

News Hub



MARCH
2026

Update from the Headteacher and The Senior Leadership Team



Introducing, Director for Special Education Neil Strain
Many of you may have already seen a new face around the school or at recent school events. Neil joined the Trust Senior Leadership Team in September as our Director for Special Education.

Since his arrival, Neil has hit the ground running, leading the strategic development of our SEND Hub. An experienced leader with a career starting in 2007, Neil has a proven track record of leading Outstanding Special schools, developing inclusive curriculum models, and conducting SEND reviews to improve outcomes for vulnerable learners. By spending his first two terms deeply embedded in our schools, Neil has been ensuring statutory compliance and driving inclusive teaching and learning across the Trust. We are delighted to have his expertise guiding our vision for every student.

As we reach the end of a busy and productive Spring Term, we would like to share some updates regarding our staff team.

We are saying goodbye to Pip, Magda, and Aneesa, who are moving on to new chapters. We would like to thank them for their dedication and the positive impact they have had on our students; we wish them every success in their future endeavours.

Looking ahead to the summer term, we are delighted to welcome Habiba, Gail, and Miklos to the team. We are also thrilled to welcome back Jasmine, who returns to us from maternity leave. Handover periods are already underway to ensure a smooth transition for all students after the Easter break.

We wish you all a wonderful Easter holidays.
Oak Tree Senior Leadership Team



Primary and Secondary Update

Primary

It has been a vibrant half term across our Primary Phase, with our various topics sparking immense engagement. Years 5 and 6 have dived into their 'Monsters' topic, while Years 3 and 4 have been exploring the depths of the ocean through 'Under the Sea' projects. For our students in Years 1 and 2, the 'Wonderful Weather' topic has provided a brilliant platform for sensory exploration and tracking the changing seasons. Students have engaged positively with the community visits this half term and are transferring their skills with support out in different contexts. We celebrated World Book Day, reading and sharing stories as well as some great costumes as our favourite characters.

A particular highlight was the arrival of our new ducklings. Watching them hatch to join our ever growing animal provision here at Oak Tree has been a source of pure joy for students and staff alike!



Secondary

It has been a short but sweet half-term for our students in Secondary. We have celebrated Holi through a whole-school cultural day, participated in a 'dance-athon' for Comic Relief, and taken part in Careers Week, to name just a few highlights!

Careers Week saw visiting professionals come and speak to the students about their roles, including a train driver, a postman, and a medical supplies engineer. It has been a busy term for academic learning, too. In Food Technology, Year 9 have been mastering different types of pastry, including profiteroles and flaky pastry from scratch. In Performing Arts, Year 9 have used their teamwork skills to solve a 'spy mission' through movement, while Years 7 and 8 have been learning cultural dances from around the world. Meanwhile, in Science, Year 8 have been applying their knowledge of light and shadow to create their own shadow puppet shows, a brilliant blend of science, art, and drama.

Year 9 have also been introduced to their new pathways for Key Stage 4, and we look forward to exploring these further with them in the coming months.

With the arrival of the sunshine, students have been busy in our land-based area, planting bulbs, tending to the chickens, and painting planters to add a personal touch. We are all looking forward to spending more time outside as the weather continues to improve. Finally, Years 7 and 8 have been working hard towards their reward trips; visits to Dinton Pastures and Lucky's Diner were huge hits with the young people on the last day of term.

We look forward to seeing what the summer term brings!



Family Support Worker

Since joining in December, it has been a pleasure to get to know you and your children. I have been able to visit some families at home which has been lovely and have visited new starters with our Admissions Manager, Suzie. We have planned informal get togethers each term - CONNECT@OTS. The next one is due to take place on **Thursday 4th June at 2pm** and it would be great to see you there. This is an opportunity to meet with other parents and carers and offer support to one another. I will send a reminder nearer the time. Next term we will be sending out a questionnaire so you can share your views about the support we offer. This will include feedback about training on topics such as sleep, eating, behaviour, social media etc. I have included some links to information you may find helpful:



Autism Parent Programmes by ASSIST (National Autistic Society Licensed)
The EarlyBird, EarlyBird Plus, and Teen Life programmes are developed by the National Autistic Society and delivered locally by...
Wokingham Directory



Autism Advisor to Families in Reading
Autism Advisory Service - What we Do... Autism Advisor to families in Reading. Provide support to...
Reading Directory



Upcoming Events, Workshops, Courses & Support Groups
Find out about Parenting Special Children's upcoming events, workshops, courses and support groups on this...
Parenting Special Children



Autism Central - England's Peer Education Programme | Autism Central
Autism Central offers a wealth of resources for parents, carers and personal assistants of autistic people in England...
autismcentral.org.uk

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Home

UPDATE: As part of our change to a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) status, we have opened a new bank account. If you make regular donations, or would like...

Camp Mohawk /



About the Raft Club, Reading
RAFT runs out of The Avenue School, Tilehurst for two hours on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of every month during term-time. We employ 6 Play Workers, who are all qualified...
The Raft Club



Swings & Smiles | Support for Disabled Children
Discover Swings & Smiles, a warm and inclusive space offering play sessions, respite care for families, sibling...
Swings And Smiles

We are all enjoying glimpses of the spring sunshine and looking forward to the summer term.

Please come in for a chat when you need to, call or email me.

Joanna



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Curriculum at OTS

At Oak Tree School, we recognise that our students have a wide range of individual needs, which is common in a setting that supports young people with autism and associated complex needs. To best meet these needs, we offer a number of tailored curriculum pathways designed to support each student's unique strengths, abilities, and learning styles. As students progress into Key Stage 4, we will introduce additional pathways that focus on preparing them for adulthood and their next steps beyond school. These options will be refined and explained to parents of Year 9 students before being shared with all families.

This approach reflects what all Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools strive to do, ensuring that students are not set up to fail, but are instead supported through pathways that are carefully matched to their individual needs, interests, and future aspirations. Our overarching aim is to nurture independence and equip our students with the skills they need for later life. We are deeply committed to supporting the whole child - focusing not only on academic progress, but equally on personal, social, emotional, and life skills development to help each student thrive both in and beyond the classroom

Curriculum at OTS		
Immersive/ Meadow	Flexible/ Emerald	Concrete/ Forest
<p>Meadow learners have complex learning needs.</p> <p>This curriculum is designed to enable students to learn functional skills and experience a range of activities through meeting students' sensory needs.</p> <p>The focus is on developing key skills of communication, cognition, independence and personal care in an engaging and stimulating environment.</p> <p>Immersive/ Meadow learners are unlikely to go on to further education or a workplace.</p> <p><u>Therapeutic Input may be significant in order for them to meet their goals.</u></p> <p>Teaching and learning is sensory based with opportunities for practice and repetition.</p> <p>The progress is evidenced through engagement and participation in the process of learning.</p>	<p>Emerald <u>follow a flexible curriculum</u>.</p> <p>Students have significant learning difficulties, and some may have a complexity of needs and emergent communication, social and interaction skills.</p> <p>The focus on this pathway is a narrower selection of options which may be linked to employability.</p> <p>Flexible/ Emerald learners have an Inconsistent profile and learn best through a combination of experiential learning and a topic-based approach.</p> <p>Life skills permeate the <u>curriculum</u> and it focuses on real life experiences and application in engaging and stimulating environments.</p> <p>Students <u>have the opportunity to pursue accreditation in Entry Levels, Functional Skills and Level 1 courses</u> at KS4. Some</p>	<p>Forest learners have developing communication, social and interaction skills.</p> <p>They have a more consistent learning profile and are able to access a range of subjects for their key stage, at age related expectations.</p> <p>It aims to develop higher order thinking skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving as well as functional skills, employability and independence skills.</p> <p>Concrete/ Forest learners are able to access lessons delivered in a more traditional format.</p> <p>Students <u>have the opportunity to pursue formal level 2 qualifications at KS4 such as GCSEs, IGCSEs and AlmVoc courses.</u></p>



PTA at OTS

The PTA has been busy behind the scenes over the past few months, meeting with potential grant charities and working through the process of becoming a registered charity so we can better support the school and our children. We were delighted with the fantastic turnout at last week's coffee morning — thank you to everyone who came along and helped make it such a welcoming and successful event. Your support and involvement make a real difference, and we're excited to share more updates and opportunities to get involved as the year continues.



Shannon: Our newly appointed chairman of the PTA and also serves as a parent representative on the school board. With a professional background in resource management in the private pensions sector, she contributes skills in strategic planning and operational support. As the parent of a child with profound autism, she is particularly passionate about inclusion, communication and ensuring every child has the opportunity to succeed. She looks forward to working with the school community to support ongoing improvements and strengthen collaboration between families and staff.



Grace: Hi, I'm a mum of two girls, including one in Year 2 at Oak Tree. I've been part of a PTA before and loved seeing the joy it brought to the children and the difference it made to the school. I work as an EA and do lots of event planning! So, I'm really excited to get involved, support the team and help make great things happen for our school community.

PTA at OTS



Sarah: Hi, I have a son in year 9. I also serve as a parent representative on the school advisory board along with Shannon. After spending most of my working life as a pensions consultant, I am using my lived life experience of parenting a neurodiverse child and have recently started a new role and am now working for an organisation who support families like ours. I am excited to be involved with the PTA to support fundraising that will benefit all of the amazing young people at Oak Tree.



Michelle: Hi, I'm a mum of three, with one of my children currently attending Oak Tree School. He has autism and global developmental delay and he experiences significant sensory and selective needs around food, smells and textures. Through our journey, I've learned the importance of patience, understanding and strong home-school communication. I'm joining the PTA because I'm passionate about helping create an inclusive, supportive environment where all children and their families feel understood, welcomed and valued.



Cath: A mum to 3 autistic children with my middle daughter in Year 7 at Oak Tree. I am a Primary School Teacher in Woodley so have the experience of working within a school team. I am excited to join the PTA to help support our children by raising vital funds for resources to be used in school. I am looking forward to meeting more parents from the Oak Tree community and working together to achieve the very best for the children.



Sophie: A teacher with over 25 years experience, who now works in Higher Education, specialising in teacher training. As a parent to a Year 3 girl, she is passionate about neuro advocacy, education and Autism awareness, particularly in relation to female Autism. She has joined the PTA as she wants to contribute towards creating opportunities for all the students at Oak Tree. We look forward to working together to make great things happen for our children.

Dates For The Diary

13th April 2026 - School re-opens

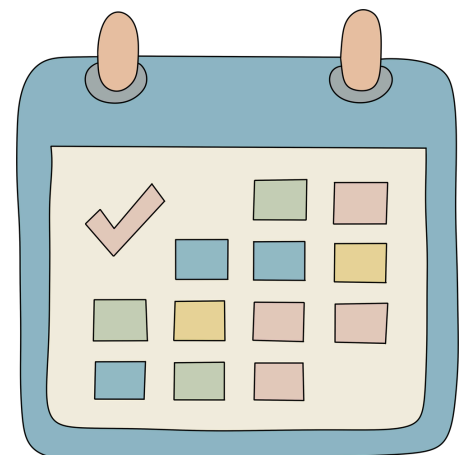
14th April 2026 - Songkran Cultural Day

17th April 2026 - Easter Bonnet Parade

21st April - 2026 - HPV immunisation - (Year 8 Only)

4th May 2026 - Bank Holiday

25th - 29th May 2026 (School Holidays)



The Term In Pictures

