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ORCHARD SCHOOL BRISTOL

INSPIRE TODAY, EMPOWER FOR LIFE

16th October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you have had a good week. This week, we have had a busy and productive penultimate week of term. Year 10 have made a brilliant impression on local employers who came to complete mock interviews on two days this week. The students were described as confident, positive and immensely likeable. These are all skills they will need in future interviews and it's a great reflection on the year group as a whole.

We have also had three students representing the school in Bristol Youth Talks, who gave outstanding speeches in front of an audience at the Bristol Youth Talk finals. They were a complete inspiration.

Next week, we also have a Year 9 kayaking trip to Bristol Harbourside, a university taster day for our young carers, a fishing trip to Clevedon and a Speak with Spark challenge workshop. Sports fixtures include Cross Country on Monday and Year 11 Girls' netball on Wednesday.

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

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 21st January 3.30 – 7pm**

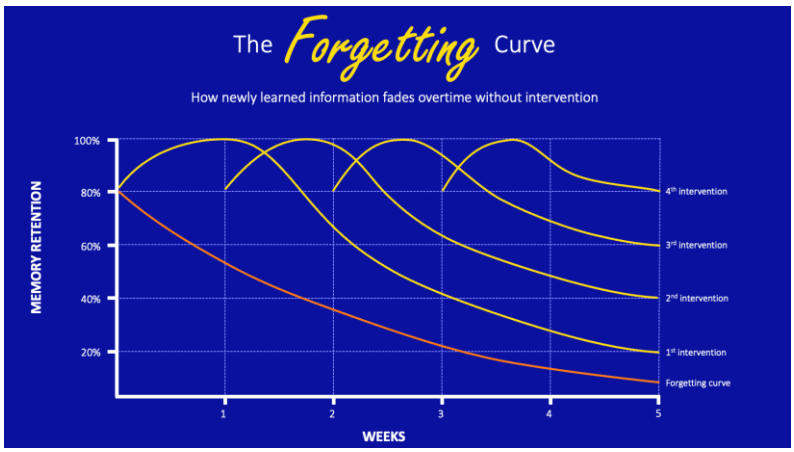
Please also note the following date:

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 - Supporting Memory Through Regular Retrieval Practice

At Orchard School, every lesson begins with a short '*Do Now*' activity. These tasks are designed with one key purpose in mind: to help strengthen students' memories and improve long-term learning.

Educational research shows that forgetting is a natural part of learning. Unless information is revisited and recalled, our memories fade over time. This pattern is often illustrated through the "forgetting curve", which shows how knowledge can be lost if it is not regularly brought back to mind. The good news is that every time we successfully recall information, we strengthen the memory and make it easier to access in the future.



You may notice from the accompanying forgetting curve diagram that memory retention can decline rapidly without opportunities to revisit learning. In simple terms, the more students practise remembering, the better they become at remembering, and that is why we quiz at the start of every lesson.

This approach also highlights the importance of excellent attendance and punctuality. Do Now activities take place immediately at the start of lessons and are carefully planned to revisit essential knowledge. Arriving late to a lesson means missing valuable opportunities to strengthen memory, consolidate previous learning and prepare for the new lesson. Missing these regular retrieval opportunities can make it more difficult for students to build the strong foundations needed for future success.

Lunch Arrangements for Year 7 and 11 – Term 2

At the start of Term 2, Year 11 students will move to the first lunch sitting. This adjustment has been made to support students who will be sitting afternoon mock examinations, giving them sufficient time to have lunch and prepare calmly before their exams begin.

Year 11 students will be based in the Small Hall canteen during Lunch 1. As a result, Year 7 students who would normally use the Small Hall canteen will instead access the Main Canteen during this period.
We appreciate that any change to established routines can cause some concern. Please be assured that staff have carefully planned these arrangements to ensure a smooth transition for all students. Additional supervision and support will be in place, and clear information will be shared with students beforehand so that they understand where they need to go and what to expect.

These temporary changes are designed to provide Year 11 students with the best possible conditions as they prepare for their mock examinations, while continuing to provide all students with a safe and positive lunchtime experience.
Thank you for your support as we implement these arrangements.

Safeguarding - **Staying Safe as the Evenings Draw In**

As we move further into autumn and the evenings become darker, we would like to remind families of the importance of keeping children safe when spending time outdoors, particularly in local parks, green spaces and recreational areas.
Whilst parks provide valuable opportunities for young people to socialise and enjoy time with friends, reduced daylight, limited visibility and quieter surroundings can increase potential safeguarding risks. Areas such as Monks Park and other local green spaces can become particularly isolated after dark, increasing the risk of young people encountering antisocial behaviour, substance misuse or situations in which they may feel vulnerable or unsafe.
We encourage parents and carers to have regular conversations with their children about where they are going, who they are spending time with and when they are expected home. Agreeing clear boundaries, encouraging young people to remain in well-lit public areas and ensuring mobile phones are charged can all help to keep them safe.
We would also encourage families to discuss peer pressure and making safe choices, particularly where young people may encounter vaping, alcohol, drugs or antisocial behaviour. It is important that children feel confident to remove themselves from uncomfortable situations, seek help from a trusted adult and understand that their personal safety should always come before pressure from others.

Clubs – Term 2

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. Here is a link to where clubs are listed on the website: Orchard School - Clubs and Enrichment

Attendance

As we continue to work together to support every student to achieve their best, I would like to remind families of the importance of regular school attendance. Every day in school matters, and we ask that, wherever possible, medical and routine appointments are arranged outside of the school day to minimise disruption to learning. If it cannot be avoided, please ensure your child is absent only for the duration of the appointment and that they attend school before and after the appointment. If your child is unwell, please refer to NHS guidance Is my child too ill for school? - NHS when deciding whether they should attend school or remain at home, as many minor illnesses do not require a child to be absent from education. This is the same for menstruation (period) pains and students should not be absent from school for this reason. We can help and support in school with this, and we have a huge variety of free period products available to anyone that needs them. These can be collected from reception, or from any office or room with a pink dot on the door.

Behaviour

As part of our commitment to maintaining high standards of behaviour and learning, I would like to remind parents and carers about our detention procedures. After-school detentions take place every day and last for 20 minutes. If a student fails to attend this detention, they will be required to attend an additional detention on the following Friday (for detentions missed Monday to Thursday) or on Monday (for a detention missed on Friday). Detentions may be issued for receiving two late marks in one day, persistent corridor defiance, missed homework at Key Stage 4, mobile phone confiscation, or following a referral to our Reset Room (formerly known as ISR). Parents and carers are notified whenever a detention is issued, and we would greatly appreciate your support in ensuring that your child attends as required.

Looking ahead, we are excited to hold our celebration assemblies next week, where year groups will come together to recognise and celebrate students' achievements so far this year. We are delighted to have a record number of students receiving attendance certificates, as well as our first recipients of Bronze House Point Certificates. We look forward to recognising the many students who consistently demonstrate our values and contribute positively to our school community.

Family Voice Survey

The Amplify Trust Family Voice Survey is now live, and all parents and carers are invited to respond. We want to work collaboratively with you to ensure the best possible experience for your children at school.

To help us improve how we communicate, work together and support transitions (moving into a new year group or school), we would like to invite you to complete our Family Voice survey. Your views will help us understand what is working well and where we can make positive changes.

You can scan the QR code below or click on the link below.
The survey closes on Monday 19th October at 4:00pm

https://participate.schoolsurveys.com/VyLHr4P7SZTNg92N

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

Community Events

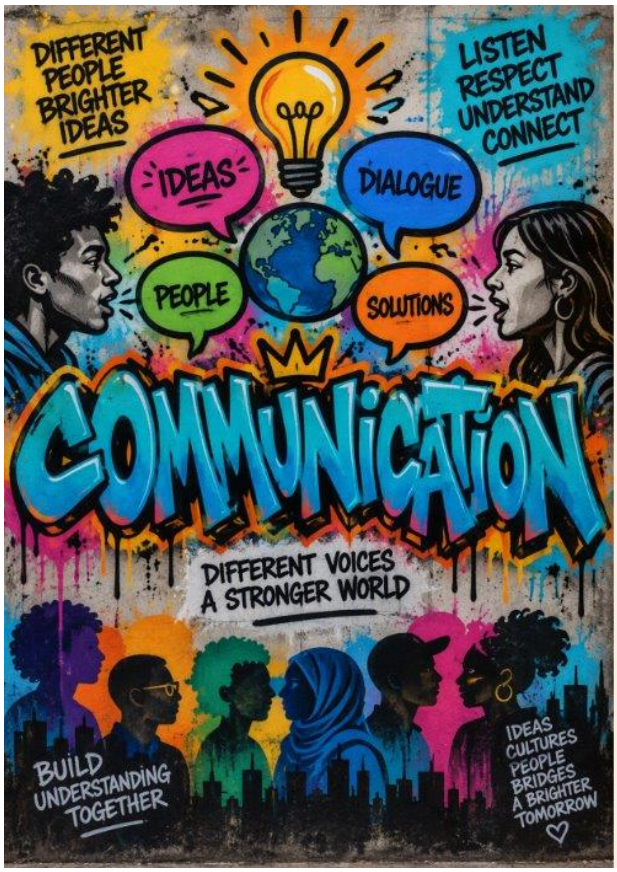
There are multi-sport holiday camps taking place during the October half term for both boys and girls aged 8-12 years old at Lockleaze Sports Centre. See the flyer below and timetable.

The camps are £21 per day and will be taking place on Tuesday 27th, Thursday 29th & Friday 30th October from 9:30am - 3:30pm. A hot lunch is included within this price for all participants.

Parents/guardians can either scan the QR Code on the attached flyer or register through the weblink: https://www.abler.io/shop/lockleazesport

Character Competition

Please see details below of the next Character Competition that we have launched to students in all year groups. Please encourage your child to enter to win a place on the graffiti workshop.



CHARACTER COMPETITION
Theme: Communication

We have 10 places available in a graffiti workshop on 3rd November. Professional artists from Graft will be running a fun, hands-on graffiti workshop at Orchard School, where you can:

- Learn about the Bristol street art scene
- Design your own graffiti lettering
- Create a graffiti name board
- Learn skills with spraypaint and stencils
- Make a stencil canvas

Please design a poster which represents the theme of 'communication'. You may create this on a PowerPoint or a one page Word document. Please make sure your choice of words is respectful and kind, should you choose to add words to your design.

Please send in designs by **9am, Friday 23rd October** to:

charactercompetition@orchard.ampedu.co.uk

from your school e-mail address.

Winners will be informed by the end of the school day on Friday 23rd October and you will be able to join other students in the Workshop in November.

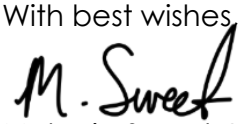
Good Luck!

Culture Day

A reminder that Friday 23rd October is going to be Culture Day in school. As with previous years, students are invited to come in wearing cultural clothing, or the colours of a world flag which is important to them. It is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our diverse community and express ourselves at the end of term!

Wishing you a lovely weekend.

With best wishes,



Melanie Sweet, Headteacher