SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2026 | ISSUE 32



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A message from our Headteacher

Zoe Ramshaw

DeDear Parents and Carers,
As we come to the end of our first half term, it is a pleasure to share our September and October newsletter with you and reflect on what has been a busy and positive start to the academic year at Orange Tree School.
We know that returning to school after the summer holidays can be a significant transition for many of our children and families. Adjusting to routines, expectations and new faces can take time, and every child experiences these changes differently. I have been incredibly proud of the way our pupils have approached these first few weeks, gradually settling into school life, building relationships and growing in confidence at their own pace.
It has been wonderful to see our pupils embracing the opportunities and experiences available to them. As you will see throughout this newsletter, there has been plenty happening across the school, from outdoor learning and enrichment activities to new clubs, creative projects and celebrations. Every achievement matters, whether it is trying something new, developing a friendship or taking a small but significant step forward.
I would like to thank our families for your continued support and partnership. We recognise the patience, understanding and reassurance that can be needed at home, particularly during times of transition. Working together makes such a difference to the children in our care.
A special thank you must also go to our wonderful staff team for their dedication, kindness and commitment to ensuring every child feels understood, valued and supported.
As we head into the half-term break, I hope all our pupils and families enjoy some well-deserved time together. Whether you have exciting plans or are looking forward to quieter days at home, I hope you find time to rest, recharge and enjoy the break.
Thank you for being part of our school community. I wish you all a lovely half term and look forward to welcoming everyone back.

DoLessons Tutouring:

DoLessons connects families with verified teachers for one-to-one IGCSE, SAT and IELTS support. Lessons are available online or at home, with flexible morning, evening and weekend times. To find a tutor, visit DoLessons.com

A Warm Welcome to New Staff

As we begin a new academic year we welcome a few new faces to Orange Tree School including new LSA's Martha, Maya, Finnbarr, Johnathan, Yasemin, Georgia, and Georgia. We also welcome four fantastic new teachers Abi (who teaches Maths and Science), Stefan (who teaches Science) and Beata (who teaches Humanities), as well as Sophie, our new Functional Skills teacher.
We hope they feel accepted and appreciated at OTS. They have settled in wonderfully and made great first impressions on our learners!






Our extracurricular therapy provisions have begun again! Year 8 took part in Wild About the Woods where we practiced fire lighting, tightrope walking and campfire cooking! Year 7 went to Equine therapy for the first time and had a lot of fun interacting with the horses.








Our Safeguarding Team:

If you have any concerns about a child or want to talk to a member of our Safeguarding team please speak to one of the following:
DSL: Hayley Hunter
DDSL: Lucy Price
DDSL: Evie Waldren
DDSL: Jake Beeson



"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."
- Audrey Hepburn



What's growing in Friary Hall garden?

Despite record temperatures this summer, a national drought, and a nation-wide hosepipe ban, the Friary Hall garden has proved itself to be resilient and fruitful (or vegetable-full)! Tomatoes, pumpkins, chillies, sunflowers and much more continued to grow over the summer and surprised us all when we arrvied back this September!
The Friary Hall Garden is a great project that all of our learners have access to.

Our students treat the varied fruits, vegetables and flower patches with great attention, wisdom and care. One of our learners, Lenny has also gone on trips to a local garden center, where he carefully selected some of the produce we have been growing in our garden this year. As a result of the great care of our staff and students, all our crops are currently flourishing and blooming.
Our Friary Hall Garden is a wonderful space that our learners can use to regulate and spend some valuable time with nature.

Pottery Painting Trip

Toward the end of our last academic year our year 8 (previously year 7) girls took a trip to the local pottery paitning studio, Paint the Town, where each of them painted their own plate.
They drew their own designs using stencils, photos and their own imaginations for inspiration.
All six girls painted a beautiful plate during the two hour session. We then left the finished plates at the studio to be fired and then collected them a week later. On the last day of summer term the girls took their amazing finished plates home.
Violet (8A) said that her plate was perfect for eating her mum's delicious homemade cinnamon rolls. Isla (8A) said that she uses her plate for keeping all her jewellery and accessories in one place.





Spanish at OTS

Hola! Me llamo Cameron y soy profesor de español aquí en Orange Tree School.

Commencing my tenure as sole Spanish teacher here at OTS has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience thus far – I hope that our students have shared in this enjoyment during their first few lessons.

Why learn a language?
Learning another language is about far more than memorising vocabulary. It develops communication skills, cultural curiosity and children's awareness of how language works. Research has linked language learning with greater metalinguistic awareness – essentially, the ability to recognise patterns and think about how languages are constructed (Bialystok, 1988; Bialystok & Barac, 2012).
Our approach to Spanish is informed by Dr Gianfranco Conti's MARS EARS framework. Put simply, children first have plenty of opportunities to hear, read and understand useful Spanish before being expected to produce it independently.

Through modelling, repetition and structured practice, support is gradually removed until students can use the language with increasing confidence and spontaneity.

How can you support your child with their Spanish?
You don't need to speak Spanish yourself! Asking your child to teach you a few words or sentences, testing them on their sentence builder, or simply asking "What Spanish can you teach me today?" are all useful ways to encourage retrieval and build confidence.
We also have a school subscription to sentencebuilders.com, which supports the work we do in lessons. Students will receive their logins this week and can then complete optional Spanish revision at home through short, game-like activities. Parents are very welcome to get involved too!
The website can also support the learning of other languages, so if any students or families are interested in exploring this, please let me know.
Above all, I hope our students develop the confidence to see Spanish not simply as something they study, but as a language they can genuinely understand and use.
¡Vamos!

Chess Club at OTS

We now have a new chess club running in the library at lunchtimes - all are welcome, regardless of level - including anyone who has never played before and just wants to have a go! Our Chess club is organised by Gaynor and supervised by staff on duty in the library. Students are encoraged to play against their peers as well as staff!





Upcoming School Events in October:

1st National Poetry Day
5th World Teachers Day
9th World Mental Health Day
12th Culture Enrichment Day
Friday 16th Break for Half term



Quiz Question from Cameron, our Spanish teacher:
¿Qué hace un pez? Nada
Why is this joke funny? Hint: 'nada' has two possible meanings.

OTS Poem

For National Poetry Day (Thursday 1st October), staff and students have collaborated to make a poem about Orange Tree School. The theme of National Poetry Day this year is "*Wonder*".

Poetry can be written, sung, spoken, and signed. Poetry doesn't always have to rhyme!
The English and Library departments of OTS encourage you to have a go at home. We can guarantee that you will have a good time!

O – ORIGINAL, OPEN-MINDED
R – RESILIENT, RESOURCEFUL
A – AMAZING, AWESOME, ASTONISHING
N – NICE AND KIND, NURTURING
G – GENEROUS, GOBBLEDYGOOK – GREAT VOCABULARY!
E – EXCELLENT, ENERGETIC, EXCLAMATION MARK!

T – BUILT ON TRUST
R – RESPECTFUL
E – EVERYONE WELCOME
E – EDUCATION FOR ALL

Upcoming parent forum

Friday 9th October
9:30-11:00am

We will be holding our first Parent Forum meeting of the year.

During the session, we will complete an art activity together and discuss and choose themes for our remaining Parent Forum dates:

- Friday 4 December
- Friday 5 February
- Friday 19 March
- Friday 9 July

Quiz question answer: The question reads 'What does the fish do?' And the answer could be either 'nothing' or 'it swims' since 'nada' means both.









Religious Holidays in September and October:

12th - 13th September *Rosh Hashanah*
21st September *Yom Kippur*
25th September - 2nd October *Sukkot*



National Non-Fiction Month!

Not everyone likes reading fiction!

The Cambridge Dictionary defines nonfiction as **"writing that is about real events and facts, rather than stories that have been invented"**.
It's easy to forget all of the factual things we do read such as websites, newspaper articles, recipes, instruction guides, nutritional information, maps, prices, etc!

The Orange Tree School Library now has lots of new nonfiction books that our learners can read, including fact books about space and history as well as guides on how to draw!

"Play is the highest form of research."
- Albert Eienstien

Over the Summer holidays we had three new pieces of exercise equipment installed in the school playground. They are designed to target specific muscle groups including the core, legs, and arms. Students are encouraged to use the equipment safely and sensibly during their break times. They are also helpful for students to use during regulation breaks.





Reading Tips for Parents:

Discovering a love of literacy

1. **Find the motivation to read!**

What does your child enjoy – sport, gaming, making things?
What would your child like to be able to read? An article on Formula 1, 'book of a film' or review of latest Fifa game?
Have a goal and purpose to reading

2. **Create a reading habit**

Like building any good habit, you need to create a reading routine. It takes time (eg 60 days) and repeated practice. Let your child see you reading regularly – even ordinary day-to-day things, like ingredients on a food item, instruction guide, travel information, etc.

3. **Make reading memorable**

Read alongside your child, share a puzzle, a fun fact, ask them to read words that you're 'not sure of' – let them become the expert!

4. **Try 'Pause, prompt, praise' to encourage child:**

Pause– when child struggles over a word, wait 5-10 seconds. Let them try and self-correct
Prompt – give a clue (eg, 'It's something you use in a car' for accelerator), or a phonics clue (the 1st sound or even what it rhymes with)
Praise – praise effort, self-correcting, remembering new words.
Lots more on this topic by Keith Topping, on-line. Also, it shows you have researched literacy!

5. **Reflect on how many words you 'correct' and which ones**

Only correct a couple of words, as you don't want to spoil the reading experience. Remember to praise words well-read too.

6. **Pick up on reading mood**

If your child becomes tired or bored, change the activity – read to them, put on voices in fiction, check they have understood, change location – read outside or stop.

7. **New words**

Keep a flip book/fridge pad of challenging new words. See who remembers the meaning of them!

8. **Morphology**

Boost confidence, by showing what else you can read, if you know a part of a word. If you can read present, you can get representational; if you can read establish, you may get to antidisestablishmentarianism!

Merga, M. K. (2017). Becoming a reader: Significant social influences on avid book readers. School Library Research, 20
Schmidt, F. T. C., & Retelsdorf, J. (2016). A new measure of reading habit: Going beyond behavioral frequency. Frontiers in Psychology, 7, Article 1364. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01364

Celebrating World Mental Health Day at OTS

World mental health day reminds us why good mental health is so important, and how we can prioritise it in our lives and communities. It's also a moment to talk openly and listen to what others are experiencing.

The theme for 2026 is **"Lived experiences heard: real voices, real change"** (World Federation for Mental Health).

Conversations about mental health make a difference. And they matter most when we listen to people's experiences.

(https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/world-mental-health-day)

To celebrate world mental health day at OTS we asked staff and students to wear green on Friday 9th October. We offered students the opportunity to have a 'hot chocolate and a chat' with a member of staff to encourage talking about mental health at school. Students were also offered the chance to go on a shorth 'walk and talk' outside of school with members of staff and their peers.



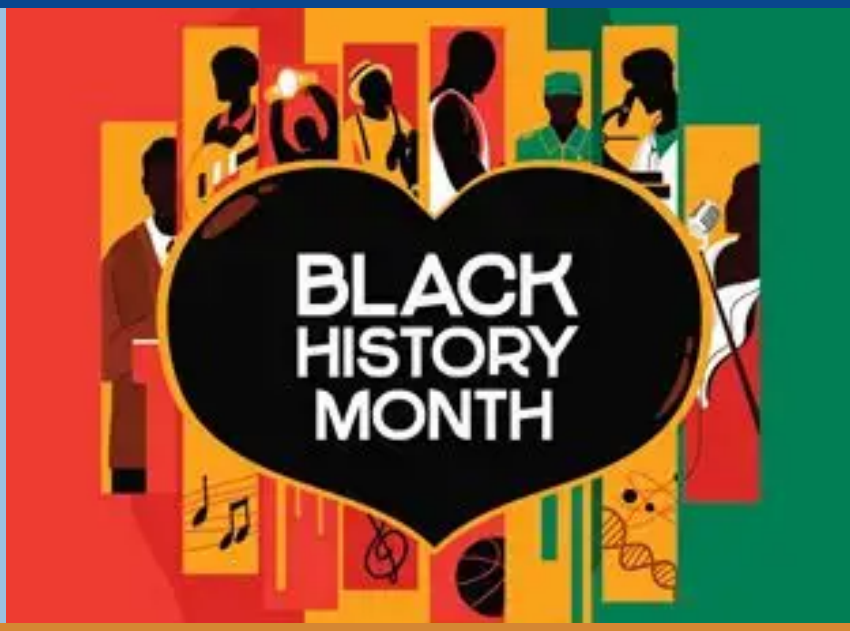


World Space Week 2026 takes place from 4–10 October 2026, with the official UN-declared theme "Rocket Revolution," highlighting global advancements in rocket and launch technology. Our head of Science, Kiran recommends BBC Bitesize resources for further space exploration!





October is...



This year's theme "***Honouring Our Communities***" invites us to recognise the individuals whose everyday contributions shape, support and sustain Black life across the United Kingdom.

Black history is not a specialist subject or an add-on to the curriculum. It is present in our towns and cities, in public service, in the arts, in business, in faith communities and in family memory. It forms part of the social, cultural and civic development of the United Kingdom.
Black History Month 2026 invites us to look more closely at something often taken for granted — the communities that shape, support and sustain us.
This theme is not simply about place or postcode. It is about people.

Across Britain, there are individuals whose contributions are part of everyday life, yet too often go unseen. Volunteers who give their time without expectation. Teachers who shape futures beyond the classroom. Nurses and carers who offer dignity and compassion. Community leaders who bring people together, often without recognition.

These are the people who help to hold our communities together.
Their work may not always be recorded, but it is felt — in relationships, in support systems, and in the spaces where people find belonging.

From early Black presence in Britain to the Windrush generation and beyond, community has been central to resilience, progress and identity. That legacy continues today — not only through major milestones, but through consistent, everyday contributions.

"Honouring Our Communities" is about making those contributions visible.
It asks us to consider whose work we value, whose stories we tell, and whose contributions we may have overlooked.

There is no single story of Black Britain. There are many communities, many experiences and many journeys. This theme creates space for that complexity — and for the individuals within those communities to be fully recognised.

Written by Black History Month UK 12/01/2026
https://www.blackhistorymonth.org.uk/black-history-month-2026/

Culture Day!

12th October we celebrated Culture at OTS

Culture day was a huge success at OTS. We offered our students a range of activities which replaced their usual timetables for the day.
They could choose from:

- Cultural cooking
- Currency around the world
- My cluture book
- DNA extraction
- Staff migration
- Cultural art
- Dance
- Cultural games

Our students loved all the activities on offer and engaged with each of them brilliantly. Suzanne and Martha offered craft activities with a focus on Japanese art practices including making paper origami. Halia (with help from Maya) taught our students dance routines inspired by Carnival style dancing. Kiran led a fantastic science session where students extracted DNA from a strawberry! Vicky gave the students the opportunity to earn OTS currency in her brilliant global currency game. Our next enrichment day will focus on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). We hope it will be as much of a success as Culture Day!











Orange Tree School

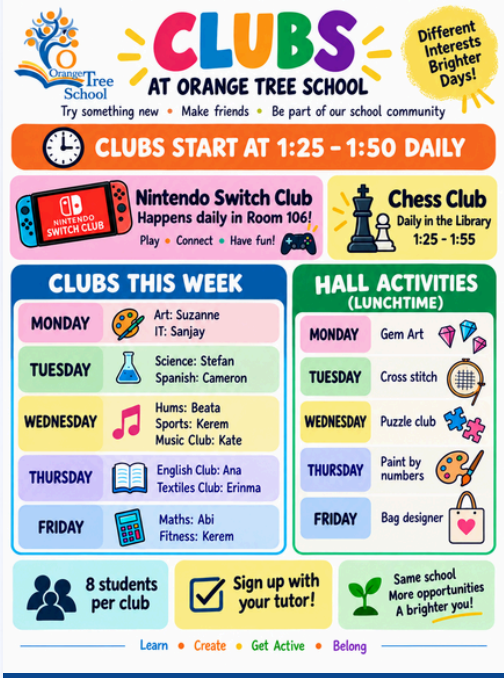
Functional Skills at OTS

Introducing Functional Skills with Sophie

This term, we have introduced Functional Skills English and Maths to our curriculum at OTS for Year 11 and 12. The Functional Skills qualifications are designed to ensure that learners gain practical skills and knowledge that are useful in the real world. Functional Skills are offered at five different levels, allowing students to build confidence as they work their way up to achieving the highest level.
Some of the key skills covered in each subject are as follows:

Functional Skills English
Identifying bias, distinguishing facts from opinions, recognising the writer's purpose, spelling and grammar, organising ideas logically, and adapting writing styles for formal letters, work emails and feedback forms.

Functional Skills Maths
Working out costs, budgets, wages, tax, and profit or loss. Reading timetables, estimating durations, and scheduling work hours. Reading and creating tables, charts, line graphs and diagrams. Through these qualifications, students will develop practical skills that they can apply in everyday life, further education and the workplace.



OTS Lunchtime Clubs

We offer a range of lunchtime clubs for our learners

This academic year we are offering a wide range of lunchtime clubs supported by teachers and LSA's. OTS is committed to providing varied enrichment through activities and play. Our Nintendo Switch club proved to be very popular last year and continues this year every lunchtime.

The teachers of OTS getting stuck in with Culture Day! Mauro and Cameron cooked up a Spanish storm, while Sheena and Beata lead a staff migration and heritage guess who game!









Upcoming School Events in November:

2nd Soft start for students (10:30am)
9th - 13th Anti-Bullying Week
16th Geography Awareness
23rd - Inset Day

Anti-Bullying Week

16th - 20th November

As part of anti-bullying week at OTS we are asking all of our learners to contribute to a whole-school art project. The theme of the project will be “break the silence” emphasising the importace of speaking up agaisnt bullying.
The project will be completed during tutor time throughout anti-bullying week and will be displayed in school.





World Teacher’s Day

What is World Teacher's Day?

World Teacher's Day, also known as International Teachers' Day, is a day dedicated to honouring and appreciating the contributions of educators worldwide. The day provides an opportunity to recognize the crucial role that all teachers play.

When is World Teacher's Day 2026?

World Teachers' Day is held annually on October 5th to help celebrate teachers all over the world. This year, the unique celebration falls on a Thursday. The event was established in 1994, and it commemorates the signing of the 1966 UNESCO/ILO Recommendation concerning the status of teachers. To celebrate this day, the UNESCO runs a campaign every year to help the world gain a better understanding of teachers and the impact they have on the development of students within society.

Why is There a Global Teacher Shortage?

Many countries around the world struggle with a shortage of teachers. This happens because teachers don't receive enough training, work in poor conditions, and don't earn enough money. This makes it hard for teachers to do their job well and makes it difficult for students to learn. In addition, more people are going to school, while many teachers are retiring.
According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 69 million new teachers are needed around the world by 2030 to ensure everyone receives a basic education.

https://www.twinkl.co.uk/event/world-teachers-day-2026

Religious Holidays in November:

8th - Diwali (Hindu, The festival of lights)
1st - All Saints Day (Christian)
2nd - All Souls Day (Christian)

A Poem by tutor group 9A:

Orange Tree School, we work as a team,
Helping each other reach our dream,
Together we shine and make a great team.

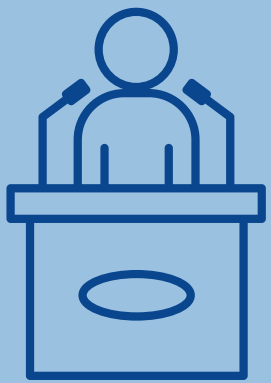





Our year 8's are getting stuck in at Wild About the Woods every Tuesday morning. They took part in activities such as axing, chopping, kindling, sawing logs, trimming foliage, making conker necklaces, fire lighting, and tree climbing. They love exploring the woodland and spending time in nature.





An Orange Tree School President has been elected!

Congratulations to Vinnie in year 10 who has been successful in his presidential campaign. *"Small Vinnie for big ideas!"*

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

10 Top Tips for Parents and Educators

SUPPORTING CHILDREN TO DEVELOP EMOTIONAL LITERACY

Emotional literacy refers to the ability to recognise, understand and express our feelings effectively. It plays a crucial role in strengthening a child's wellbeing by enhancing their relationships and resilience. However, emotional literacy is not necessarily an innate talent, and its development may present challenges. This guide gives parents and educators practical tips on supporting children to cultivate this essential skill.

1 NAME THE EMOTION



Encourage children to identify and name their emotions. This helps them understand what they're feeling and why. Use simple language and relatable examples to make it easier for them to share their emotions. This builds a foundation for emotional understanding and open communication.

2 MODEL EMOTIONAL EXPRESSION



Demonstrate healthy emotional expression by sharing your feelings visibly. When children see adults properly displaying how they're doing and what they're thinking, they learn to do the same. Discuss how you handle emotions in different circumstances, providing a real-life framework for young ones to follow.

3 MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES



Teach children mindfulness practices to help them stay present and manage their emotions during more challenging moments. Activities like deep breathing, meditation or yoga can reduce stress and enhance emotional regulation. Regular practice can improve focus and emotional stability, which can significantly help children both as they're growing up and throughout their adult life.

4 USE STORYTELLING



Incorporate storytelling to help children understand emotions. Stories can offer relevant scenarios illustrating how the characters experience and manage their feelings. Discuss the emotions depicted in stories and ask children how they might feel in similar situations.

5 PRACTISE EMPATHY

Teach children to consider others' views and emotions – and to explore why they might think or feel this way. Role-playing and discussing various scenarios can enhance their ability to empathise. Understanding others' emotions helps children to develop compassion and improves their social interactions.

6 ENCOURAGE JOURNALING



Suggest keeping a journal to make note of thoughts and emotions, as writing can provide an outlet for self-reflection and emotional processing. Encourage children to write about their daily experiences and feelings, helping them gain insight into their emotional world. Do this alongside them, so they can see and experience how to do it effectively.

7 TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING



Do what you can to help children develop problem-solving skills to assist in managing emotional challenges. Discuss potential solutions to emotional conflicts and encourage them to think critically about what they (and others) can do to process their feelings in a healthy way. This empowers children to handle emotions positively and build resilience.

8 CREATE A SAFE SPACE



Establish an environment where children feel safe to display their emotions without judgement. Encourage open exchanges and reassure them that all feelings are valid. This supportive atmosphere promotes trust and encourages children to express themselves with confidence.

9 USE VISUAL AIDS



Take advantage of visual aids like emotion charts or mood meters to help children identify and express their feelings. Use these tools regularly in your interactions. They provide a visual representation of emotions, making it easier for children to communicate their emotional state.

10 CELEBRATE EMOTIONAL GROWTH



Acknowledge and celebrate progress in emotional literacy, and praise children for expressing their emotions and handling them effectively. Positive reinforcement is a useful tool that will encourage continued growth and reinforces the importance of emotional literacy – encouraging young people to maintain the good habits and healthy behaviours that you've taught them.

Meet Our Expert

Adam Gillett is Associate Vice-Principal for Personal Development at Penistone Grammar School and works on secondment one day a week for Minds Ahead, an organisation that supports schools in improving their mental health provision.



#WakeUpWednesday®

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