

## End of Year Reflection 2022-2023

When I first started Cherry Tree, I was highly anxious and had not been able to go to school for years. My social anxiety had taken a toll on my mental health and I was in a really bad place. Although I was really depressed and pessimistic, I still had an inch of hope that coming to this school was really going to help me. At the beginning it was really tough for me to come into school everyday and I still kept the unhealthy coping mechanisms that I used for years like avoiding school and sleeping in bed all day. Back then I didn't know that this was a coping mechanism and I just thought there was something wrong with me that couldn't be fixed. Now, because of all the talks and sessions I've had with Soo & Emma, I know that that is all untrue and I've found better, healthier ways to cope with my anxiety without avoiding school. On the days where I found it hard to come into school and wanted to be left alone, the school still found ways to include me in every way like doing Skype calls and having someone walk down to my house to talk to me and see what was going on. Emma used to text me a motivational message in the morning and still does to this day which has always lifted my mood in the morning and made it easier for me to get out of bed.

Over the time being here, I've really learnt more about myself than I ever would've done anywhere else. After so many months of reassurance I now understand that overcoming my anxiety is a process, every small step that I'm taking is a step of progress and trying to jump from A to B will only make things worse for me. I used to feel so negative about not being able to speak and wished that my anxiety could just disappear and I could go back to the confident person I used to be. I now know that being stuck on my past self is never beneficial and only leads to taking steps backwards. Although I still struggle with anxiety I've become more positive about my achievements and learnt to celebrate them instead of thinking about the things I haven't done or the things I could've done differently. I've achieved things like doing job interviews, college interviews and communicating with other people in and out of school even if it was just briefly. Without the people here at school congratulating me and really praising my achievements, I don't think I would be positive about them and would still be stuck in that negative thought pattern.

I am really going to miss coming to school here and having the support but I'm also not too anxious about leaving anymore as Soo & Emma have reminded me that they're always a call away and even though I'm going off to college, they're never going to forget about me and I can contact them any time I'm struggling. I really appreciate all the support I've received from everyone and I'm never going to forget the memories I've made here. I remember the first time everyone sang happy birthday to me and it made me quite emotional because I hadn't celebrated my birthday with anyone in such a long time. It makes me happy that I got to share such moments with people who care about and understand me. This is definitely the best school I've ever been to and although it's going to be hard to leave, I know now that I'm ready to move on and start a new journey into college.