



As we step back into the rhythm of school life after the refreshing Easter break, I extend a warm welcome to each of you.

This week, I had the privilege of introducing our two new vice principals to you all. Their arrival brings with it a wave of enthusiasm and fresh perspectives, promising an exciting chapter for our academy. I am confident that their dedication and expertise will enrich the learning journey of every student here, contributing to a thriving academic community.

To our Year 11 students, welcome back for one last stretch before the exam season commences. This final lap is crucial, demanding your utmost focus and dedication. I urge families to rally behind our Year 11s, offering unwavering support and encouragement as they navigate through this critical phase. Independent study at home will be key in ensuring they are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to excel. Let us empower them to seize every opportunity and strive for the outcomes they truly deserve.

Together, let's embark on this next chapter with determination, resilience, and a shared commitment to academic excellence.

**Kelly Hassall**  
Principal

## WORLD BOOK DAY WINNERS 2024!!!



Congratulations to our students who were the winners of the OAT World Book Day trophy for the school with the most participants taking part in their reading challenge.

We had 833 students who participated in the reading challenge in the lead up to WBD. A massive well done to Mrs George for promoting the importance of reading.



## DIARY DATES

**Wednesday 17th April**  
Year 9 Options Evening

**Tuesday 7th May**  
GCSE Exams begin

**Wednesday 8th May**  
Year 10 Parent's Evening

**Friday 24th May**  
Last day of term

**Monday 3rd June**  
Students return to the academy

## POETS CORNER

**'Big Fat Liar' by Ezara W,**  
**OSSMA Poet Laureate, 2024**

They're playing with God but I can't tell

Is this heaven, or is this hell?

The unknown truth that just can't be

So I cry and cry, till I can't see.

I want it to be a lie,

But I know it is the truth.

That I'm a nobody

Under this nobody's roof.



## INTRODUCING OUR NEW VICE PRINCIPALS

We are pleased to introduce our new Vice Principals, Mrs Joanne Croft and Mrs Sarah Williams. Both have joined the academy this week and are quickly becoming part of our OSSMA family.



***Mrs Sarah Williams***

Mrs Williams is our Designated Safeguarding Lead and also the academy lead for Welfare and Behaviour. She has a large area of responsibility but brings a wealth of experience from different settings within Stoke-on-Trent. Utilising her Fashion and Textiles degree, Mrs Williams started her career as an art/photography teacher and has experienced numerous leadership roles in all areas of secondary school.

Mrs Williams said, "I am incredibly passionate about secondary education. It is during this time that students truly develop a sense of identity and autonomy, which makes it crucial that we care for, support, and challenge them. I strongly believe in providing the best learning environment for all students, rewarding all, and also removing any barriers to ensure all can succeed.

Mrs Williams has over ten years of experience as a pastoral leader. During this time, she was responsible for the pastoral and academic needs of all students at every key stage.

"My aim is to ensure that our academy environment is safe and calm and supports the learning and well-being of students through a strong sense and understanding of our values."

The pastoral care at OSSMA is designed to ensure that all students are individually known and supported by as many staff as possible to ensure they maximise their potential. It is crucial that all students feel valued and that they are an important part of our school community.

Mrs Williams looks forward to meeting you all and supporting your child's educational journey at OSSMA.



***Mrs Joanne Croft***

Mrs Croft is responsible for the Quality of Education across the academy. This is a crucially important area, but she brings a wealth of experience from different settings having worked in leadership in a school with an outstanding grading for Quality of Education as well as a school with a more challenging setting.

Starting her teaching career as an English teacher, Mrs Croft gained experience as a subject lead, standards lead and has led on achievement and curriculum. This experience has developed an extensive knowledge of research around education to ensure that every child can achieve results to fulfil their potential.

Mrs Croft said, "My aim for OSSMA is to create an environment where students love to learn and see the benefit of having a high-quality education. OSSMA has a fantastic reputation across the city and this is something I want to build on so that students develop a lifelong love for learning."

Mrs Croft spent a large proportion of her career ensuring that academic progress, for all students, regardless of ability or background, was a central purpose. She said: "Creating an environment where students love to learn and are both supported and challenged is my utmost priority. I am a firm believer that this is achieved by working as part of a team – including pastoral and inclusion staff – to ensure that every child can reach their potential and can feel proud of their achievements."

"I have been impressed by the students that I have met so far, both with their attitude to learning and their keenness to make suggestions for improvement. I look forward to working with all staff and students to make OSSMA an enriching and positive learning environment."

# THE MERCIANs

All students were welcomed back after the Easter break by the upcoming indie rock band, The Mercians.

The band performed a mixture of their own songs and cover songs that the students may know, including their UK chart hit, Polaroid which reached number 2 in the charts and their upcoming new release, I Don't Mind.

The band also spoke about mental health and their own experiences and things they would change if they had the chance. They highlighted the importance of talking to people you trust. The talk also had a focus on mental health in boys and the fact that boys don't need to be alpha males and solve the world alone.

They also covered the topic of misogyny (which was our wow word of the week at the time). The talk was delivered with such confidence and positivity.

All year groups thoroughly enjoyed the session and it was an enthusiastic start to the summer term.



## DEAR BOOK REVIEW: 'WITCH CHILD' BY CELIA REES

**Reviewed by M. Terfouss, 7PP**

"Witch Child is an interesting book full of adventure, challenge and jealousy. Mary is a girl who questions her life. Who is my mother? Is my grandmother a witch? Am I a witch?"

Join Mary on an amazing journey, each stop uncovering a clue to solve the mystery of her life.

This book shows CREECK values of resilience and challenge. Mary does not give up despite the difficulties she faces.

Personally, I liked Witch Child because it gets you thinking about what might happen next and it gets your curiosity working overtime! However, the ending was quite disappointing for it leaves you on a cliffhanger.

Overall, it is a good book. It has quite mixed emotions: sorrow, anger, revenge and unworthiness.

I think this book would appeal to teens and above because it has some unfamiliar vocabulary. To anyone who likes mystery or witchcraft or problem solving, this book is for you."

**Reviewed by Noah Tomlinson, 7PP**

"Witch Child is a book which is set during the end of the English civil war in 1654, in Old England and New England. It tells the story of Mary who is suspected to be a witch. After her grandmother is executed, Mary moves to America, making the long eight-week journey on a ship to start a new life with a group of people in New England. They disembark at Salem where they run into a native Indian camp and decide to settle there.

Mary, who is the main character, shows our core values of challenge and resilience as she faces her fears when everyone suspects her of being a witch.

Personally, I think that Witch Child was not such an engaging book due to its lacklustre ending with Mary running away. If I had written Witch Child, I would end the book by giving Mary powers."



# ORACY AND READING FOCUS

## TOPICAL TALK FESTIVAL

Certification has arrived confirming OSSMA as an 'Outstanding Class' in The Economist's Topical Talk Festival 2024.

A selected group of talented speakers, chosen by the English department from all classes across the age and ability range, took part in the eight-week festival where they discussed topics such as artificial intelligence, climate change, female representation in the media and the enhanced Olympics with other students from around the world. The festival culminated with students producing a final standpoint expressing their opinion on any of the topics that they found most engaging.

As a school, OSSMA took 2nd place in the OAT school's group and 7th place in the United Kingdom (All school categories.) This is a fantastic achievement! Our students have been brilliant throughout the festival.

Particular commendation goes to the following students:

**Year 9** - Lylah S - 6th place in the United Kingdom, 2nd place OAT school group winner and Outstanding Student award.

**Year 9** - Shelby H - 7th place in the UK, 3rd place OAT school group winner and Outstanding Student award

**Year 9** - Archer M - 6th place winner OAT school group.

**Year 10** - Charlie B - 9th place winner OAT school group.

Well done all on your outstanding achievements which demonstrate OSSMA orators can compete on the world platform, expressing their thoughts articulately and with great success. Go OSSMA oracy!

**Mrs J. George, Oracy and Literacy Lead.**



## PROMOTING READING AT OSSMA

At OSSMA, we place a strong emphasis on promoting reading for pleasure and supporting the well-being of our students. Through our core values, we aim to provide students with the necessary tools to support their mental health both in and out of school.

Starting in Year 8, students are encouraged to visit our Learning Resource Centre (LRC), where they can participate in our Well-being club. This club offers access to age-appropriate literature that can help boost confidence and build mental resilience. Additionally, we have appointed anti-bullying and well-being pupil ambassadors who provide peer-to-peer support under the guidance of our well-being coordinator.

Students can be referred to the club by their head of year, but they are also welcome to drop in and request support and guidance as needed.

Furthermore, students have access to our LRC homepage, where they can find valuable well-being information and links to safe online resources.

If you are interested in exploring our LRC Homepage, please click on the following link <https://uk.accessit.online/orm06/#!dashboard>

## ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

OSSMA is located in a pre-paid area for an emotional health resources hub. This means parents and carers can access a range of online support to better understand children's emotional health, brain development and wellbeing.

As part of our commitment to supporting mental health for your children we would like to inform you about courses available to support parents from pregnancy to young adulthood. These are available in 108 languages and have audio support so that they can be accessed by parents that may not be able to access face to face courses.

The courses are modular, with videos, simple exercises and advice, there is also an in built notepad so that parents can copy and paste the information that they have found to be most useful to access later. They can be completed over a period of time and once a parent has signed up to the in your place site, they can access all of the learning on the site free, for life [www.inourplace.co.uk](http://www.inourplace.co.uk)



[inourplace.co.uk](http://inourplace.co.uk) is brought to you by the Solihull Approach, a team of NHS psychologists and practitioners passionate about children's mental health and experienced in training and education for professionals as well as families. The Solihull Approach has an established, evidence based training offer for schools as well as a 'whole-school' mental health offer. You can find out more on their website. [www.solihullapproachparenting.co.uk](http://www.solihullapproachparenting.co.uk)



## AN EXCEPTIONAL SPORTING SUCCESS

We are always excited to hear about our students participating in out of school activities.

Recently Archer M in Year 9 travelled to Eton College in Berkshire to participate in the National Sculling Head as part of a team from Trentham Rowing Club, which is based at Trentham Gardens.

It was the teams first national event and they did amazingly well coming 3rd out of 40 clubs racing winning bronze!

This is an epic achievement for their small boat club.

Well done Archer!!

