



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

World Book Day

Duke of Edinburgh Training

Pi day

Neurodiversity Workshop

End of Term Celebrations

Important Dates

## A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

**Zoe Ramshaw**

"An optimist is the  
human personification  
of Spring."

-Susan J. Bissonette

Dear Parents, Carers, and School Community,

There has been such a positive energy around school this Spring term, and it's been a real pleasure to see our students growing in confidence and embracing new opportunities.

This newsletter captures just some of those moments, from the creativity and community of World Book Day to the teamwork and resilience shown during Duke of Edinburgh training. Events like Pi Day and our Neurodiversity Workshop have also highlighted how important it is to celebrate different strengths and ways of thinking, something we are very proud of at Orange Tree.

We are also incredibly proud of our students who will be sitting exams after Easter. They have been working exceptionally hard and showing real determination in overcoming barriers they have faced throughout their school journey.

What stands out most is the confidence we are seeing in our students. Whether it's taking on a new challenge, working together, or simply believing in themselves a little more, these are the moments that matter most.

I would like to thank our staff, students and families for their continued commitment, support and positivity. It is a privilege to see our community flourish in this way. We hope you enjoy reading this edition and wish you all a restful break.

# WORLD BOOK DAY

On Thursday 5th March, OTS celebrated World Book day, along with thousands of schools across the country.



It was wonderful to see so many students and staff dress up as a character from a book to celebrate a shared love of literature. There was an enthusiastic buzz around the school throughout the day, particularly due to the fantastic costumes that students and staff wore!



We had costumes from The Addams Family, Wizard of Oz, Manga, Hunger Games, Romeo and Juliette, The Lorax, Spiderman and Disney.

In preparation for the day, students worked together in their form groups to decorate their classroom doors.

A special congratulations to 7A, who won the door decoration competition with their display of 'Gangsta Granny'.



The day began with form time activities, going through different ways reading can be fun, engaging and promote wellbeing. Students were invited to take part in a range of creative activities during form time and were given a book voucher to take home.

We completed a lunch-time Treasure Hunt, where students were provided a range of clues which matched specific staff... well done to all that took part: it was a wonderful atmosphere! Special mention to Max W for winning the hunt!

The day ended with creating our own book marks, encouraging all to read and promoting a love of literacy. Well done to all that participated and we look forward to seeing your costumes again next year!



# DUKE OF EDINBURGH

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of March years 9-12s spent the day in Duke of Edinburgh training. The day was dedicated to developing teamwork, independence, and outdoor skills.

Students were split into Bronze and Silver award groups, with Year 9s forming two Bronze groups and Years 10-12 forming two Silver groups.

The Bronze groups began the day with team-building activities, developing their communication and teamwork skills before heading out to a local park. There, they put their map-reading skills into practice, working in pairs to spot landmarks and tick them off along the way. The walk lasted around an hour and a half and provided valuable preparation for their expedition in July. After returning to school and enjoying lunch, students learnt how to safely use outdoor cooking equipment in practise for the camping element of the DofE award. Training day ended with planning their breakfast lunch and snack menus for the summer expedition.



Meanwhile, the Silver groups took on a longer three-hour practice walk, building confidence and endurance ahead of the July expedition. They also took part in the same activities as the Bronze groups, rotating through map reading, outdoor cooking and menu planning. It was a fantastic day of teamwork, resilience and skill-building. Well done to all students for their enthusiasm and effort!

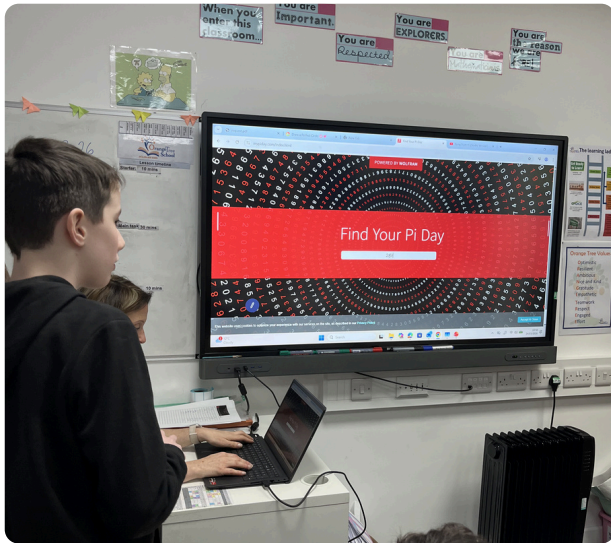


## TUTOR GROUP COMPETITION

At the end of the first Spring Term, 11B finished at the top of the leaderboard, winning 3 out of 5 weeks and earning the highest number of positive points overall. 7A 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.

# PI DAY

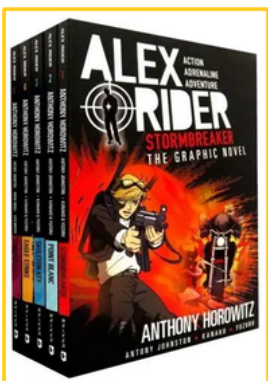
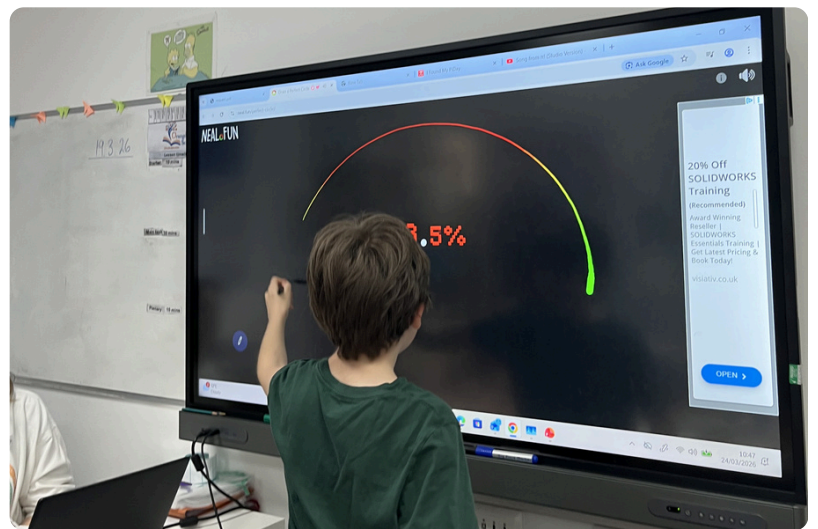


On the 24<sup>th</sup> of March OTS celebrated Pi Day with sweet treats, fun activities and competitions throughout the day.

In lesson students learnt about the history of Pi, listened to Pi on the piano and of course ate Pi! The Maths department hosted three exciting challenges for both students and staff. In room 105 we competed for who can “Draw the Perfect Circle”, Congratulations to Lenny (yr8) and Zelic (Yr9) who took joint first place with an impressive 95.5% accuracy. In room 117 students challenged themselves to recite as many the digits of Pi as possible, with Ilhan (Yr8) reciting 41 and Olivia (Yr9) successfully remembering 45 digits in the correct order! We also had fun finding out whose birthday is the closest in position to Pi using mypiday.com!



Congratulations to all of our winners and those who participated, helping make Pi Day such a success!



## Book of the Month

The book of the months March and April chosen by our English department are the 'Alex Rider' series by Anthony Horowitz. The story follows a 14-year-old orphan who discovers that his uncle was actually an MI6 agent. After his uncle's death, Alex is recruited by MI6 to investigate the mysterious Stormbreaker computer, which is being distributed to schools across England.

# NEURODIVERSITY WORKSHOP

On the 25th of March, our Therapy Team hosted a Neurodiversity Workshop in the hall! Welcoming all students across the year groups to discuss new information, strategies and tips.



The workshop gave students a valuable opportunity to better understand how their brains work and celebrate the many different ways we think, learn and experience the world.

Throughout the session, students explored their individual strengths and how these can support their success in school. They took part at a pace that felt comfortable for them, whether by actively engaging in activities or simply listening and reflecting.



The session fostered an inclusive and supportive environment where students felt confident to ask questions and share their experiences. By the end, they had developed practical strategies to support focus, organisation and managing stress, both in and out of school.

Thank you to our Speech and Language Therapist, School Counsellor and Occupational Therapist for creating a safe space and providing a welcome break from the usual routine, allowing students to take part in something engaging and meaningful.



## Power League Trip

As an activities trip in the last week of term OTS visited Power League in Barnet. Over 20 students across all year groups joined the trip and were taken for a tour around the pitches before they were divided in 3 teams and played 7/8 aside football games.

# END OF TERM CELEBRATIONS

To celebrate the end of term, we organised a whole school park and picnic trip to Friery Park.



The day began with a briefing in the Hall for staff and students before a staggered departure for the park. Beginning with year 11, students left the school year group by year group and made their way to our local park.

From 10:45am - 12:00pm students had the opportunity to have free time in the playground and other agreed areas with plenty of games, snacks and drinks to keep them energised. At noon students registered with their designated team leaders and made their way back to school in time for the assembly!

To conclude the day, students settled in the hall for a good bye speech from the head teacher and collected their well earned certificates for their hard work and representing the school values this term!



After a heartfelt assembly, students were offered a takeaway lunch as the school day came to a close at 1pm.

# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> 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)*



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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 Emma!

Emma's leaf said: "I am grateful to Emma who always finds ways to help others."

Thank you and we hope you enjoy your prize!

## Food Tech highlights

This month in Food Tech, years 7, 8 and 9 made pineapple upside down cake and brownies, year 8 made Pi biscuits and year 10 practised exam recipes like jerk chicken, cheesecake and pizza whilst year 11 prepared chicken nuggets, wedges and halloumi fries.



# What Parents & Educators Need to Know about

# TIKTOK

AGE RESTRICTION  
**13+**

(Certain features are restricted to over-18s only)

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Online videos are often associated with apps such as YouTube, but among teens, TikTok is king. The app provides a potentially addictive, never-ending stream of short clips tailored to users' interests based on their viewing habits. Around half of British children use TikTok, and while most content is benign, Ofcom considers it the app where young people are "most likely to encounter a potential harm".

## AGE-INAPPROPRIATE CONTENT

TikTok's Following Feed shows videos from known creators, while the default For You Feed serves endless clips based on viewing history. Most are harmless, but unsuitable content can still appear, and watching for long enough signals interest to the algorithm. Although TikTok bans illegal or inappropriate uploads, the volume of posts means some slip through, increasing the chance that children encounter age-inappropriate material before it is detected or removed.

## BODY IMAGE AND DANGEROUS CHALLENGES

Ofcom reports that most online harms for girls involve body image, while boys more often see dangerous stunts. Both types appear frequently on TikTok and spread quickly through its engagement-driven algorithm. Harmful challenges have included the "blackout" trend, where users held their breath until passing out. Families filed lawsuits after children died linked to the trend, showing how extreme or risky content can rapidly reach young people and negatively influence them.

## IN-APP SPENDING

TikTok is free, but children can still spend money. TikTok coins, costing £9.99 to £224.99, let users buy gifts for creators. TikTok Shop adds risk by allowing purchases from influencers or companies, sometimes leading to poor-quality items driven by persuasive marketing. A Canadian investigation found TikTok collected personal data from many children for targeting and advertising despite age limits, meaning young users may lose control over their personal information.

## CONTACT WITH STRANGERS

Between 1.6 and 1.9 billion people use TikTok, meaning there's a high risk of unwanted attention from strangers. Accounts created by over-16s (or young people using a fake date of birth) are set to public view by default. This means that not only is someone's profile visible to everyone else on the app, it also suggests their videos to others and allows anyone to download or comment on them.

## MISINFORMATION AND RADICALISATION

TikTok's short videos may appear lighthearted, but they can expose young people to harmful ideas. Misinformation is common, and Ofcom reports that nearly one third of 12-15-year-olds use TikTok as a news source, increasing the chance of seeing racist, misogynistic, extremist or conspiracy material. Even brief clips can influence impressionable users and shape their worldview, making discussions about critical thinking, propaganda and online influence especially important for parents and educators.

## ADDICTIVE DESIGN

TikTok's fast-paced stream of eye-catching videos can be potentially addictive for young users. In 2024, UK children spent an average of 127 minutes per day on the platform, double the time recorded in 2020. Excessive use can disrupt sleep, increase irritability, and distract from healthier activities. Constantly skipping between short clips may also affect attention span, making it harder to focus on longer tasks such as homework or reading.

## Advice for Parents & Educators

### ENABLE FAMILY PAIRING

Family Pairing allows parents to link their TikTok account to their child's in order to manage settings remotely. Parents can then turn on Restricted Mode (reducing the chances of a child seeing inappropriate content), set screen time limits, make accounts private and manage whether their child can send messages – and if they can, to whom. Children cannot alter these settings without parental approval.

### DISCUSS THE DANGERS

If a child wants to use TikTok and you're happy for them to do so, it's good practice to discuss the potential risks. Ensure they don't share any identifying personal information or respond to dangerous trends, and that they know to talk to a trusted adult if they're worried by interactions on the app. With more teens using TikTok for news, it's important to talk about misinformation and propaganda.

### BLOCK IN-APP SPENDING

Parents can restrict in-app purchases on iPhone and Android devices to prevent accidental or impulsive TikTok spending. Young people can easily spend large amounts on TikTok coins or low-quality products promoted through TikTok Shop. If a disappointing purchase occurs, turn it into a discussion about influencer marketing and how online promotions can be misleading.

### READ THE SIGNS

If you're concerned that a child is spending too much time on TikTok, or that they've been emotionally affected by something they've seen, it's important to know how to spot the signs. Increased irritability and a lack of concentration are potential red flags, as is failing to complete homework or skipping meals. Remember, the parental controls are there for a reason, and it's never too late to introduce limits.

## Meet Our Expert

Alan Martin is an experienced technology journalist who has written for the likes of Wired, TechRadar, Tom's Guide, The Evening Standard and The New Statesman.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

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