



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**Neurodivergence
Drop-in Sessions
Lunchtime Clubs
PSHE and Social
Learning updates
Important dates
Useful resources
Activities at OTS**

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEADTEACHER

Zoe Ramshaw

“Education is the
most powerful
weapon which you
can use to change the
world”

- Nelson Mandela

We have had another very busy month at Orange Tree school, full of learning and activities.

I was thrilled to see how many students attended the Neurodivergence drop-in session. Learning about ourselves and/or others is such a valuable experience, and the students asked some very insightful questions. Thank you to the therapy team for arranging this.

I also love to see the extra-curricular clubs run at lunchtime. They are always well attended and planned specifically for the children by the staff. They are so beneficial to the student's social development and wellbeing. I think the staff do a fantastic job of running these clubs using the student voice to guide the club timetable. We also had a visit from Crumble the therapy dog on Thursday. Crumble will be a regular visitor to the school and so watch out for more updates.

As the term is drawing closer to the end, students' attendance is dropping slightly. We understand that the term has been long, and some students are experiencing different levels of burnout. We would like to encourage students to keep as much of an attendance routine as possible towards the end of term. This will make starting the Autumn term a little bit easier.

Wishing you all a restful weekend.

July is packed full of excitement - more to follow!

NEURODIVERGENCE DROP INS

The Therapy Team hosted their first Neurodivergence Information session on June 19th, which was really well received. This was an optional session to provide a safe space for students to come and discuss neurodiversity, to ask questions about their own or other people's differences, to talk about the topics that impact them and for students to support each other.

We had 8 students attend, and we used this session to play a game, to explore and discuss the meaning of neurodivergence, myths and facts about Autism, and the language students prefer people to use when talking about neurodiversity, and for them to share helpful resources. Students also referred to our notice board about successful celebrities who are neurodivergent.

Our students asked some really good questions about their differences, and expressed that they would like more books in our library written by neurodivergent authors who have achieved great things. We will look at placing an order for these very soon.



Due to the success of this first session we will continue to offer optional neurodivergence information sessions on a half termly basis, so please keep an eye out for future dates!

LUNCHTIME CLUBS: WELLBEING CLUB



The Wellbeing Club is back and running for its 2nd term of the year! So far, we have engaged in several creative activities including making origami, jewellery and putty.

Our brilliant students also contributed suggestions on what they would like to do, so we can expect another slime session and hopefully end the year with a pamper session.

The next two weeks will focus on making dreamcatchers and learning about the amazing history behind these!

Lunchtime Clubs

Monday
Crochet Club

Tuesday
Fishkeeping Club

Wednesday
Gardening Club

Thursday
Art Club

Friday
Wellbeing club
Touch-typing Club

Activities
Every Day
13:25 - 13:55

PSHE AND SOCIAL LEARNING UPDATES

PSHE

The **Year 8** students recently completed their unit on Equality and Diversity, where they learnt about the importance of celebrating diversity in society. For the remainder of the Summer Term, students will be stranded on a desert island - SOS! Here they will need to consider what makes a good community, how their decisions impact themselves and others and how to make and enforce laws. They will also learn about the importance of teamwork and skill division.

Having wrapped up their Celebrating Equality and Diversity lessons, **Year 9** students are now studying the wonderful world of Politics. They have already learnt why politics is important and how our country is run, and will now focus on the role of the PM and King, alongside political debates, elections and campaigns. We hope that these lessons will help them to better understand the ongoing election news that they hear in the media and in conversation.

Last half term, **Year 10** PSHE students focused on Relationships and Sex Education. They learnt what a healthy relationship looks like, what consent means and how to identify sexual harassment. For the remainder of the term, students will look delve into topics including hate crime in the UK, multiculturalism, terrorism and the radicalisation process



SOCIAL LEARNING

This month in Social Learning, students have been working on their **one page profile** which is a document where they can record the things they like, the strategies that work for them and anything else that is useful for staff at OTS to know about them. This will be kept in our staff room for new staff to refer to and will be updated periodically to reflect their changing interests and needs.

We have enjoyed some walks to around Whetstone that pupils have planned using GPS, and having some team building tasks in the school grounds on warmer days. Our Year 9s have also hosted a fantastic ice lolly sale and raised £20 to buy a new game for students to enjoy at lunch time.

My One Page Profile	
The things I enjoy: 😊 ❖ ❖ ❖	What people love about me: ❖ ❖ 😊
The things I find tricky or don't enjoy: 😞 ❖ ❖ !	My regulation strategies ❖ ❖
Ways you can support me: ❖ ❖ ❖	
Health information: ❖ ❖	

More Social Learning tools

Planning a family vacation with Autism - 10 tips for success

<https://wrongplanet.net/planning-family-vacation-autism-10-tips-success/>

Autism Podcasts from The Girl With The Curly Hair

<https://thegirlwiththecurlyhair.co.uk/resources/podcasts/> (not just for girls!)

Video about Growing up with Tourette's

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUJ997gqh30&list=PL1Suwo02Q3YbkX7XYS24kbqzcPNB4xuzk&index=](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUJ997gqh30&list=PL1Suwo02Q3YbkX7XYS24kbqzcPNB4xuzk&index=18%20Video%20about%20Growing%20up%20with%20Tourettes)

[18%20Video%20about%20Growing%20up%20with%20Tourettes](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUJ997gqh30&list=PL1Suwo02Q3YbkX7XYS24kbqzcPNB4xuzk&index=18%20Video%20about%20Growing%20up%20with%20Tourettes)

IMPORTANT DATES

ORANGE TREE VALUES

Optimistic
 Ready to Learn
 Achievement
 Nice and kind
 Good listening
 Effort

Team work
 Respectful
 Engagement
 Empathy and Acceptance

8th July

Crocodile encounters visit

11th July

Hampton Court Palace trip

16th July

Natural History museum trip

18th July

Picnic in the Park

19th July

Yr11 Leavers lunch

22nd July

End of term celebration

23rd July

End of term

Orange Tree School's 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: Zoe Ramshaw
DDSL KS4: Melanie Nichols
DDSL KS3: Keziah Arthur

NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY TRIP

The Year 10 and 11 art classes had a wonderful time at the NPG this month. Students took part in a workshop arranged by the gallery focusing on our current unit theme of Identity.

They all engaged and created some wonderful self-portraits. We visited portraits of many recognisable sitters from historic to contemporary icons and the large collage of important historical women.



STUDENT COUNCIL: FIRST MEETING

Hayley, our lovely Assistant Headteacher, held the first student council meeting on June 19th. Each form's representative and the student council president attended and shared their ideas.

GCSES - ALL DONE!

Congratulations to our hard-working year 11s who completed their GCSEs this term! We are extremely proud of their resilience and progress.

You Said	We Did
Students wished to reduce the amount of one-use plastic cups at school. They would like school water bottles	Ordered school bottles for every student to refill and use at school from September
Girls wanted sanitary products provided in the toilets	We have provided every toilet with free female sanitary products

A few of the year 11 students are currently undertaking work experience, including: shadowing teaching assistants, helping with admin tasks, working on editing a promotional video for OTS, and building a business for the enterprise project.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Authetically Emily Blog

https://www.autheticallyemily.uk/blog/tag/Autism#google_vignette

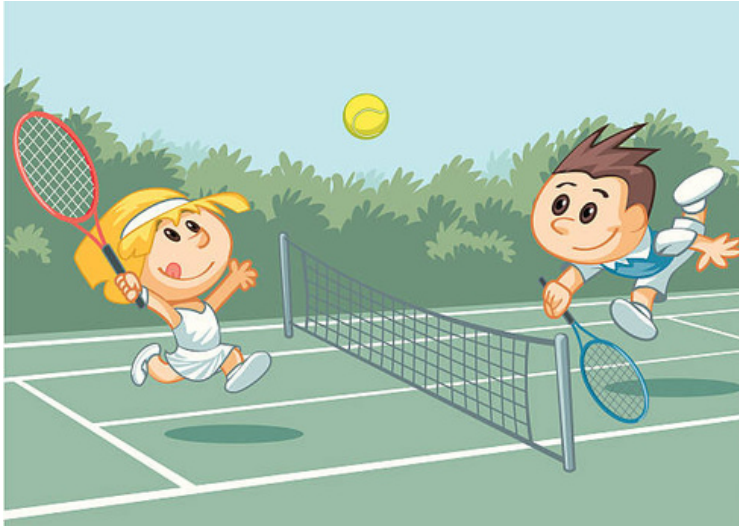
Young minds OCD blog

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/blog/how-i-learnt-to-live-with-ocd/>

ACTIVITIES



TENNIS AT OTS - SUMMER TERM



Year 8	Monday (10:15am-10:50am)
Year 9	Thursday (9:20am-10am)
Year 10A	Friday (9:20am-10am)
Year 10B	Friday (10:15am-10:50am)
Year 11	Thursday (10:15am-10:50am)

Our students have been engaging with and enjoying Tennis as part of our Activities lessons. This is part of a broader movement this half term towards an active and healthy lifestyle. Andy, the head coach at the Oakleigh Park Lawn Tennis and Squash club, is providing students with lessons tailored to their needs. This allows them to develop their hand-eye coordination, agility, decision making, endurance and social skills at their own pace.

We hope this love for tennis continues for the last couple weeks!



Activities club takes place every day in the morning **(8:50-9:05)** and afternoon **(1:25-1:55)**. The students can engage in various physical activities, including running and playing football!

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

School avoidance refers to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school by a child or young person. In 2022–23, more than one in five children in England were found to be absent from school over 10% of the time. This guide focuses on school avoidance with an emotional basis, offering expert mental health advice. However, it's important to remember that school avoidance is a hugely subjective experience which requires a tailored, individual approach.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

IMPACT OF SCHOOL AVOIDANCE

REASONS FOR ABSENCE

School avoidance is sometimes underpinned by several factors rather than one single cause. This could include something going on for the child or young person within the family or at school. A child may have caring responsibilities at home, for instance, or a change in family dynamics; bullying and friendship difficulties at school; pressure to achieve in schoolwork and exams; or moving from primary school to secondary school.

LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

School refusal can negatively impact a young person's learning and development. Attending school on a regular basis not only supports academic attainment but is also important for the development of key life skills and the growth of children and young people as citizens.

PATTERNS OF ABSENCE

You may notice patterns in regular absences or children regularly expressing that they don't want to attend school (particularly being reluctant to leave home on school days). If a child or young person is neurodiverse, there is some evidence to suggest there are more aspects of school life which can cause distress – such as changes in the environment, changes of routine and sensory stimuli.

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

The difficulties associated with school non-attendance can be far reaching and may have a negative impact on long-term outcomes. It may, for example, lead to reduced future aspirations, poor emotional regulation, mental health difficulties, limited academic progress and restricted employment opportunities.

COMPLAINTS ABOUT PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

There may be an increase in a child or young person's complaints about physical symptoms, particularly on school days or the evening before school. These could include tummy aches, headaches, or saying they feel ill when there doesn't appear to be a medical cause. Always check with the GP first to rule out medical causes or illness.

CYCLE OF ABSENCE

Consistent absences may contribute to sustained school avoidance over time. Further to this, the longer a pupil is out of education, the more likely it is that there is a rise in their ongoing need to avoid the activity making them anxious – increasing their desire to stay at home.

Advice for Parents & Educators

WORK TOGETHER

If there's a concern about a child's absence and emotional wellbeing, it's important that there is clear communication and a consistent approach between the child's parents and the school, so you can take a child-centred approach together towards a plan of support or reintegration. This ensures a consistency of approach from both home and school, creating better outcomes for the child.

MANAGE OVERWHELMING FEELINGS

Acknowledge the child's worries, listen and discuss coping strategies together to help them manage difficulties. These could include mindfulness, deep breathing or going for a walk. This helps them understand that you are working together towards a common goal, and that these strategies can be used when bigger feelings arise.

FOLLOW REGULAR ROUTINES

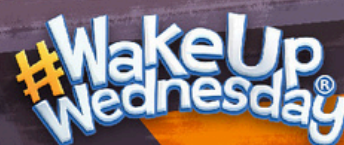
Children can benefit from a regular and consistent routine. This could be a morning routine, from waking up and having breakfast through to getting dressed, packing their bag and leaving the house. A consistent evening routine which is calm and spent away from screens can also give children much needed predictability and familiarity. Schools can help create a timetabled routine for the child's school day, if required.

RECOGNISE POSITIVE STEPS

Drawing attention to a child's successes – be they big or small – can help to give them some much-needed confidence and motivation. Celebrate these daily victories – such as getting out of bed on time or completing school work – and don't hesitate to let the child know when you're impressed or proud of them. Such an approach can go a long way.

Meet Our Expert

With 30 years' experience as a teacher, trainer, consultant and interim executive board member, Anna Bateman has a superb understanding of what works in pedagogy, school improvement and leadership. She has also advised the Department for Education on their mental health green paper.



The National College

Source: See full reference list on guide page at nationalcollege.com/guides/school-avoidance

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