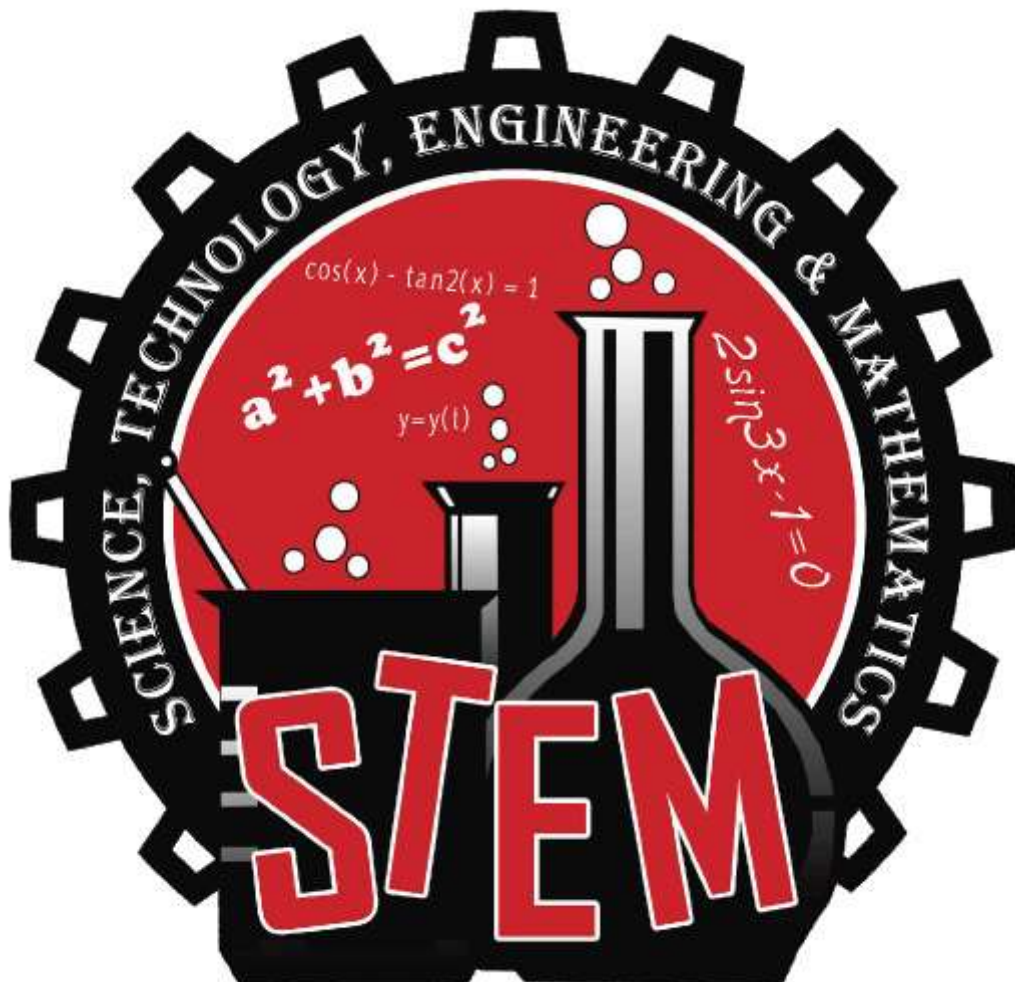




CHALLENGE WEEK

23rd – 26th June 2026



YEAR 8 STEM WEEK

Dear Parents / Carers

Challenge Week is an Oaklands tradition dating back to 1987. Over that time successive dedicated teams of staff have formed a Challenge Week Group who work together to put together a fantastic week of enrichment activities.

Challenge Week is intended to allow students to have fun whilst learning; spending time with teachers and other students outside of the classroom environment, free from the constraints of a timetable. It is a genuine opportunity to work in a cross-curricular way and to learn new information and skills that we could not deliver through our normal curriculum and timetable structure.

All students in Years 7, 8 and 9 will have an assembly outlining the 'theme' of their respective weeks. This booklet is intended to give you all the information you need as parents / carers about what your child will be doing each day of the week and so I would encourage you to read it carefully and keep it somewhere safe. Copies can also be found on the school website.

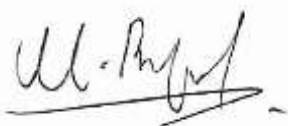
Staff have worked incredibly hard to put together imaginative, creative and student- friendly activities which have educational value as well as allowing students to have fun and work with each other to produce something which is both tangible and meaningful.

Parental support for the week is vital if it is to be a success. We hope that by reading through what your child will be engaged in you will recognise the wonderful learning opportunities that your son or daughter will be involved in and you will encourage them to take a full and active part in the week.

Finally, the school continues to subsidise Challenge Week in order to support the cost of specific activities and to allow us to offer a full and fun week at a reasonable price to yourselves.

My special thanks go to this year's Challenge Week Group and to all our dedicated staff who have worked hard to plan and prepare this week for our students.

With best wishes

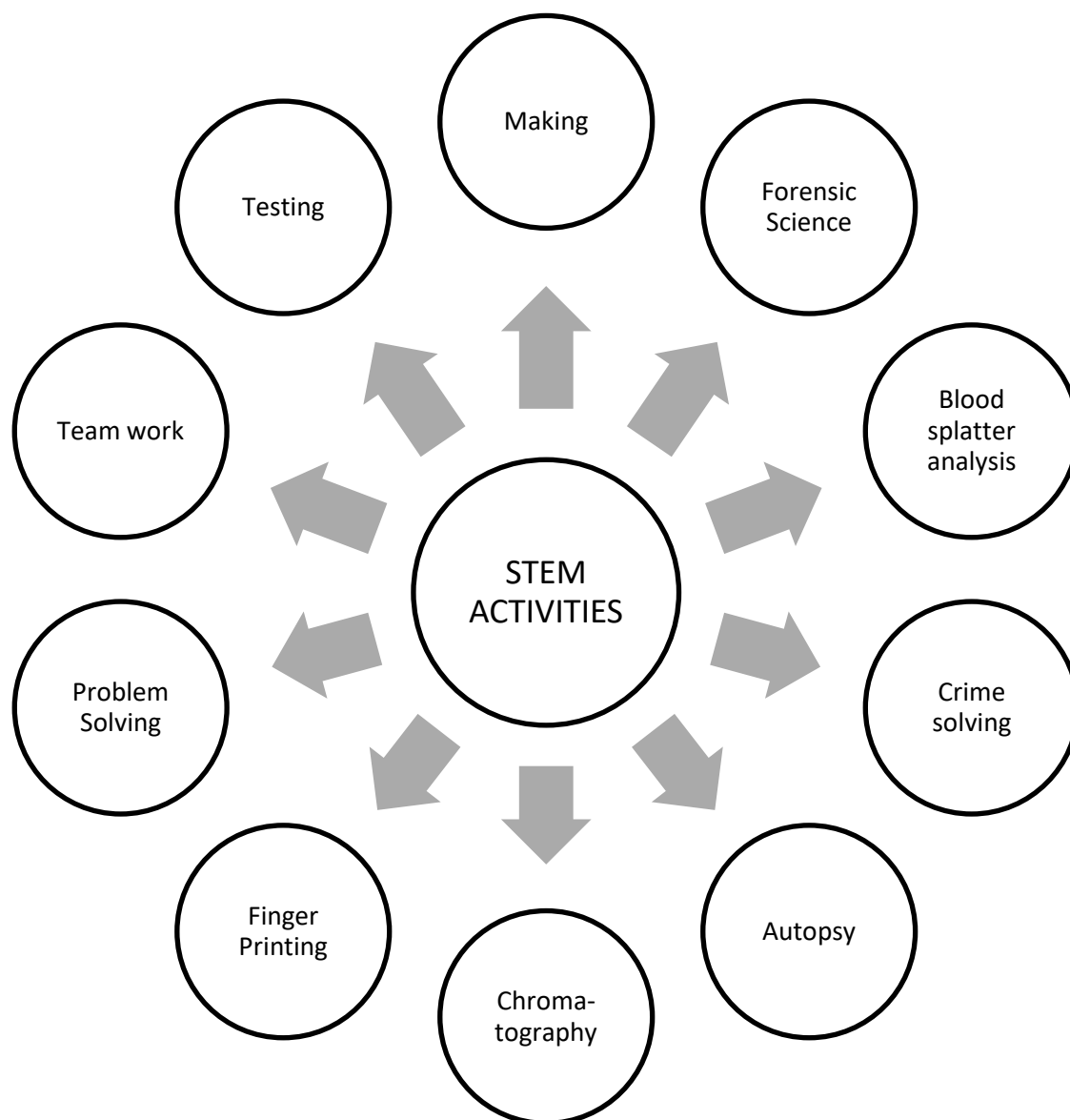


Mark Bamford
Assistant Headteacher

What does STEM Week involve?

Over the course of the week, you will spend a day in each of the Science, Maths and Design and Technology Departments doing a variety of STEM related activities. On the Thursday you will spend a day at Thorpe Park and will have the opportunity to explore STEM in action.

The diagram below shows the kind of activity you will be involved in



ALL THE IN-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES CAN GET MESSY!

DON'T WEAR YOUR BEST CLOTHES

WEAR SENSIBLE SHOES

OVERVIEW OF THE WEEK

DAY	GROUP	ACTIVITY	LOCATION
Tuesday 23 June	Group 1	D&T Activities	A1,2+4
	Group 2	Science Activities	Kolbe Block
	Group 3	Maths Activities	Thomas More Block
Wednesday 24 June	Group 1	Science Activities	Kolbe Block
	Group 2	Maths Activities	Thomas More Block
	Group 3	D&T Activities	A1,2+4
Thursday 25 June	Group 1	Maths Activities	Thomas More Block
	Group 2	D&T Activities	A1,2+4
	Group 3	Science Activities	Kolbe Block
Friday 26 June	ALL GROUPS AT THORPE PARK		

THE TOTAL COST FOR YEAR 8

CHALLENGE WEEK IS £35

Please note that although voluntary contributions are asked towards the week, these contributions are essential if the week's activities are to run. As with all trips and activities and in accordance with the Governors' Charges and Remissions Policy if parents are reluctant to support these events through donations, then planned activities will not take place due to lack of other funding being available.

**Pupil Premium students will have the cost of the week
funded from the Government grant.**

D&T Activities

You will be given a design brief to create an area of a Theme Park. Working in teams, you will develop a range of ideas and produce a model to communicate your final design. By the end of the day, your team will have considered all aspects of the area, including the theme, rides, layout and decoration, food provision, souvenirs, logo, colour scheme, and any other features you feel are important.

Science Activities

You are tasked with trying to solve a murder. You will carry out a range of scientific investigations to establish who has committed the crime. Discovering the murderer is not enough, you need to have gathered and presented enough evidence to convince the jury to convict.

Working as a team you will compete against other groups to solve the crime and produce the best case for the prosecution. Can you be the best and win the prizes?

Maths Activities

We will also aim to discover the identity of a murderer. We will be using ancient code breaking techniques as well as modern code solving strategies to whittle down our list of suspects. You will also discover that the dimensions of Oaklands Catholic School hide a very dark motive for the murder. By working in groups, you can experience what the day in the life of a real detective is like.

Information for students relating to the Thorpe Park Trip (Friday 26th June)

Before the trip

- Make sure you know who your group leader is and what coach you will be travelling in – this information will be given to you by your tutor.
- If you suffer from travel sickness, please make sure you take any medication required in good time.
- Please dress for the changeable British weather. There is not a great deal of cover so please be prepared for rain and wear sensible flat footwear.
- Make sure you have sun cream and a hat; there are shaded areas provided throughout the park.
- Make sure you are suitably dressed.

Departure from Oaklands.

- See Mr Gorman if you have forgotten your coach number or group leader.
- Be in the Hall by **7:20AM on Friday 26th June** and check in with your group leader. We will board the coach and leave at **7.30AM**

On the journey

- Wear your seat belt at all times and sit in the seat properly
- Use the rubbish bags provided
- **NO** chewing gum
- You will be issued with an information sheet that you must keep with you all day.
- Make sure you have provided your group leader with your mobile phone number if you have one.

On arrival at Thorpe Park

- Wait in seats until you are instructed to leave the coach
- Make sure the coach is tidy and litter free

During the Day – PLEASE BE AWARE THAT SOME OUTLETS MIGHT BE CASHLESS.

- Stay in groups – do not leave anyone on their own
- Do not talk to or go away with strangers. The only people who will have messages for you are Oaklands teaching staff. You will be given a 'check in window' to meet with an allocated member of staff
- All Thorpe Park staff wear uniforms, and you must follow their instructions
- If it is warm, make sure you apply sun cream and drink plenty of water
- Take care when getting on and off rides
- Watch out for slippery surfaces and stairs
- Pay close attention to the warning signs on rides with regard to strobe or reduced lighting and height restrictions
- Do not leave rubbish lying around – use the bins provided
- Remember your manners at all times, say please and thank you
- The highest standards of behaviour are expected; remember you are representing the school and inappropriate behaviour will be severely dealt with. Your cooperation will ensure that everyone enjoys the day.
- Small lockers are available in the lower Dome, by Nemesis, Colossus and opposite Tidal Wave at a cost of £5.

At 4.30pm

- Make sure you have been to the toilet
- Make sure you have all your belongings
- Make your way out of the turnstiles and assemble in the ticket sales area

- Register with your group leader
- Wait there until you are asked to board the bus

Return journey to Oaklands

- The same rules apply with regard litter and chewing gum
- **We expect to be back at Oaklands by 7pm at the latest. Please make sure your parents are informed of this and are available to pick you up**
- You may bring a mobile phone if you wish so that you can call your parents if we are going to be late or early, but **you** must take care of it all day – neither the school nor Thorpe Park will take responsibility if you lose it.

*Students may wish to bring their own spending money e.g. for the gift shops, and we would advise an amount of £10 **maximum** for the day. However, some outlets could be cashless, so be prepared for this.*

Students are advised to bring a packed lunch as prices for food and drink in the park are expensive.

The students who are going to France, will be following a programme of cultural visits, educational and leisure activities. Mrs Over has already provided parents with details for that trip, so no further information is provided here.

REMINDERS ABOUT CHALLENGE WEEK FOR PARENTS / CARERS

Whilst not wanting to produce a list of do's and don'ts, it is important to state the following so that everyone is clear about the expectations we have. Then we hope that all of us, staff and students, can have a safe and enjoyable Challenge Week and you, the parents and carers, know what is happening each day.

Challenge Week is compulsory – all students are expected to participate in every day and every activity. If your child is unwell, please follow the usual procedures and phone 02392 259214 and select the 'reporting absent student' option or email absence@oaklandscatholicschool.org .

Parents of any student not in school without a valid reason will be contacted during the course of the morning. Students not present without a valid reason will be marked as unauthorised.

The School Behaviour Policy continues to apply during Challenge Week; both for on-site and off-site activities. Students will therefore be subject to the usual range of sanctions should their behaviour fall short in any way of what is expected of students at Oaklands. No monies can be refunded to parents whose child is excluded from subsequent activities.

Students will be allowed to wear their own clothes during Challenge Week, which should be **entirely appropriate** given the nature of the activities and the weather. Skimpy or revealing outfits, inappropriate logos on T-shirts etc are not deemed suitable and students may find themselves unable to participate in an activity if not appropriately dressed.

Each day, students should bring in sun cream / sunhats and a bottle of water to keep themselves safe in the sunshine.

All students on site can bring in a packed lunch or purchase food from the canteen. Students going off site should bring a packed lunch and drink with them. **No** fizzy drinks please. Chewing gum is **not** permitted.

Students are advised to bring a packed lunch on Friday (Thorpe Park trip), as prices for food and drink in the park are expensive.

Students who have free school meals will be able to get lunch as usual Tuesday to Thursday BUT due to the time students are leaving site on Friday, it will not be possible to have pre-prepared packed lunches, so we do ask that students make their own arrangements on this day.

Mobile phones, as always, must be switched off and in bags. Students going off site may of course find it useful to contact parents if the coach is delayed, for example, but the school policy with regard to mobile phones is still in force during Challenge Week. Students will have their phones confiscated if they have them switched on or are using them during the 'school day'.

If students are involved in an off-site activity, please can parents ensure that they note the drop off and pick up times and try to be on time to avoid delayed departure / collection.

The usual access arrangements in school apply. Morning drop-offs along the drive please. The gates will not open before approximately 3.50pm in the afternoons, allowing cars to then collect from the designated pick-up points once the buses have departed.

Thank you for your support in these matters.

WHAT NEXT....

- 1 Payment (£35) should be made online. However, if you are unable to make payments in this way, you can also pay by cash or cheque (made payable to Oaklands Catholic School). If paying by cash or cheque, please write your child's name and tutor group on an envelope and write 'Challenge Week payment' on it. Envelopes must be returned to the Finance Office.
 - 2 **Payment must be made by Friday 12th June 2026 please**
 - 3 Keep this booklet and your son / daughter's timetable for the week (once it is published) somewhere safe
- *Please contact Mrs Brettell - Business Support Manager - if you wish to discuss consideration for financial assistance.*
 - *Any other concerns / matters related to Challenge Week, please discuss with Mr Bamford.*

A REMINDER – CHALLENGE WEEK IS JUST 4 DAYS LONG (TUESDAY-FRIDAY). Monday is a normal school day.