



Dear Parents and Carer

23 January 2021

1. Safeguarding update and attached support leaflet.
2. Remote learning- helpful hints to promote good learning habits at home.
3. Reading really matters and Lockdown Literacy.

As always a huge thank you to you our parents and families for your continued support over the last few weeks. Your children have been working hard to complete their remote learning at home. Teachers across the school have been sharing with me the brilliant work being produced by your children. We will have a huge amount to recognise and to celebrate over the next term and I am already looking forward to our live achievement celebrations later in the term.

Your donations and your generosity- Over the last week, we have received a kind donation of a laptop from one of our local residents and an anonymous donation of £2500. These donations are incredibly kind and thoughtful and I am sure that they will be greatly appreciated by the students who benefit from them.

We are keeping our 'Lets Localise' laptop campaign open. You can either donate a new or used laptop, Chromebook or tablet or contribute to the laptop fund which will be used to buy Chromebooks for students. Please visit <https://www.letslocalise.co.uk/school/oxford-spires-academy/sch119431/campaigns/> for more information.

Safeguarding update- Due to the pandemic, our lives have changed significantly. With the current restrictions in place, young people are spending more of their time online. Whilst the internet is a great way to stay in touch and keep busy, it does also come with risks.

It is now more important than ever that you take the time to talk to your child/children about staying safe online. I'd like to draw your attention to the leaflet attached which gives advice in supporting young people online. If you wish to read further around online safety, I would recommend visiting the NSPCC website. If of course you have any worries or are concerned, then please do not hesitate to contact the Safeguarding team and we would also be happy to give support.

Shelley Baker (Designated Safeguarding Lead-OSA)

Remote Education (helpful hints)- We have been working with parents over the last week and many of you are telling us about what has been working well at home and the strategies that you have put in place with your children to establish good learning habits.

- Many of you have talked about the importance of establishing a regular routine. That you have tried to find the right balance for your child and the needs within your wider family.
- You are also trying to find a balance in regards to their screen time, you are encouraging them to read a book or complete some of their work off screen when is not needing to be screen based.
- You have also talked about your children benefitting from taking regular breaks, you have been breaking the day up with a family lunch, small activity or a walk/ walking the dog.

I am concerned that they are completing their work too quickly:

- Many of you are encouraging your child to read back through their own work and to check and improve it before they submit it to their teacher.
- Students might also be completing the extension work or extended reading around their subjects.
- Some students are choosing to peer assess work with their friends in their class and then use this feedback to make improvements before they submit their work to their teacher.



I am worried that my child is struggling to complete and manage all of the work:

- Students could experiment and set themselves a timer (60-80 minutes per lesson). This will help them to manage their time over the course of the day.
- You have been encouraging your child to speak to their teacher and give feedback and ask for help, to talk with a friend in their lesson or group and discuss this together, or to seek help from an older sibling.
- If students are worried and becoming anxious you have been contacting us and we have been able to work with you and support your child to put in place strategies which have helped.

Reading Really Matters: Reading matters, maybe even more than any subject you study at school. Why? Because every day, in every lesson, in every subject you will be required to read in some form: questions, textbooks, teachers' feedback, internet pages or task instructions. Therefore, we at OSA believe reading is vital to your personal success in life but just how much it can impact you may be surprising.

- **Reading** is exercise for your brain. Your brain is a muscle that strengthens as it processes words and meaning, so that reading actually changes your brain's structure.
- **Reading** can make you smarter, it teaches knowledge, vocabulary, structure and word definitions. So, your ability to communicate effectively grows each time you read. Children who read books often at age 10 and more than once a week at age 16 gain higher results in all subjects including maths at age 16 than those who read less regularly.
- **Reading** makes you more empathetic. This is the ability to recognise and understand other people's emotions and therefore improves your ability to build better relationships.
- **Reading** encourages creativity. It sparks the imagination and opens our minds to new ideas and concepts.
- **Reading** fosters ingenuity and inventiveness.
- **Reading** changes the range of words at your disposal, giving you greater choice and the words to fully express yourself. Your vocabulary and reading age are the most important indicator of later success at school. Want to get a grade 9? you need to read!

Reading for pleasure has been shown to reduce stress and depression and give stronger feelings of relaxation than from watching television or engaging with technology. Studies have also shown that those who read for pleasure have higher self-esteem and are better equipped to cope with difficult situations. This is all vital in the present pandemic.

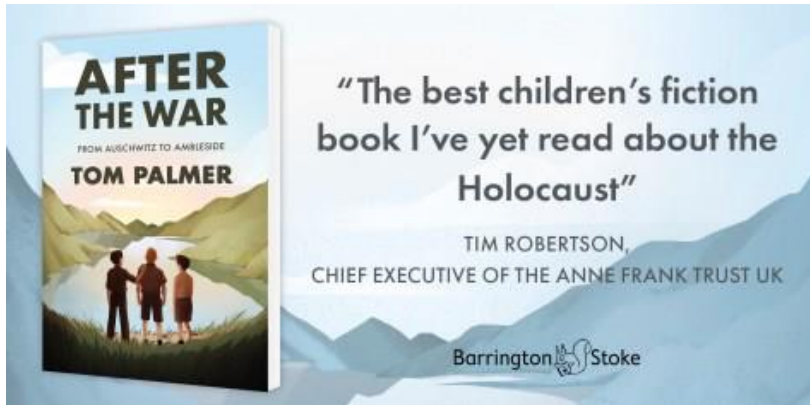
Reading for 20 minutes before you sleep has been shown to improve sleeping patterns and help you live longer. If you can read well and you view reading as the source of information, then for the rest of your life you will have access to all of our accumulated knowledge, access to all of the great minds and ideas of the past and present.

"The more you **read**
the more **things** you know.
The more that you **learn**
the more **places** you'll go."
-Dr. Seuss



Lockdown Literacy at OSA

Lockdown Literacy provides a real opportunity to bring our school together through reading. We have got the ball rolling with our OSA Words of Value book lists. These are 8 reading books that link to our school ethos of becoming the best individual you can be. Each book has been chosen specifically for each year group to develop our student's awareness of personal strengths when faced with adversity. The books aim to provide differing perspectives and experiences of the world and develop understanding of what it means to be part of a community. The 8 books for each year group will be read to our students throughout the year to provide a common experience linked to the pleasure of being read to.



We are pleased to announce that our first book will be *After the War* by Tom Palmer. It is appropriate at this time as it links to the current Holocaust Memorial Week. We are privileged to have a live intro from the author and he will also read the first chapter of the book on **Monday 25th January**. Throughout the week there will be other guest readers from a range of school staff. The book will be shown on screen for students to follow along at home.

The reading will take place at 1.45pm to 2.15pm each day on Teams. Please do join us!

Sixth Form Update & Notices

Joining Sixth Form- Thanks to all those in Year 11 and their parents who attended the Sixth Form subject open evening on Wednesday 20 January. I hope you found it helpful. A reminder that we would like application forms for OSA Sixth Form (available on the website at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScFvgBgaMBVDGhurtjygmGBWsAjl_9BNA6NmIUIdQRXLzykCA/viewform) submitted by the end of January.

College Applications- If Year 11 students are thinking about an application to Oxford City College, please see the attached letter for information on their open events. Students have had an email about applications to Oxford City College, and to Abingdon and Witney College from Dr Watson on 21 January.

Careers Support- Year 11 should now have had their individual careers appointment with Mr Bingham (either in person or, after lockdown, by phone). This is followed up with an emailed Action Plan. If any student has not had this meeting, or would like a follow up appointment, please can they email Dr Watson.

Considering Medicine- Year 12 for any students considering Medicine will find they are invited to OSA MedSoc events via Teams over the next week. Please make sure Dr Watson knows you are interested in a medical career, if she isn't already, to be added to this list. Year 10 and 11 students who are considering Medicine have also been asked to let Dr Watson know, as some MedSoc events, and wider invitations from universities, are open to them too.

Sixth Form Debating- Any Sixth Former interested in learning to debate is encouraged to contact Daisy in Year 12, who has sent an email to all students. She is going to convene a Teams debate club.

Active Learning- There is an invitation attached also for any student (aged 12 to 16) interested in Art to join Activate Learning's free Saturday Art Club (delivered, at the moment, via virtual sessions).

CATCH IT! BIN IT! KILL IT!



We will try to keep you informed of any changes to the exam and grading system for this academic year. I hope to be able to share further exam information with Year 11 and Year 13 students over the next two weeks. Until we know the finalised approach for this year, please keep trying your best to complete all of the tasks requested of you from your teachers and keep revising for Mocks/Exams as all of this work will still go towards your final grades and assessments.

I hope that you continue to find these updates useful and helpful, please do encourage your children to take part in our daily Lockdown Literacy live sessions and encourage them as much as possible to continue reading.

Best of wishes
Marianne Blake