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A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Zoe Ramshaw

"What the new year
brings to you will
depend a great deal
on what you bring to
the new year."

-Vern Mclellan

Dear Parents, Carers, and School Community,

Welcome back and happy new year. I hope you all had a restful and enjoyable break and that 2026 has started positively for you and your families.

The new term has begun with a real sense of energy and purpose across the school. It has been wonderful to see students returning ready to learn, reconnecting with their peers, and engaging so enthusiastically in lessons. From exciting practical work in Science to the creativity on display in our lunchtime clubs, there is already so much to celebrate this month.

I would also like to thank all the families who attended our recent Behaviour Policy meeting. Your time, engagement, and valuable feedback are greatly appreciated. Hayley is currently working through all of the feedback shared and is busy incorporating this into the development of our new Behaviour Policy.

We are also delighted to share updates to our school environment. Over the holidays, improvements to our outdoor spaces were started, creating welcoming areas for students to relax, socialise, and regulate. These developments reflect our ongoing commitment to supporting students' wellbeing alongside their learning, and we are pleased to be adding astroturf to our outdoor area later this month.

This newsletter highlights just some of the fantastic opportunities and achievements taking place at Orange Tree School, including rewards for positive behaviour, the work of our ELSA team, and important dates for the term ahead. I would like to thank our dedicated staff for their continued hard work and our families for your ongoing support — together, we make a real difference to our students' success.

As we move forward into the new year, we remain focused on helping every student feel safe, valued, and confident to achieve their best. Thank you, as always, for being such an important part of our school community.

Warm regards,
Zoe Ramshaw
Headteacher

SCIENCE



It has been an exciting start to the year in Science, with pupils across the school already getting hands-on experience in the science lab. Practical work is a key focus this term, helping pupils develop confidence, curiosity, and essential scientific skills.

Year 9 students have begun their GCSE Combined Science course. They have been creating cell models using a range of everyday materials including plastic bags, jelly, raisins, popcorn, and buttons. These creative models have helped students understand cell structure while becoming familiar with working scientifically in a laboratory environment.



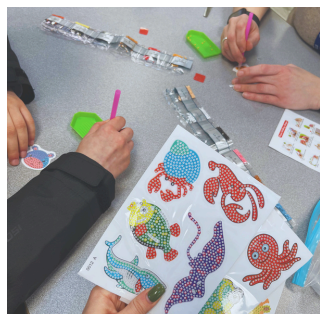
Year 11s have been completing a required practical on electrolysis, giving them valuable experience of carrying out experiments they will be assessed on. They have shown great focus and enthusiasm while conducting the investigation in the lab.

Looking ahead, all year groups will have regular access to the science labs and opportunities to take part in practical experiments each week. Year 8 will be using the lab to construct and test electrical circuits, while Year 7 will soon have the opportunity to observe a heart dissection, allowing them to explore anatomy in a real-life scientific context.



NEW LUNCH TIME CLUBS

Introducing our new lunchtime clubs running from 13:25pm in the hall extension. Alongside the daily activities, students can also attend Nintendo Switch Club - a relaxed space to socialise and enjoy supervised gaming in rooms 205 and 212.



Monday – Gem Art

A calm, creative club where students create sparkling gem art designs, developing focus and fine motor skills.

Nail Painting



Outside



Tuesday – Cross Stitch

Pupils learn and practise cross-stitch techniques, encouraging patience, creativity, and concentration.

Boxing



Outside



Wednesday - Building Club

Students enjoy hands-on building activities as they construct 3D animals and themed models from thick card.

Drumming



Room 214



Thursday – Paint by Numbers

Students paint pre-outlined pictures using numbered sections that match specific colours, encouraging mindfulness and fine motor skills.



Friday – Bag Designer

Students design and personalise tote bags using fabric markers and decorative stickers, developing creativity and imagination.

Boxing



Outside

SCHOOL SITE UPDATES



Over the Christmas holidays, the school site has undergone several improvements to enhance students' outdoor experience and wellbeing. Our outside space now includes two outdoor swings, along with a wooden gazebo providing seating for over 20 staff and students.

These additions offer students welcoming spaces to relax, socialise, and enjoy time outdoors during breaks, lunchtimes and regulation rests.



COMING SOON

From 19th of January, works on the front outdoor area of the school have begun. We are upgrading our grass to new astroturf. New and improved conditions for outdoor play and ball games will be ready for use from the beginning of February!



THE PEARLY QUEEN OF BARNET



Our very own Pastoral Lead, Evie, also holds the prestigious title of Pearly Queen of the London Borough of Barnet. Evie plays an important role in preserving a cherished London tradition that has been alive for over 150 years.

Recently, Evie was invited to address Barnet Council, where she shared the rich history of the Pearly Kings and Queens and how they support their community by raising money for charity. She is proud to pass this tradition on to the next generation through her niece, the Pearly Princess.



Following Evie's recent appearance at Barnet Council, we are excited to share that the Mayor of Barnet has officially been invited to visit Orange Tree School. We look forward to this special and memorable occasion for both our students and staff!



ELSA

This month we are pleased to welcome our second trained LSA to our Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Team.

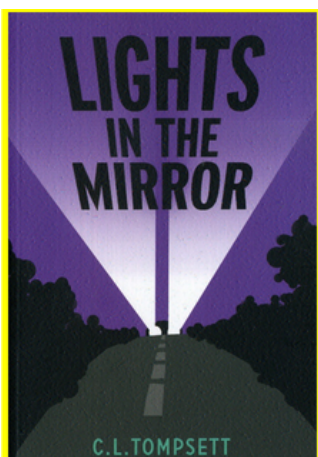
ELSA sessions are weekly interventions that support students in recognising, understanding, and managing their emotions. Sessions begin with a check-in and often include structured activities such as arts and crafts, introspective games, or building LEGO.

Working with students on an individual or small-group basis, ELSAs provide a safe and supportive space to explore sensitive topics. This may include: identifying emotions and their physical sensations, building social and friendship skills and developing regulation strategies.

Overall, our ELSA team fosters building confidence, communication skills, and strategies for managing complex life events, including during times of grief, loss or family change.



Majestic LEGO Owl, Zain (Yr 10)



Book of the Month

This January, the book of the month chosen by our English department is 'Lights in the Mirror' by C. L. Tomsett. In this story, a boy named Max and his mum are stalked by a mysterious blue car, leading to a chilling discovery about who's inside and what they want.

TUTOR GROUP COMPETITION

This month, the winners of our Tutor Group competition enjoyed their rewards for earning most positive points in the Autumn Term.



At Orange Tree School, students are rewarded with positive points for consistently demonstrating our school values, following expectations, and making positive choices in and around school. These points are tracked weekly and contribute to an ongoing tutor group competition throughout the term.

At the end of the Autumn Term, 7B finished at the top of the leaderboard, winning 3 out of 7 weeks and earning the highest number of positive points overall. 11B closely followed in second place, with 2 out of 7 weeks won. To celebrate their achievements, both winning tutor groups have chosen to enjoy a movie afternoon with pizza and McDonald's treats during Periods 3 and 4.



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

Tuesday 6th January

First day of term (10:30 start)

Wednesday 28th January

Careers Meetings starting for Y11

Wednesday 11th February

IEP Meetings (School closed to Students 12:30pm)

Friday 13th February

Last Day of Term (3PM finish)

Friday 27th February

Exam Support Workshop for Y10,11&12 Parents (9:15-10:05am)



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ORANGE TREE VALUES

Optimistic
Ready to Learn
Achievement
Nice and kind
Good listening
Effort

Team work
Respectful
Engagement
Empathy and Acceptance



APPRECIATION TREE LEAF WINNER

The appreciation tree leaf winner this month is Cory!

Cory's leaf said: "I am grateful for Cory always being on time in every lesson and for always being kind."

Thank you and we hope you enjoy your prize!

FOOD TECH HIGHLIGHTS

Year 11 have started off the year with trial recipes for their food tech GCSE coursework-including creamy tomato and meatball pasta with leek and mushroom sauce. Year 10 made lasagne. Year 9 baked cheese and onion pasties. Year 8 made pizza with their own choice of toppings. Year 7 made spicy bean burgers.



10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

FOSTERING A SENSE OF BELONGING

Feeling a genuine sense of belonging is essential for the emotional and social development of children and young people. Belonging significantly boosts self-esteem, resilience, and mental wellbeing, reducing feelings of isolation and anxiety. This guide provides practical strategies to help parents and educators cultivate inclusive environments, enhancing both academic outcomes and overall happiness among young people.

1 CELEBRATE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Acknowledge and celebrate the uniqueness of every child. Promoting diversity and inclusion creates an environment where differences are valued rather than stigmatised. This acceptance empowers children to confidently express their identities and feel genuinely included, fostering a robust sense of belonging within both school and home settings.

2 CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Regularly communicate and actively listen to children, showing genuine interest in their thoughts and experiences. Creating open communication channels helps young people feel heard and valued. This approach not only builds trust but also reinforces children's perception of themselves as a vital part of their family, school and community.

3 MEANINGFUL PARTICIPATION

Give children opportunities to actively participate and contribute, whether in classrooms, at home, or in community activities. Meaningful participation helps children feel their input matters, reinforcing a sense of purpose and value. Including them in decisions and responsibilities enhances their self-worth, promoting a deeper sense of belonging and inclusion.

4 FOSTER STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Support and encourage positive relationships between peers, educators, and families. Strong, healthy relationships significantly impact a child's sense of belonging, providing emotional support and reducing feelings of loneliness. Facilitate social interactions through group activities, teamwork, and collaborative learning to strengthen these vital connections.

5 CREATE INCLUSIVE SPACES

Design environments that reflect diversity and are welcoming for everyone. Inclusive spaces where all children see themselves represented can dramatically improve their feelings of safety and acceptance. Consider classroom displays, books, and resources that celebrate various cultures, abilities, and backgrounds to visibly reinforce inclusivity and belonging.

6 MODEL POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

Adults play a crucial role by demonstrating inclusive, empathetic, and respectful behaviours. Modelling positive interactions and attitudes sets a clear standard for children to follow. Children are likely to replicate inclusive behaviour, creating a supportive community atmosphere where everyone feels accepted and valued for who they are.

7 BUILD EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Teach and encourage emotional expression and understanding among children. Developing emotional literacy enables young people to articulate their feelings and empathise with others. An emotionally intelligent environment cultivates mutual respect and compassion, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and interpersonal connection within groups.

8 SUPPORT PEER MENTORSHIP

Encourage peer mentorship or buddy systems within educational settings. Peer support enhances feelings of connectedness and security, reducing feelings of isolation. When children support one another, they naturally build community bonds, nurturing a supportive culture where belonging and friendship thrive.

9 RECOGNISE EFFORTS REGULARLY

Consistently acknowledge children's contributions and achievements, however small. Recognition reinforces a child's understanding that their presence and efforts are important. Celebrating individual and collective successes helps cultivate a positive environment where children feel acknowledged, motivated, and deeply connected to peers and adults around them.

10 ADDRESS BULLYING PROMPTLY

Quickly address any incidents of bullying. Promptly intervening demonstrates a clear commitment to an inclusive and safe environment. Creating a culture where incidents are swiftly and effectively addressed reinforces trust, security, and a sense of belonging for everyone involved.

Meet Our Expert

Anna Bateman is Director of Halcyon Education Ltd and Director for Wellbeing and Family Services at Leigh Trust. With extensive experience in systemic mental health in schools, she supports educational leaders across the UK to develop inclusive, resilient, and supportive learning environments. Anna is also the lead expert for mental health at The National College.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: nationalcollege.com/guides/fostering-a-sense-of-belonging



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