst other things Luke felt that while the work in Year 10 was more demanding, it was also more interesting.

He further felt that he was treated more like an adult than in Year 9, that he now had more responsibilities at school, and that he was having more fun at school than was the case the previous year.

His mother's view on what had been the best thing for Luke in his first term in Year 10 was...

"...being in the school production — gave him confidence."

And in relation to the 'hardest, or not so good, things' for Luke, she simply stated *"schoolwork"*.

She indicated too that while Luke mostly liked school and wanted to do well, he didn't always put in as much effort as he could, and that being sufficiently organised in terms of study, having necessary books and equipment to hand, and so on, was a constant challenge for him.

However, Luke's Year 10 form teacher considered that Luke was getting on 'very well/extremely well' at school so far that year:

"He shows quiet confidence, participates in extra-curricular activities, and is class rep on board of trustees."

All Students

Comparing Year 10 with Year 9

It is of interest to compare the data in this table with the comparisons students made in Phases 2 and 3 regarding their experiences of Years 8 and 9 (see 'All Students' section on p.218). For example, it can be observed from the present data that almost three-quarters (72%) of students totally agreed or agreed that they were having more fun at school in Year 10 compared to Year 9 (although it should be kept in mind here that students were answering in their first term in Year 10; on the basis of the pattern of students' responses in the latter part of Year 9, their answers may well have been different towards the end of Year 10). By comparison, less than two-thirds (60%) of the students had totally agreed/agreed in Phase 3 that they were currently having more fun at school than was the case the previous year.

There was a similar trend in responses for the statement 'The teachers are nicer/they look after me better, with 42 percent of students in Phase 4 totally agreeing/agreeing with this statement when comparing Year 10 with Year 9, but only just over a third agreeing or totally agreeing with this when comparing Year 9 with Year 8.

Aspect of Year 10 being compared with Year 9	Totally agree %	Agree %	Neither agree nor disagree %	Disagree %	Totally disagree %	Missing data %
The work this year is more demanding or challenging (harder)	12	46	36	5	1	–
I am repeating work I did before	4	24	42	27	2	–
The work is easier	–	12	51	30	4	2
The work is more interesting	14	50	30	3	1	1
I have more school responsibilities this year than I did last year	9	23	35	23	10	1
I am treated more like an adult than I was last year	11	40	43	4	1	–
I am now treated more as an individual	7	46	39	8	1	–
I have more fun at school this year	26	46	20	8	–	–
The teachers are nicer/they look after me better	16	26	47	10	1	–

All Students

The best and not so good things about Year 10

To the question 'Is there anything about being in Year 10 that you are finding not so good as Year 9?', two-thirds of students in Phase 4 answered 'no', most often adding either that this was because things were *"much the same because I'm used to secondary school now"* or that *"Year 10 is better"*.

Although the move to Year 10 represented a much less dramatic change for students than their transition from primary to secondary school, there were nevertheless concerns expressed by approximately a third of students once they were in Year 10. Most often, their concerns were that:

- the work was harder, more advanced;
 - *"The work's harder, more demanding. In Year 9 the work was easier."*
 - *"It's hard, difficult work and harder homework."*
 - *"The work's harder so it makes me feel lazy."*
- the workload was heavier;
 - *"Too much work, last year it was much less."*
 - *"The workload is bigger."*
- they were having to do exams;
 - *"Getting pretty scary, 'cause we are getting close to exams."*
 - *"Not looking forward to exams."*
- they were much closer to having to cope with NCEA;
 - *"Knowing that I have to do NCEA — a bit nervous."*
 - *"Closer to NCEA now."*
- teachers were stricter and more serious;
 - *"The seriousness of the teachers. The extra workload."*
 - *"Teachers being more strict."*
- expectations were higher; they were expected to be more responsible now that they were older; there was less fun;
 - *"They expect more of you now. Sometimes a bit more pressured."*
 - *"Expected to do more work — last year was more fun."*
 - *"You can't have all the fun we had in Year 9 'cause you're older. Have to sit down and study, more serious."*
 - *"I'd still like to be a Year 9. Everyone expects more of you in Year 10. It's hard to cope with."*
 - *"I'm growing up. I don't want to be a teenager."*
 - *"We have to bring more things. Teachers expect more from us."*
- it was difficult adjusting to new teachers, and/or disappointing not having some of their Year 9 teachers again;
- they were missing friends who had gone to other schools.
 - *"Some friends moved to another school at the end of Year 9. It's not so much fun in class this year as last year."*

But as was the case when they were in Year 9, most students reported a range of positive aspects of their Year 10 school experiences: friends, teachers, option subjects, learning new things, extra-curricular involvement.

For example, while a third of students answered 'no' when asked 'Is there anything about being in Year 10 that you are liking more or finding better than being in Year 9?', often because they considered things were much the same as they'd been (in the latter part) of the previous year, the remaining two-thirds of students answered 'yes' to this question.

continued...

All Students

The best and not so good things about Year 10 – continued

By far the most frequent response from those who answered ‘yes’ was that they were pleased, now that they were in Year 10, to no longer be the youngest students in the school, and were especially glad to no longer be called names because of their junior position:

- *“Not being the youngest anymore. More to do around the school when you’re older, because you’re more confident. More confident to do things — for example, acting in front of Year 9s.”*
- *“Don’t feel little now. We’re not the new-comers anymore.”*
- *“Don’t get called ‘turds’ anymore — used to get called that quite a bit last year. Not being the youngest.”*
- *“Knowing that I’m not in the youngest group of people anymore.”*
- *“Not being at the bottom of the food chain.”*
- *“I’m not the youngest in the school anymore. Just a nice feeling not to be the youngest (even though I didn’t really get called names last year).”*
- *“Not being the youngest, being more responsible, so younger kids will look up to me.”*
- *“The Year 9s look up to us. The Year 10s are like the seniors of the juniors.”*

A related response was that they enjoyed being treated ‘more like an adult’ as a second-year student:

- *“People respect you, teachers respect you as well, you are known — part of the school.”*
- *“We don’t get treated like we’re the bottom of the school — as if we’re babies.”*
- *“Just the fact that we’re treated more like adults. We’re given more responsibility and more freedom. The teachers can trust us to do stuff now, now that we know the procedures.”*
- *“In some ways you get a bit more ‘respect’. Kind of treated older than last year.”*
- *“Treated by teachers better — don’t get the ‘talks’ from them like we got last year.”*
- *“There is a bit more responsibility, and I guess your parents trust you a bit more, because last year you were less trustworthy and younger.”*

Other comments made in response to the question emphasised that students felt more relaxed at secondary school in their second year there, because they were in a now familiar environment and knew and were known by more people.

- *“I know more people now and I know the teachers better and so it makes the work easier. Easier to talk to them and ask questions. And I know my way round the school now.”*
- *“Our teachers are like friends, now that we know them better. Say ‘hi’ to them every day.”*
- *“It’s good to feel more relaxed about school.”*

Most of the remaining responses from students regarding aspects of Year 10 they liked better than Year 9 concerned their learning in class, particularly having more option subjects, being able to choose subjects that suited them best because of experience gained the previous year, and having more challenging or exciting work.

- *“The work is more challenging than Year 9 work.”*
- *“We’re starting to get [NCEA] credits now — to get ready for fifth form [Year 11]. We do more interesting things this year than we did in third form [Year 9]. We have more options, more fun things to do, like the posters we did in English, and science experiments. Also camp is coming up.”*
- *“Better subject choice, can do subjects this year that weren’t available last year.”*
- *“We get to do a lot more stuff in option classes and learn more things. And we get three options; last year we just had two.”*
- *“Better classes: instead of trying out all the different subjects like last year, you do your favourite ones [ie, options].”*

Summary Statements about Emily's Progression to Year 10

By the end of her first term in Year 10, on the whole, Emily was very comfortable about being a Year 10 student. As well as saying she was used to everything at school now — that is, the 'way things were done' — she was enjoying new challenges and responsibilities, and learning new things. She was

also pleased to no longer be one of the youngest in the school and commented that she enjoyed 'being older' generally. As well, Emily was expressing greater confidence about her abilities in her subjects, in her extra-curricular activities, and in her social interactions. She did not now refer to her world as being "*topsy-turvy*" as she had when talking about some of her experiences as she adjusted to her first year at secondary school.