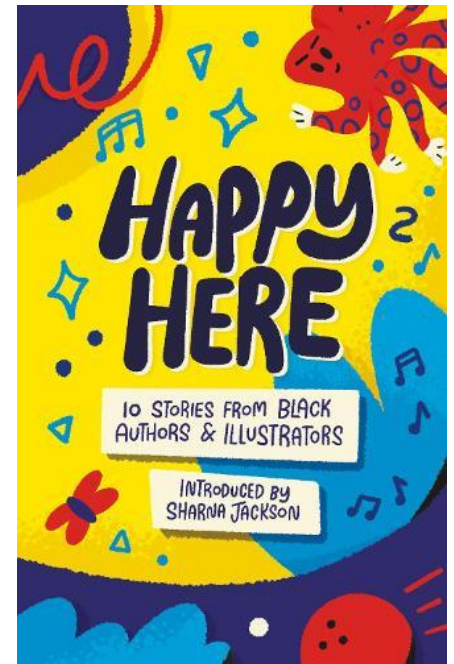


You're the boss by E.L. Norry

Autumn term and the first day at your new school. You've just gotten over a bad virus, so you missed a few days, but hopefully that won't be a problem. This week is induction for the whole of Year Seven. Just Year Seven. The older pupils don't start until next week, which is a relief.

Walking through the tall **imposing** school gates, you're self-conscious. You **squirm** – this uniform is so stiff! You didn't have a jacket in your old school. A blazer. You feel weird, like you stand out. You liked being the oldest at your primary school but now it feels like you're starting all over again. There are butterflies in your stomach.



You didn't even want to move to this time town. It's so different! The school classes only have fifteen children each. You'll get more 'attention', but you don't want more attention. You like blending into the background, thanks very much. You miss the noise of the big city, and your mates too. You really miss your mates.

Across the playground, boys and girls line up. All you can see is a sea of black and navy. No bright colours anywhere. That's because your school bag has to be black or navy, and so does your coat. Your pencil case has to be clear plastic and exactly 20cm. This place doesn't seem keen on **individuality** or trust, from what you can tell so far.

A teacher, dressed all in black, stands at the front of a line. She's holding up a sign that says CLASS X. You check the slip of paper with your registration details on that you're clutching – X. You join the queue.

"Class X," the teacher says, "follow me. You know the drill by now: leave your phones and devices in the reception tray. You may collect at the end of the day. Thank you."

Students file through the double doors in school. Each of them drops their mobile phone into a large plastic tray on the reception desk as they pass.

What? No phones?

Leaning forward, you whisper to the boy in front of you.

"What's with the phone thing?"

He turns his head to start at you. "Hi. Oh, you're new," he says, **tilting** his head to one side.

"You hand over your phone – anything electronic – when you step through the doors," he says, smiling.

"And if I don't?" you joke.

A frown appears. "You must," he replies. "You have to follow the rules."

"Seems a bit strict?"

He blinks **rapidly**. "It's great here. It's out gaming session this morning."

"Computer Studies?"

He grins. "No. Just wait 'til we get to class. You'll see."