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## A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

**Zoe Ramshaw**

"If April showers  
should come your  
way, they bring the  
flowers that bloom in  
May."

-Buddy De Silva

Dear Parents, Carers, and School Community,

As we move through the spring term, it has been wonderful to see our students continuing to grow in confidence, independence, and resilience. There is a real sense of energy across the school, with pupils embracing new experiences, the new outdoor space and taking pride in their achievements. This month has been filled with opportunities for students to challenge themselves, from the Duke of Edinburgh expedition to a range of enrichment activities. It has been fantastic to see learners stepping outside of their comfort zones and thriving.

We are also pleased to share a positive development in the ongoing journey of the school. Orange Tree School is now inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). This framework is particularly well suited to specialist settings, as it recognises individual progress and places strong emphasis on personal development and wellbeing. We feel this better reflects the achievements of our students and the work we do every day. Importantly, this change will not affect the day-to-day experience for pupils.

As we reach this point in the year, we would also like to wish our wonderful Year 11 students the very best as they begin their study leave in preparation for their GCSE examinations. We are incredibly proud of their hard work and wish them every success in the weeks ahead.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support. We are incredibly proud of our students and look forward to sharing more of their successes with you.

# DUKE OF EDINBURGH SILVER AWARD

From 15th–17th April, our Year 10 group successfully completed their Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award practice expedition. This three-day, two-night experience took place in the Epping Forest area, with students camping at Gilwell Park Activity Centre.

On Wednesday morning, students travelled by our brand-new school bus to the starting point of their journey. From there, the group of ten campers set off on an impressive 7-mile walk to their first campsite. The route was completed in approximately five hours, demonstrating great determination and resilience. Over the following days, distances were slightly shorter, allowing students to build confidence and develop a steady pace.

This was an adapted expedition designed to meet the needs of all participants, ensuring every student could fully engage with the experience. For some, it was their first time staying away from home, making the achievement even more significant.



Throughout the expedition, students took turns leading their groups using maps and compasses to navigate through Epping Forest. They followed planned routes, located checkpoints, and worked collaboratively to make adjustments when needed. Along the way, they identified a range of native plant species and spotted local wildlife, enriching their understanding of the natural environment.



Camp life provided valuable opportunities to develop practical outdoor skills. Students independently assembled their equipment and cooked meals using portable gas stoves, with pasta proving a popular choice. Working in pairs, they pitched their tents efficiently, demonstrating excellent teamwork and problem-solving skills.

Each evening, the group gathered around the campfire to enjoy s'mores and hot chocolate before settling in for the night. The expedition was a rewarding and memorable experience, fostering independence, resilience, teamwork, and a spirit of adventure. Students are now looking ahead to their qualifying expedition in July.

# CYBER CHOICES WORKSHOP



We were pleased to welcome Lisa from the Metropolitan Police Service to school for an informative and engaging workshop on how to stay safe online. Lisa delivered two half an hour sessions to all year groups, with Years 7-9 attending from 11:15-11:45am and Years 10-12 taking part from 12:00-12:30pm.

In each session students watched an eye-opening video showing how easily personal information can be accessed when privacy settings on social media are not used effectively. This highlighted the importance of staying safe online and thinking carefully about the information shared across digital platforms.

She also spoke about how we should use three random words to create individual passwords for each different account we own and how these could further be strengthened by adding a character and/or numbers. As cyber crime becomes more sophisticated criminals use passwords to collect personal data which can then be sold on or used in identity theft.

Lisa also spoke to students about making positive and responsible cyber choices, helping them to understand the impact of their online behaviour and the importance of protecting themselves in an increasingly digital world. The sessions encouraged thoughtful discussion and provided students with practical advice for staying safe online.

Additionally, Lisa spoke about jobs in the industry with Years 10-12, sharing with them the salaries they could earn helping to protect online data for companies (mouth-watering!) and explained that as we become more and more digital these jobs will never not be needed, even with AI (an excellent question from a Year 11 learner).

To further support our students, a range of helpful resources were shared, including short educational videos and guidance on preventing fraud and cyber crime.

These resources can be accessed through the Metropolitan Police Service Cyber Choices webpages and the national cyber awareness website.



# SOCIAL LEARNING PARK TRIP



Over two weeks of planning, Social learning students have come together to organise a trip to our local park- Dollis Valley Greenwalk.

During the planning process, students worked collaboratively to create a map of the route, calculate timings for the journey, and decide what equipment and items would be needed for the visit. This provided a valuable opportunity to develop organisational skills, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Both trips took place during the second week, with Years 8 and 9 visiting the park on Friday 24th April, and by Year 7 on the following Monday.



Students successfully adhered to the timings they set out, including factoring in the wait at the traffic lights to cross the main road, and made it back to school on time.



The year groups enjoyed their time outdoors together while continuing to build their planning skills in a real-life setting.

## SUPPORTING PROSPECTIVE OTS STUDENTS

We are aware that many families exploring a place at Orange Tree School are navigating the EHCP process, transitions, and, in some cases, tribunals. This can often feel complex and overwhelming. We know that our current parents and carers hold a wealth of valuable experience, and we are exploring whether any members of our community might be willing to offer informal support to prospective families. This could be as simple as sharing experiences or offering reassurance to those at an earlier stage in their journey.

There is absolutely no expectation, and any involvement would be entirely voluntary and arranged in a way that feels comfortable for you. If this is something you may be interested in, please let us know by contacting [reception@orangetreeschool.org](mailto:reception@orangetreeschool.org). We will then be in touch with further information.

Thank you, as always, for your continued support.

# ORANGE TREE SCHOOL BUS



On 27th March, we were delighted to receive our brand-new minibus, generously part-funded by the Variety charity. This is a truly exciting addition to our school, and we are incredibly grateful for the support that has made this possible.

The minibus will open up many new opportunities for our pupils, particularly for those who may find travelling more challenging. Having access to our own larger transport will enable us to plan more trips, enrich learning experiences beyond the classroom, and ensure that all students can participate more comfortably and confidently.

We are especially proud that the bus features our school name on the side, giving a real sense of identity and belonging wherever we go.



A huge thank you to Variety and all involved in making this happen, we look forward to many memorable journeys ahead!

## TUTOR GROUP COMPETITION



Over the month of April, year 11B reached the top of the leaderboard in week 1 with 18 points on average and year 12 with 62 positive points! Both form groups have taken turns spending the week with our school mascot, Sir Peelington as a reward

A big well done to both tutor groups!

# AQUARIUM REWARD TRIP

As winners of the Spring term positive point competition, the 8B form group have chosen Sea Life London as their reward trip!

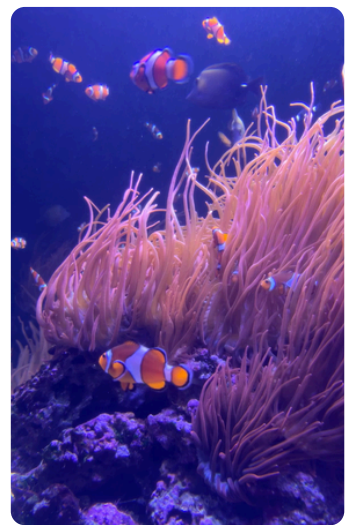


On 28th April, students set off for an exciting day exploring one of London's most popular attractions.

The day began with a short briefing and social story in the 8B form classroom to prepare everyone for the trip ahead. Once informed about the day's plans, the group made their way to Totteridge and Whetstone station, boarded the Northern Line, and travelled to Westminster station before walking to the aquarium.

Inside the aquarium, students followed the one-way route through the exhibits, taking their time to explore and enjoy the fascinating underwater worlds. Over the course of around 1 and a half hours, they encountered a wide variety of marine species, leaf cutter ants, penguins and crocodiles.

At 12:30pm, the group enjoyed lunch in Jubilee Gardens near the iconic London Eye, before continuing their journey across London Bridge and travelling back to school. The students arrived back at around 2:30pm, where they had time to rest after the journey and enjoy some free time before home time.



The trip was a fantastic reward for the students' positive efforts throughout the Spring Term and provided a memorable day of learning, exploration, and fun.

# IMPORTANT DATES

## Orange Tree School Safeguarding Team

If you have any concerns about a child or want to talk to a designated or deputy safeguarding lead, please speak to one of the following:

**DSL:** Hayley Hunter  
**DDSL:** Lucy Price  
**DDSL:** Jake Beeson  
**DDSL:** Evie Waldren

**Friday 24th April-**  
Year 7 skiing lessons begin

**Wednesday 29th April-**  
Final Parent Forum

**Friday 1st May-**  
Year 11 Leavers' Assembly

**Monday 4th May-**  
Bank Holiday (school closed)

**Tuesday 5th May-** Chicken eggs arriving

**Wednesday 6th May-** Online IEP meetings (12:30pm finish for students)

**18th May -** Mock Exam skills and revision week for Year 10



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## ORANGE TREE VALUES

**O**ptimistic  
**R**eady to Learn  
**A**chievement  
**N**ice and kind  
**G**ood listening  
**E**ffort

**T**eam work  
**R**espectful  
**E**ngagement  
**E**mpathy and Acceptance



## APPRECIATION TREE LEAF WINNER

The appreciation tree leaf winner this month is Kaitlyn!

Kaitlyn's leaf said: "Wonderful creative writing and conscientious attitude towards lessons, especially English! Keep it up"

Thank you and we hope you enjoy your prize!

## Food Tech highlights

This month in Food Tech, all years made Keema samosas and Jerk potato with bean curry! Our Year 10 students also prepared exam recipes of their choice like poke bowl and rainbow cake this month!

A big well done to all the year 10s for stepping out of their comfort zone and getting creative with new recipes this month!



# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about ENERGY DRINKS

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Energy drinks are highly caffeinated beverages often consumed for a quick energy boost. However, excessive intake can lead to health risks like increased heart rate and sleep disturbances. Statistics underline these products' popularity among young people – many of whom consume them regularly. Here's our expert's advice on addressing the concerns surrounding energy drink consumption in adolescents.

### HIGH CAFFEINE CONTENT

Most energy drinks contain high levels of caffeine: often much more than a typical cup of coffee or fizzy drink. Excessive caffeine consumption can lead to increased heart rate, high blood pressure, anxiety, insomnia, digestive issues and – in extreme cases – even more severe conditions. For children and adolescents, whose bodies are still developing, excessive caffeine intake can be particularly harmful.

### INCREASED RISK OF HEART PROBLEMS

The combination of high caffeine levels and the other stimulants found in energy drinks can put extra strain on the cardiovascular system. Potentially, this could lead to irregular heart rhythms, palpitations and increased future risk of heart attack – especially in individuals who have an underlying heart condition.

### IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

The significant levels of caffeine and sugar in energy drinks can exacerbate anxiety, nervousness and even – in susceptible individuals – contribute to panic attacks. Additionally, the crash that often follows the initial energy boost can actually make mood swings worse and possibly lead to feelings of depression and irritability.

### DISRUPTED SLEEP PATTERNS

Consuming energy drinks, especially during the afternoon or evening, can disrupt normal sleep patterns. The stimulating effects of caffeine can make it difficult for children and young adults to fall asleep – leading to insufficient rest and its associated health risks, including impaired cognitive function, mood disturbances and decreased academic performance.

### LINKS TO SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Some research has suggested a correlation between energy drink consumption and higher rates of alcohol and drug use among young adults. Young people may mix energy drinks with alcohol, mistakenly believing that the energy drinks' stimulant effects will counteract the sedative nature of alcohol. This combination, however, can be dangerous and increase the risk of accidents, injuries and alcohol poisoning.

### POTENTIAL FOR DEPENDENCY

Frequent consumption of energy drinks can lead to tolerance – meaning that individuals may need to consume increasing amounts to continue achieving the desired effects. This can potentially lead to dependency and addiction, especially in younger individuals who may be more vulnerable to addictive behaviours.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### LIMIT CONSUMPTION

It's wise to educate young people about the potential risks related to energy drinks, emphasising the consequences of excessive caffeine consumption. Encourage healthier alternatives like water, herbal teas or natural fruit juices. You can model healthy behaviours by restricting your own consumption of energy drinks and creating a supportive environment for informed choices.

### PROMOTE HEALTHIER HABITS

Schools can help with this issue by including discussions about the possible dangers of energy drink consumption into their health education curriculum. Encourage children and young adults to critically evaluate the marketing messages they see and make informed choices about their health. Teachers could also provide resources and support for children to identify healthier alternatives.

### ADVOCATE FOR REGULATION

If this is something you're particularly passionate about, you could work with local health organisations and policymakers to advocate for regulations on energy drink sales to children and young people. Raise awareness among parents, educators and community members about the potential health risks associated with energy drinks and support initiatives promoting healthier options in schools and communities.

### SET A POSITIVE EXAMPLE

Adults can model healthy behaviours by visibly choosing alternative beverages instead of energy drinks. Maintain open communication with children and young adults about the reasons for limiting energy drink consumption – underlining the importance of balanced nutrition, adequate hydration and sufficient sleep for overall wellbeing and academic success.

### Meet Our Expert

Dr Jason O'Rourke, Headteacher of Washingborough Academy, champions food education and sustainability – and his school holds the Soil Association's prestigious Gold Catering Mark. Jason has spoken about food education at Westminster briefings and overseas. A member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on School Food, he co-founded TastEd, a sensory food education charity.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: [nationalcollege.com/guides/energy-drinks](https://nationalcollege.com/guides/energy-drinks)