



FEBRUARY 2026 | ISSUE 26



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Subject Spotlight

Orange Tree School
Mascot

Pick up and Collection
Times

School Site Updates

Study Skills Workshop

Online Safety

Important Dates

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Zoe Ramshaw

Dear Parents, Carers, and School Community,

As we move through February, I have been incredibly proud of the continued progress and positivity shown across our school community. This half term has been full of exciting developments, student achievements, and opportunities for our young people to grow both academically and personally. Our students have been working hard in their subjects, and it has been fantastic to see the confidence and independence developing in areas such as Food Technology, where students have recently completed their BTEC practical assessments. Their resilience, creativity and commitment to their learning continue to impress us.

We have also introduced a new and very special member of the Orange Tree community; our school mascot, Sir Peelington! Students played a key role in choosing the name, and it has been wonderful to see the enthusiasm and school spirit surrounding this initiative. This month has also brought some exciting and much needed developments to our school environment. Our new outdoor astroturf area is now complete, providing students with a lovely, welcoming space to enjoy movement breaks, lunch and outdoor activities. It has been a pleasure to watch the students running, rolling and playing outside. Looking ahead, we are also excited to welcome our very own school minibus next month, which will open up even more opportunities for trips, experiences and learning beyond the classroom.

Finally, I would like to thank our families for their continued support. Working in partnership with parents and carers is essential in helping our students feel safe, confident and ready to learn each day. Together, we can continue to build a positive and supportive community where every child is able to thrive. Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter and celebrate the many successes across our school.

"In February, nature reminds us that even in the coldest moments, beauty can flourish."

-Gabriela Aleman

FOOD TECH

This month in Food Tech, Our BTEC Level 2 students have completed a series of practical assessments, and we are delighted to celebrate their success.



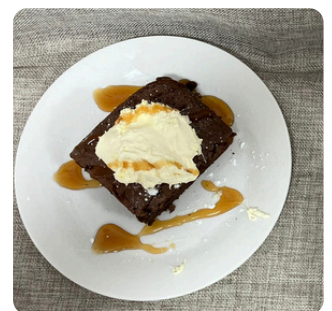
These assessments provided students with the opportunity to apply their learning in realistic, hands-on scenarios, demonstrating not only their knowledge but also their growing confidence and independence in the kitchen.

Throughout the term, students have been developing a range of important vocational skills, including timekeeping, multitasking, food presentation, hygiene and safety, as well as problem-solving, organisation, and effective communication. The practical nature of the course allows them to engage actively with their work while building skills that are valuable for future study and employment in the hospitality and catering industry.

It has been fantastic to see the effort, commitment and progress shown by the group. Many students rose to the challenge of the assessments, showing resilience and creativity while producing dishes they can be proud of.



We look forward to continuing to support them as they build on these achievements and further develop their practical and professional skills.



ORANGE TREE SCHOOL MASCOT

Welcome Sir Peelington, our newest (and fluffiest!) member of the Orange Tree community!

Our students have been taking part in the exciting process of choosing the perfect name for our Orange Tree School Mascot. Each form group has voted for their preferred option, and the final name was decided through a whole-school poll during assembly.

Our new mascot has joined the school in the first week back after the half-term break, and going forward will play a special role in celebrating our school community.

As part of this initiative, the form class that wins our Tutor Competition will have the opportunity to look after the mascot for the week. During this time, we will be encouraging students to include the mascot in their form activities and daily school life.

Each week, we will be inviting form groups to share photos of the mascot and the activities it takes part in.



TUTOR GROUP COMPETITION

A big congratulations to 8B, who won this terms Tutor Group competition after earning the most positive points for four out of six weeks in a row! 7A came in second place with two weekly wins.

As a reward for their success, 8B have begun planning their reward trip to Sea Life Centre in London. The class is now working together to plan the details of their visit. Well done to both tutor groups this month!

PICK UP AND COLLECTION TIMES

A Friendly Reminder About Drop-Off, Registration and Collection Times

The school opens at 8:50am, so we kindly ask that children do not arrive earlier than this, as staff are not available to supervise students before the school opens. Recently, some children have been arriving quite early and have had to wait outside until we are able to let them in.

Registration begins at 9:05am and lasts for 10 minutes. After this time, children will be marked as late unless we have been made aware children are on their way with a valid reason. This provides a grace period at the start of the day from 8.50am to 9.10am to support a calm transition into school, and we would really appreciate your support in helping children arrive on time as regularly as possible.

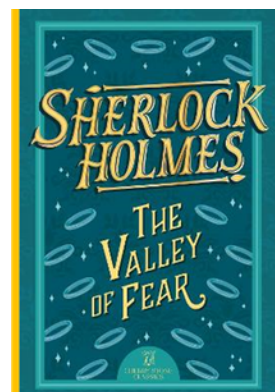
We understand that there may occasionally be transport issues, or that some students may be developing independent travel skills, which can sometimes lead to lateness. If this is the case, please keep the school informed and we will do our best to support you and update our registers to reflect this. We recognise how important it is for some students to build independence in travelling to school which we want to encourage and celebrate and do not want them to feel unnecessary anxiety about being late. Please note that attendance and punctuality data is regularly requested by placing local authorities, so encouraging good attendance and punctuality is important.

School finishes at 3:00pm, and we kindly ask that children are collected as promptly as possible. Occasionally students are collected later than this time, and staff are not always available to supervise as they may have other responsibilities at the end of the day. If you know you will be late, please contact the school so we can make arrangements. We would also kindly ask parents and carers to park considerately when dropping off and collecting children. Please avoid blocking the school gates, the car park entrance, or the driveways of our neighbours.

Thank you for your support in helping the start and end of the school day run smoothly.

BOOK OF THE MONTH

This February, the book of the month chosen by our English department is 'Sherlock Holmes - The Valley of Fear' by Arthur Conan Doyle. The novel explores themes of vengeance and terror, connecting the organized crime in the American frontier to the machinations of Moriarty in London.



SCHOOL SITE UPDATES



Our school Astroturf is finally ready for use!

Works on the outdoor space since the beginning of this month are complete, meaning students have a clean, soft and mud-free space to spend movement breaks, lunch and break times. The new area has already proved to have enhanced students' outdoor experience support their wellbeing and opportunities for active play.



COMING SOON

This March, we will be welcoming our very own school bus!

Having our own bus means greater flexibility and more opportunities for enriching experiences beyond the classroom. The bus seats up to 17 students and will be used for school trips, local outings, events, and other educational activities throughout the year!



ONLINE SAFETY

Online Safety, Cyberbullying and Working Together

I would like to take this opportunity to remind families of the vital role we all play in keeping children safe online.

While school teaches online safety, digital citizenship and respectful conduct through our PSHE curriculum and our Orange Tree Values, the majority of children's online activity takes place outside of school hours and off-site. This means that supervision, monitoring and guidance around devices, apps and social media platforms rests primarily with families.

Cyberbullying, online shaming, exclusion from group chats, sharing images, or posting harmful comments can have a profound impact on a child's emotional wellbeing. What may appear to be "banter" or a moment of poor judgement can quickly escalate and cause significant distress to the child it is directed at. We ask families to speak regularly with their children about how their online behaviour affects others and to reinforce that liking, sharing or encouraging harmful content is also a form of participation.

When deciding whether a platform is appropriate, we encourage parents and carers not to rely solely on national age restrictions, but to consider their own child's maturity, emotional resilience and ability to manage online conflict safely. Regular checks of devices and group chats are an important part of safeguarding. If concerns arise, please report them to the school promptly. We will always take concerns seriously and respond in line with our behaviour and safeguarding policies. Depending on the nature and severity of the incident, this may include contacting parents, implementing restorative processes, recording the matter as a safeguarding concern, and in serious cases, involving external agencies, including the Police.

Our expectation is clear: students must treat one another with respect and kindness at all times, both in school and online. By working together, we can create a consistent message and ensure that all children feel safe, supported and protected in both their digital and school environments. If you feel you need any support, please do reach out to the school team. Please see our February Safeguarding pages for more information.



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

Monday 2nd March

Careers week

Wednesday 11th March

Parent Forum (9:30am)

Friday 13th March

Reports emailed home

Tuesday 17th March

Duke of Edinburgh Training Day

Wednesday 18th March

*Students' progress day
(School closed to students)*

Friday 27th March

Last day of term (1pm finish)

ORANGE TREE VALUES

Optimistic
Ready to Learn
Achievement
Nice and kind
Good listening
Effort

Team work
Respectful
Engagement
Empathy and Acceptance



FOLLOW US!

[@orangetreeschool](https://www.instagram.com/orangetreeschool)



[OTS - Orange Tree School](https://www.facebook.com/OTS-Orange-Tree-School)



APPRECIATION TREE LEAF WINNER

The appreciation tree leaf winner this month is Niayme!

Niayme's leaf said: "Lovely reading in English lessons this week!"

Thank you and we hope you enjoy your prize!



Food Tech highlights

This month in Food Tech, year 7 made marble cupcakes, year 8 practised making lemon chicken risotto and year 9 baked cinnamon swirls. Our year 10s have been practising exam recipes, whilst year 11 created dipping sauces like Salsa, Hummus, Cheese & Chive!

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about HOW TO COMBAT ONLINE BULLYING



Defined as "ongoing hurtful behaviour towards someone online", cyber-bullying makes its victims feel upset, uncomfortable and unsafe. In the digital world, it has numerous forms – such as hurtful comments on a person's posts or profile; deliberately leaving them out of group chats; sharing embarrassing images or videos of someone; or spreading gossip about them. Cyber-bullying can severely impact a young person's mental health ... so, in support of Anti-Bullying Week, we've provided a list of tips to help trusted adults know what to look for and how to respond to it.



1. GET CONNECTED

Playing online games together with your child or connecting with them on social media (providing they're old enough) is not only fun but also an excellent way of establishing some common ground to discuss things you've both seen or done online – as well as keeping an eye on who your child is communicating with in the digital world.

2. KEEP TALKING

Regular chats with young people about their online lives are good practice in general, but they can also be an excellent refresher to help prevent cyber-bullying situations. Topics you might want to revisit include why it's important to only connect online with people we know and trust, and why passwords should always remain secret (even from our best friends).

3. STAY VIGILANT

Observe your child while they're using technology and just after they've used it. Are they acting normally, or out of character? Possible signs of a problem may include seeming quiet or withdrawn, jumpy or anxious, angry or repeatedly checking their phone. When you feel it's the right time, you may want to check in with them to see if everything is OK.

4. MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE

If an online bullying incident does occur, it may take a while before your child is ready to open up about what happened. Just gently remind them that they can always come to you with any problems – and that they won't be in trouble. You might also suggest a trusted family member they could turn to, in case they feel too embarrassed to tell you directly.

5. BE PREPARED TO LISTEN

When conversations about online bullying do take place, they're likely to be difficult, emotional and upsetting for both you and your child. Actively listen to your child while they're bringing you up to speed, and try not to show any judgement or criticism – even if they haven't dealt with the situation in exactly the way you would have hoped.

FURTHER SUPPORT AND ADVICE

If you or your child need additional help with an online bullying issue, here are some specialist organisations that you could reach out to.

Childline: talk to a trained counsellor on 0800 1111 or online at www.childline.org.uk/get-support/

National Bullying Helpline: counsellors are available on 0845 225 5787 or by visiting www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html

The NSPCC: the children's charity has a guide to the signs of bullying at www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying/ and can be reached on 0808 800 5000

6. EMPOWER YOUR CHILD

Depending on their age, your child might not want a parent 'fighting their battles for them'. In that case, talk through their options with them (blocking the perpetrator, deleting the app and so on). By allowing your child to choose the path they take, you're putting them in control but are also demonstrating that you're there to support them along the way.

7. REPORT BULLIES ONLINE

Cyber-bullying often takes place through a particular app, social media platform or online game. If this is happening to your child, encourage them to report the offender to the app or game in question – ideally with screenshots to support their complaint. Most games and apps have reporting tools specifically to stamp out abusive behaviour and protect users.

8. ENCOURAGE EMPATHY

Protecting themselves online is the priority, of course, but young people should also feel empowered to help if they witness other people falling victim to cyberbullying. Even if they don't feel confident enough to call someone out on their abusive behaviour online, they can still confidentially report that person to the app or game where the bullying occurred.

9. SEEK EXPERT ADVICE

Victims of online bullying frequently experience feelings of isolation and anxiety, a loss of self-esteem and potentially even thoughts of self-harm or suicide. If you think that an incident of cyber-bullying has affected your child's mental wellbeing, then seek psychological support for them. There are some useful contact details in the central panel below.

10. INVOLVE THE AUTHORITIES

If the nature of any online bullying makes you suspect that your child is genuinely in imminent physical danger – or if there are any signs whatsoever of explicit images being shared as part of the bullying – then you should gather any relevant screenshots as evidence and report the incidents to your local police force.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



National
Online
Safety®

#WakeUpWednesday