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ORCHARD SCHOOL BRISTOL

INSPIRE TODAY, EMPOWER FOR LIFE

2nd October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you have had a good week. This week, we have been celebrating European languages week with some great assemblies from the Head of MFL, Mr Edmonds. Studying languages is more important than ever, and we are proud of all the different languages spoken by our diverse school community. Year 11 have had a busy week attending after school prep sessions designed to give them an extra boost in their GCSE studies. They were also fortunate enough to hear from representatives of the North Bristol Post 16 Centre (Redland Green and Cotham) and Collegiate during informative Post-16 assemblies, helping them to explore their next steps after Year 11.

Next week, we have our usual full menu of clubs and enrichment, the start of a student leadership programme with the Bristol Education Partnership, a Year 9 Future Ready Workshop and more House Champion activities. We also have our first Parent Consultation Evening of the year with Year 11 parents/carers being invited in to meet subject teachers on Thursday 8th October.

Key Dates
There are some important dates to be aware of this term. Please make sure you put these dates in your diary.

- **Year 11 Mock Exam Information Evening – Thursday 22nd October 6.15-7pm**
- **Year 10 Mock Exam Information Evening – Tuesday 25th May 2027 6.15-7pm**

Parent Subject Consultation Evenings
The dates for these through the year are as follows:

- **Year 7 Parent Subject Consultation Evening – Thursday 12th November 3.30 – 7pm**
- **Year 8 Parent Subject Consultation Evening – Thursday 11th March 2027 3.30 – 7pm**
- **Year 9 Parent Subject Consultation Evening – Thursday 25th February 2027 3.30 – 7pm**
- **Year 10 Parent Subject Consultation Evening – Thursday 26th November 3.30 – 7pm**

- **Year 11 Parent Subject Consultation Evening – Thursday 8th October and Thursday 21st January and 3.30 – 7pm**

Please also note the following date:

Year 9 Options Evening – Wednesday 10th February 2027 6 – 7.30pm
To help parents and children decide together which options subjects/GCSEs they might choose to take over the next two years in school.

Teaching and Learning/Curriculum
To help parents and carers support their child's learning, we ask all teachers to set homework through Microsoft Teams.
Where a homework task needs to be completed on another platform, such as Sparx, the homework will still be listed on Teams with the relevant instructions and links needed to access the work.
By using Teams as a single point of reference, students and families will be able to see homework expectations more easily, helping to ensure that tasks are completed on time and that support can be provided where needed. We encourage parents and carers to check Teams regularly with their child to stay informed about upcoming homework and deadlines.

Year 11 Prep and Intervention
Year 11 Prep and tutor-led intervention programmes are now fully underway. Students are receiving targeted support to help address gaps in knowledge, strengthen examination skills and build confidence ahead of their GCSE examinations.
We encourage all Year 11 students to engage fully with these opportunities and to attend intervention sessions they are invited to to make the most of the support available. Working together, we can ensure every student is well prepared and able to achieve their full potential.

Safeguarding - Staying Safe as the Evenings get Darker

As we move into autumn and the evenings become darker earlier, we would like to remind families about the importance of helping young people stay safe when travelling to and from school and spending time in the local community.
Please talk with your child about planning safe routes home, staying with friends where possible, keeping their phone charged and letting a trusted adult know where they are and when they expect to return. We also encourage students to

remain aware of their surroundings, particularly when wearing headphones or using their phones.
If your child experiences or witnesses something that makes them feel unsafe in the community, please encourage them to speak to a trusted adult and, where appropriate, report concerns to the police. Students can also speak to any member of staff at school if they are worried about themselves or somebody else.

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility, and by continuing these conversations at home and in school, we can help our young people make safe choices and look out for one another.

- Avon and Somerset Police – Staying Safe in Public Places: Practical local advice about personal safety, travelling safely and what to do if you feel unsafe.
  Staying Safe in Public Places – Avon and Somerset Police

- NSPCC – Keeping Children Safe Outside the Home: guidance for parents and carers covering children becoming more independent, activities outside the home and wider safeguarding risks.
  Keeping Children Safe Outside the Home – NSPCC

Clubs – Term 1
We are really proud of our personal development offer at Orchard, where we run a whole host of clubs and enrichment activities for our students. These are not only good for pupils' physical wellbeing, but also their mental health, as they are a great way for children to learn new skills and, most importantly, develop lasting friendships. Below is a link showing the clubs on offer from next week - please do encourage your child to come along. We will be adding more in the weeks to come and will inform you of the new additions. Here is a link to where clubs are listed on the website: Orchard School - Clubs and Enrichment

Attendance
Regular attendance is essential to ensuring every student can achieve their full potential. Consistent attendance supports academic progress, helps students build positive relationships with staff and peers, and ensures they do not miss valuable learning opportunities. We work closely with families to promote and maintain good attendance, and where attendance becomes a concern or begins to decline, we follow a school-wide attendance process. This includes a staged approach of letters, communication with parents or carers, and meetings where appropriate, enabling us to identify any barriers to attendance and provide support to help students attend school regularly and successfully.

It is important to note that absences during the first few weeks of the academic year can have a significant impact on a student's overall attendance percentage as we are only a few weeks into the academic year. As a result, parents and carers may soon receive attendance letters if their child has missed school since September, whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised. These letters are part of our whole-school approach to attendance monitoring and should not be viewed as punitive. Rather, they are designed to ensure families are aware of attendance levels at an early stage and to give us the opportunity to offer support, guidance, and intervention wherever needed, helping every student to attend regularly and make the most of their education.

SEND Coffee events

We have three events scheduled this year for parents and carers of students with SEND to come into school and meet the SEND team. We will also have representatives present from local groups such as Bristol Parent Carers Forum and Bristol Family Hubs.

The dates are:

- Coffee with the SEND Team 1: Tuesday 3rd Nov, 9am- 10.30am in the Library
- Tea with the SEND Team 2: Tuesday 26th January, 2pm- 3.30pm in the Library
- Coffee with the SEND Team 3: Tuesday 13th April, 9am- 10.30am in the Library

Ebenezer Church are beginning a Community Meal on the second Thursday of each month. Details are on the flyer below.

Community Events

We are delighted to share an exciting new opportunity for our students. Southmead Phoenix, Southmead's first-ever girls' rugby team, is now recruiting players aged 11-16. This is a fantastic opportunity for girls to get involved in a team sport, develop new skills, build confidence, and make new friendships in a supportive and inclusive environment.

To help introduce students to the sport, a representative from Southmead Phoenix is keen to visit the school to speak to girls during PE lessons and support a coaching session, giving them the chance to experience rugby and learn more about the club. Please find the club's promotional poster attached, which contains further information about training sessions and how to get involved. We encourage any students who may be interested to consider this exciting opportunity.

Wishing you a lovely weekend.

With best wishes,

M. Sweet

Melanie Sweet, Headteacher