**First day at my new school/ Always Be prepared**

I nervously open a huge door above which there is a big sign "GYMNÁZIUM". I immediately find myself in a hallway full of teenagers trying to find a locker room. After I change into my slippers, I head up the spiral staircase to find my classroom, or as the Czechs say, my "třída".

Today is my first day at a Czech grammar school and if you're interested, I would like to share with you my experience. Our family recently moved from Great Britain to the Czech Republic. I can speak Czech quite well because my dad is Czech, but yesterday I went over some basic school-related vocabulary, just to be on the safe side. However, everything turned out very differently from what I have expected, as you'll now hear.

Finally, I found my classroom. I sat down next to a boy named Jan, but he introduced himself as Honza. I immediately started talking to him. It turned out that even though my language level is quite good, I didn't understand many words that he was saying. For example, Honza told me, that the first lesson was "příroďák", which confused me a bit, but then he explained that it means natural history. I've only learned the words "přírodověda" and "biologie" from my dictionary! It turns out that the other subjects are shortened similarly: "matematika" (mathematics) is changed to "matika", "angličtina" (English) becomes "ájina" and zeměpis (geography) is "zemák ". During "čeština" (meaning Czech), the teacher announced that we will be writing a test the next week. That was when I discovered that there are many different Czech expressions for a test, like "prověrka" and "písemka". Honza told me, that teachers sometimes say "testík" or even "testíček", which means "a very little test" and it's mostly used ironically. As I found out, the grading system is different from what I was used to. The students receive numerical grades, 1 being the best grade and 5 being the worst. High schoolers sometimes call grade 4 a "čtverec" (a square) and grade 5 a "koule" (a sphere). I still have no idea, what these numbers have to do with geometry, but I didn't want to be nit-picky. I could be labeled a "šprt", which means a nerd in Czech.

I noticed that the teachers speak quite differently from all the students, who use slang that consists mostly of abbreviations. I also noticed that Honza called the teacher "úča", not "učitelka", but only among friends. Some girl asked me if I had "omluvňák " yet, which stands for "omluvný list" or the attendance sheet. I was quite pleased with how many English words my classmates use. They say words like cool, nice, or fail, probably because they all like to watch English-speaking YouTubers and other content creators.

After school, we went to "jídelna" (which is the canteen) to get lunch. My classmates said we will be having UHO for lunch, which is an acronym for "univerzální hnědá omáčka". That means something like all-purpose brown sauce and it's a constant of school canteens all over the Czech Republic. Overall, my first day at the new school was very enjoyable and rewarding except for UHO. You truly can't be prepared for everything.