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A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Zoe Ramshaw

"October is a
symphony of
permanence and
change"

- Banaro W.
Overstreet

Dear Parents, Carers, and School Community,

As we move through October, it has been inspiring to see our students and staff embrace new opportunities with optimism, kindness, and resilience, in line with our Orange Tree Values.

This term, we have celebrated Black History Month, reflecting on stories of strength, perseverance, and compassion that echo our own school values. Our World Mental Health Day activities brought the whole community together to recognise the power of connection and the importance of looking after ourselves and each other.

Our therapy trips continue to be a wonderful highlight, offering students valuable experiences beyond the classroom that help to build confidence, communication, and emotional growth. For our Year 11 students, focus is now turning towards mock exams, and we are incredibly proud of the maturity and commitment they have shown in preparing for this next step. This is an important milestone in helping them experience and manage the challenges and anxieties of the summer exams.

As always, I am grateful for the continued support from our families and staff, who work together to make Orange Tree School such a nurturing, inclusive, and forward-thinking community.

Wishing you all a restful and enjoyable half term.

Zoe Ramshaw
Headteacher

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

This October, we celebrate inspiring Black British figures who have shaped our society and embody the Orange Tree School values. Their optimism, effort, empathy, and teamwork remind us how character and kindness can create lasting change in our communities and beyond.

Optimistic- **O**
Ready to learn- **R**
Achievement- **A**
Nice and kind- **N**
Good listening- **G**
Effort- **E**



T -Team work
R -Respectful
E -Engagement
E -Empathy and acceptance



Baroness Doreen Lawrence

O- Optimistic

A powerful voice for justice and equality. After the murder of her son, she turned tragedy into lasting change. Her optimism and belief in progress lead to major reforms in policing and race relations.

R- Ready to learn

A young researcher with a reportedly higher IQ than Einstein. He studies how autism affects learning and emotions, showing that being ready to learn means staying curious and using knowledge to help others



Ramarni Wilfred



Sir Mo Farah

A- Achievement

A four-time Olympic gold medallist who overcame great hardship after arriving in the UK as a child refugee. His journey from adversity to Olympic glory shows that true achievement comes from resilience and hard work.

N- Nice and Kind

Footballer and activist who used his platform to tackle child food poverty during the pandemic. His kindness and compassion lead to real policy change, in the UK: proving that kindness is strength.



Marcus Rashford

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Athian Akec

G- Good listening

A former UK Youth Parliament member whose powerful speech on climate justice and racial equality went viral. He listens to diverse communities and ensures young voices are heard in national debates.

E- Effort

From a working-class background in Stevenage to seven-time F1 World Champion, his relentless dedication and perseverance show how effort turns challenges into success.



Lewis Hamilton



Michaela Coel

T- Team Work

An award-winning writer, actor, and producer whose collaborative storytelling celebrates identity and resilience. She shows that teamwork can amplify powerful voices and stories.

R- Respectful

Actor, musician, and filmmaker known for his humility and professionalism. He promotes diversity and inclusion, showing that being respectful means valuing others and treating everyone with kindness.



Idris Elba

E- Engagement

Comedian, actor, and co-founder of Comic Relief. Through entertainment and charity, he has engaged millions in supporting humanitarian causes and tackling inequality, using laughter to bring people together.

E- Empathy and acceptance

Award-winning novelist whose works, like *White Teeth*, explore identity, culture, and belonging in modern Britain. Her storytelling helps readers empathise with others' experiences and appreciate the richness of diversity.



Zadie Smith



Sir Lenny Henry

THERAPY TRIPS

As part of our commitment to nurturing students' wellbeing, we've continued our therapy trip programme this term. These give students the chance to step outside the classroom, discover new strengths and build confidence in real-world settings.



Each week, different year groups take part in a range of experiences designed to nurture communication, teamwork, and emotional growth.

Tuesday- Wild About the Woods: Our year 9 students venture into the outdoors to learn survival skills such as fire lighting, while exploring the calming and restorative effects of being in nature.

Wednesday- Equine Therapy: Through guided interactions with horses, our year 7 students learn about trust, communication, and emotional awareness, developing confidence and empathy along the way.

Friday- Skiing with Snowbility: Year 8 students take to the slopes at Hemel Hempstead to enjoy adaptive skiing sessions that encourage physical coordination, perseverance, and self-belief.



Our therapy trips are a valued part of school life. They offer enriching, hands-on experiences that build growth, independence, and connection. Each one helps students thrive both in and out of the classroom.

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY



On the 10th of October, we celebrated World Mental Health Awareness Day. Our school came together to recognise the importance of kindness, connection, and wellbeing. To mark the day, students and staff wore yellow, symbolising hope, positivity and support for anyone who might be struggling. Throughout the day children were welcomed to the main hall for 30 minute “Tea and Talk” sessions.

Students gathered in small groups of five to share a sweet treat, hot drink and use conversation starter boards to spark meaningful, supportive conversations about how they've been feeling.

Each year, we celebrate this day together to help create a school environment where everyone feels seen, supported, and valued.



FOOD TECH HIGHLIGHTS

This month in Food Tech, students embraced spooky season with Halloween cookies, a hearty fry-up, and comforting chicken/ cauliflower korma.

Year 7 made apple berry crumble, Year 9- golden roasted choux buns and Year 11 ended the month with creamy pasta carbonara, a mix of creativity and seasonal flavours.



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: Lucy Price

DDSL: Hayley Hunter

DDSL: Jake Beeson

Monday 3rd November

Students return (10:30am start)

Monday 10th - Friday 21st November

Year 11 Mock exams

Friday 5th December

Autumn term reports sent home

Wednesday 10th December

School closed for parent consultation day

Thursday 18th December

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 Diya!

Diya's leaf said: "I am grateful for being your friend as you are amazing and one of the best people I have as a friend."

Thank you and we hope you enjoy your prize!

Upcoming Year 11 Mock Exams

In preparation for GCSE exams next year, our year 11 students will be taking Mock exams. These will take place from Monday the 10th to Friday 21st of November.

Morning exams will begin at 9:15am, allowing students time beforehand to revise or regulate in the library/ hall. Lunch will run from 12:00-13:00pm followed by afternoon exams starting at 1pm. Good luck!

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

EXAM-DAY READINESS

The lead-up to exams can be an emotionally challenging time. As the date approaches, nerves can become harder to manage. From nutrition to emotional support, this guide offers 10 practical strategies to reduce stress and enhance performance. Whether at home or in school, these tips encourage focus, resilience, and wellbeing – giving every student the best opportunity to approach exam day with clarity and self-belief.

1 FUEL THE BRAIN



Encourage students to eat a balanced breakfast and hydrate before exams. The brain is around 80% water, so even mild dehydration can reduce memory and concentration. Provide water, cereal bars, or fruit on exam day – especially helpful if anxiety affects appetite. A little fuel can go a long way towards better performance.

2 PROMOTE POSITIVE SELF-TALK



Support young people to challenge negative thoughts. Help them replace "I'm going to fail" with "I've worked hard; I can do this". Positive affirmations boost confidence and reduce anxiety. Practise these together at home or in school settings.

3 PRACTISE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES



Encourage daily use of calming techniques, such as diaphragmatic breathing, guided muscle relaxation, or mindfulness. These techniques help regulate stress responses. Consider running short morning sessions before exams, or practising together at home to promote calm focus.

4 CREATE FAMILIAR COMFORT



Ensure a supportive adult is visible and available before exams. The calm presence of a parent or teacher can offer a sense of safety. Schools can provide 'calm zones'; parents can support with consistent routines and reassuring conversation.

5 ENCOURAGE VERBAL EXPRESSION



Invite students to talk about their exam worries. Whether it's a quick check-in with a teacher or chat with a parent, open conversations reduce emotional pressure. Active listening is often more powerful than immediate problem solving.

6 ORGANISE EXAM-DAY LOGISTICS



Prepare exam-day essentials in advance. Schools can coordinate staff to greet students and manage pre-exam spaces. Parents can prepare clothes, equipment and transport the night before to prevent stress.

got this!

7 BUILD A COPING TOOLKIT



Teach students simple 'in-the-moment' coping strategies. These include calm breathing, focusing on what they can control, and using grounding techniques. Practise these together so they become easy to recall under pressure.

8 EMBRACE A BALANCED ROUTINE



Reinforce healthy routines: regular sleep, nutritious meals, movement and time to unwind. Families and schools can support students by encouraging outdoor time, screen breaks and restful evenings before exams.

9 NORMALISE EXAM NERVES



Let students know that feeling anxious is normal and doesn't mean they're unprepared. Reassure them that a certain level of stress is natural – and can actually improve focus and performance when managed well. A calm, understanding tone – at home and at school – helps build confidence and resilience.

10 KEEP SPACES CALM



Reduce pressure in exam-day environments. Whether in the school common room or family kitchen, avoid last-minute cramming. Instead, use soft lighting, gentle music, and quiet time to support a composed mindset.

Meet Our Expert

Stefan Fusenich is a teacher educator and DfE subject learning coach (advanced practitioner). Stefan has extensive management and teaching experience across various posts in education, and is a qualified lecturer with Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status.



#WakeUpWednesday®

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REVISION

Source: See full reference list on guide page at: <https://nationalcollege.com/guides/exam-day-readiness>