

Chance of a lifetime

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When I was a little girl, I imagined the United Kingdom as some sort of a fairytale land. It was very far away, unreachable, and all I knew about it was that it was the homeland of true gentlemen, real ladies and glamorous social events. Of course, Jane Austen's novels were not the best tour guide for modern Britain, yet this picture fascinated me. By the age of 15 it became my dream to come to this country one day to visit and to learn about its history and culture. I had not expected that when I'd be 16 an opportunity would arise that would change my whole life.

As I was a very involved student, I liked to go to many events organized in my hometown and establish new liaisons between my school and the local community. This included the American Language Centre (ALC) where I would often go to Movie Nights and Book Clubs. One day, the manager of ALC told me that there was an opportunity to study in the UK as a scholar and that all I had to do was to fill in a form online as the first step of the application process. The organization was called HMC (the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference). It was hard to believe that it was so easy, but I was not going to miss such an opportunity just because I was afraid that it might not work out. My parents always taught me that if I did not try I would regret it because I would constantly ask myself "What if?" I applied on the same day so that I wouldn't have any second thoughts, and this is how my journey began.

The whole process of an HMC application takes many months. The first stage (registration) has to be done by October; the written exams are in November with interviews following them in Winter and results in the end of Spring. When I came to the written examination in November, I was shocked by the amount of people who showed up. Many of them came from different parts of the country just to participate. It was scary, but it also woke up the spirit of a competitor in me. I decided that I do not want to give up and my aim became to make it to the interviews and present myself in the best way possible. As I sat the exam I realized how complex the process of choosing the scholars is. HMC did not just want people able to speak in English, they wanted someone able to define "leadership" and be true leaders in their society. The interviews then were conducted by Mr. Tony Lawrence who set us challenging tasks. Since it was a group interview it was interesting to hear others' responses to the questions. It was a lot of fun to address scenarios like "If you would take this watch you would be able to know who your future husband will be. Will you take it?". Looking back at it now I understand that all tasks and questions had meaning to them as they were testing our adaptability and social skills. In the end, after I walked out of my interview I realized that no matter what happens or what the results would be it was worth taking part in. It gave me a possibility to test my language skills, to have a real interview and it was a big step for someone who was just 16 years old.

When I got the call from the HMC supervisor in my country I knew that my life would change forever. The words "congratulations, you have won a scholarship to the UK" promised new

experiences, that would help me grow and open many doors for me in the future. I was proud, honored, excited and a little scared, but I was ready to make the next step in life and be as ambitious about it as possible. I was willing to grasp every chance and opportunity I could and prove to be as helpful to my school as possible. At first, I did not know what school I was going to. It was a mystery because we had to wait until we were matched to a school in UK and I found out that I was going to Warminster closer to the end of May.

Warminster School proved to be an extremely welcoming and warm society. Everyone I have met here was ready to help and advise me. From the very start, my fear of being left out, of sitting alone at the table in the dining hall, of being unable to express my feelings or thoughts vanished as if they were never there. Throughout my International Baccalaureate Diploma course I learned how to go out of my comfort zone, how to speak up, how to take charge of the situation even if sometimes they might have been challenging. The possibilities were unlimited. In only two years I had the opportunity to participate in events like: World Book Day, open mornings, poetry and prose, become a member of Warminster International Community and take part in international festivals, dinners and quiz evenings, be a part of the Bold Voices conference, start learning how to horse-ride, run the cross-country, be a part of the Model United Nations club, the philosophy and debating club. I acquired experience in the field of service by helping at events like MENCAP mornings, fireworks festival, reading in church and giving a lecture about Moldova in front of the whole school, running my own book club for Year 7 to 9, being a part of the team who organized the Mental Health Awareness day, serving at Cabaret, Drama and Music awards and parents' Summer Ball as well as being a buddy to visiting French and Spanish students. There are no bounds to the possibilities that this school gives pupils. Being involved in so many events teaches how to become an independent young adult with a bright perspective.

Academic and co-curricular success are not the only things that Warminster School gave me. I found true lifetime friends here as well as people ready to support me no matter what. Our wonderful Head of Sixth Form Dr Horler-Underwood was always there for me and you wouldn't find a more caring, professional and kind person. The encouragement every student in this school gets from teachers is superb. The motto of this institution was established by the Headmaster as "Why not you?" meaning that there should be no boundaries put up by one's comfort zone. This perspective of looking at every situation taught me to always go an extra mile and never regret it. I love the spirit of Warminster School. It gives students the perfect environment to thrive, engage, contribute and evolve. Having spent here two years I can say for sure that my peers and teachers are motivating and inspiring me every day with the effort and love they put in teaching and studying.

As an HMC scholar in England, Warminster School opened so many doors for me. I finally understood what I am supposed to do and how should I set my foot on the right path towards a pharmacology university degree. I consider the IB Diploma a very suitable way to get specific and broad knowledge at the same time. Sciences and Mathematics were essential to fulfill my

dream of becoming a research scientist. History and English have taught me to critically assess information when Russian Self-Taught gave me an opportunity to study independently. Within my Diploma I had the opportunities to continue my observations of different angles of a healthy lifestyle by taking part in different sports like tennis, horse-riding and cross-country. I had the occasion to make new acquaintances with international students and support them in the period of adjustment to a new country by becoming a member of Warminster School International Community and by being a buddy to French and Spanish exchange students. Being a School Prefect and taking part in MUN taught me that any situation or conflict can be solved with patience and determination to mean well. Being a part of the charity council helped me understand that it is not necessarily the big things we can do or give to people that need help, but the small deeds united together. Thanks to the effort of my teachers, the support of my peers and the empowering atmosphere of Warminster School I am now more mature and determined.

When I am touring prospective students and their parents I always tell them to note the amazing facilities, the science labs, the buildings, but pay most attention to the teachers, staff and pupils in Warminster School. It is true that it is easy to impress with the wonderful amenities, yet what is more important is the satisfaction level of those studying and working in this environment. In two years I have never seen anyone being upset or unhappy with their education or the level of teaching at Warminster. Teachers are always cheery and ready to help. My wonderful tutor Dr. Hankey was there for me when I was going through the hardest times of my exams and university applications. If not for him and Dr Horler-Underwood I would not have handled drawbacks as well as I did. They taught me that even though it is good to always be strong, independent and able to solve my problems myself it is worth asking for help when I need it. I will never forget this important lesson. Albert Einstein was right when he said that "Education is what remains after one has forgotten what one has learned in school." I hope that I did not disappoint them but made them proud.

Warminster School taught me how to be myself and embrace every chance and every possibility that life gives me. I will be forever grateful to HMC and my parents for this amazing experience that changed my life and opened so many doors. Now that this part of my story has ended and leaving this place left me broken-hearted. I will never have enough words to describe all the bonds and friendships formed through these years in Warminster. Hardly anything could have made this precious time better.