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ORCHARD SCHOOL BRISTOL

INSPIRE TODAY, EMPOWER FOR LIFE

9th October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope that you have had a good week. This week, we have had our first subject consultation evening of the year and it was great to see so many parents and carers attending the Year 11 evening last night. Year 11 is a crucial year for our students as they prepare for their GCSEs and it is so encouraging that students have a real focus on their GCSE preparation and post-16 plans.

Today is World Mental Health Day and we have marked that at school through awareness-raising activities including staff wearing yellow to prompt conversations about mental health. The SEMH team were also out and about at break and lunch today sharing valuable information about promoting positive mental health.

We've also had some of our first sporting fixtures of the year with some great football performances by our boys this week. Earlier in the week, our Year 9 boys beat Kings Oak 4-0 and yesterday, the Under 15 boys beat Wyedean on penalties after trailing 3-1 at half time. Incredibly, our Year 8 rugby team beat Ashton Park 3-2, Redland Green School 3-0 and St Bede's 3-0, too! We are proud of such amazing results which speak to the strength of this year's teams. On top of all that, we've had a group of Year 9 students taking part in a hands-on science workshop with Science Creates.

Next week, we have Year 10 taking part in mock interviews, giving them an opportunity to have a practice interview with a business volunteer to help build confidence and valuable employability skills. We're also hosting Speak with Spark workshops, a Year 5/6 Tag Rugby Festival, and a mentoring session for some of our students run by Bristol Rovers.

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
As part of our commitment to raising standards in written communication, we are introducing a consistent Orchard Literacy Marking Code across all subjects. This will be introduced to students through their English lessons this term. Our whole-school approach uses a clear set of letters and symbols, such as 'sp' for spelling, 'p' for punctuation and // for a new paragraph, to help students identify and understand feedback on their writing. Every student will have a reference sticker on the front of their exercise books with a summary of the code, and they will be expected to actively reflect on and improve their work using red pen during dedicated feedback time in class. By embedding these consistent prompts across the entire curriculum, we aim to improve literacy, as well as build confidence, independence, and pride in Orchard students' written work.

Safeguarding – Healthy friendships and Positive Relationships
This week, we would like to encourage families to talk with their children about the importance of healthy friendships and positive relationships.
As young people grow and develop, friendships can change, and navigating these relationships can sometimes be challenging. It is important that our students understand what positive friendships look like, including mutual respect, kindness, trust and feeling comfortable being themselves.
We encourage parents and carers to talk with their children about recognising unhealthy friendships, particularly where they may feel pressured to behave in ways they would not normally choose, feel excluded or worry about upsetting others by saying no.
Please remind your child that a good friend will respect their boundaries and never pressure them into doing something that makes them uncomfortable.
At Orchard School Bristol, we want every young person to feel safe, valued and that they belong. If you have any concerns about your child's friendships or wellbeing, please contact their Head of Year so that we can work together to provide support.

Healthy Relationships and Friendships- information for parents — Teen Health 11 - 19 Service

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

As we enter the final two weeks of term and the colder, darker mornings arrive, our message to families is a simple one: every day in school matters. We know this is the time of year when coughs, colds and seasonal illnesses become more common, and of course children who are genuinely too unwell to attend should remain at home. However, where students are well enough, we need them in school, every day and on time, so they do not miss valuable learning. To help everyone start those colder mornings positively, all students are warmly invited to join us for a hot breakfast before school, from 7.50am. Thank you to our families for continuing to prioritise attendance and helping us ensure that every student finishes the term strongly.

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

Kinship Care

We know that every child's journey is unique, and some are cared for by relatives, family friends, or other trusted adults. This is called kinship care.

The Department for Education has issued updated guidance to help schools better understand and support children in kinship care. This includes:

- Recognising the important role kinship carers play in a child's life.
- Ensuring children in kinship care have access to the right emotional, academic, and pastoral support.
- Working closely with carers to create a safe, inclusive, and understanding school environment.

If your child is in kinship care, please let us know, so we can make sure they receive the right support. This might include:

- Additional pastoral check-ins.
- Help with transitions between classes or key stages.
- Access to wellbeing resources and activities.

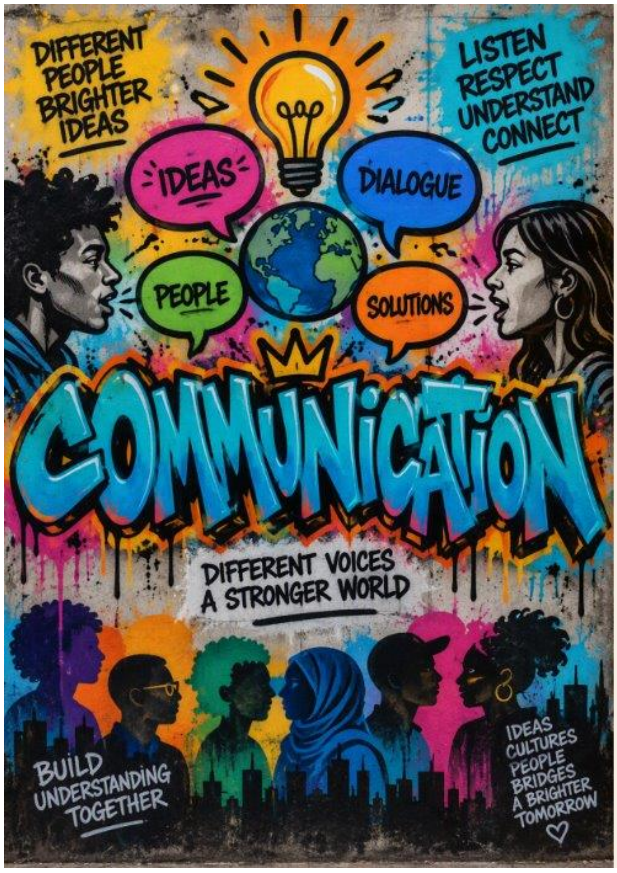
SEND Coffee events

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

Character Competition

Please see details below of the next Character Competition that we have launched to students today. 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!

Community Events

Ignite Sport offers a tremendous opportunity for disabled, deaf and neurodivergent young people to try locally based inclusive sport. Please see their flyer below for details of their Winter Inclusive Multi-sport Festival in November:

On Friday 23rd October, we will be holding our first **Culture Day** of 26-27 in school. This is a chance to celebrate our diverse school community and all our different backgrounds. As in previous years, students and staff are invited to wear cultural clothing, or the colours of a world flag which is important to them. We cannot wait to celebrate this day together at the end of term!

Wishing you a lovely weekend.

With best wishes

M. Sweet

Melanie Sweet, Headteacher