



CHALLENGE WEEK: **23rd – 26th June 2026**



Year 9 Activities

Unity

Community

Opportunity

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.

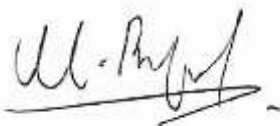
Staff have worked incredibly hard to put together imaginative, creative and student-friendly activities which have educational value as well as allowing students to have fun and work with each other to produce something which is both tangible and meaningful.

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. The cost of your child's activity is, we hope you will agree, excellent value.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Bamford', with a horizontal line underneath.

Mark Bamford - Assistant Headteacher

The Scenario

The week will be about working in groups and creating a sense of community through the lens of Humanities subjects. There are also specific Geography, History and Media activities that will take place on Wednesday and Thursday, where we will examine how Portsmouth has been protected from adversaries – both human and physical (the sea).

TUESDAY begins with a briefing session where students learn who they are creating a community with for the week. Later on the first day the students will rotate around 4 different workshops in their groups to have input on the creation of a community and to develop a team spirit (RE session on conflict, sporting activity, language translation activity and flag creation).

WEDNESDAY – TRIP DAY

Geography element: students will be experiencing coastal fieldwork at Southsea. Students will be collecting data to ascertain if the recent coastal management strategies employed at the location are effective.

In their Geography GCSE exam, Y11 Geography students need to be able to write about a fieldwork experience in their Paper 3. Although students will go out on fieldwork again towards the end of Year 10, this trip will provide students with some of the key skills they will need.

History element: History students will spend the day looking at how Portsmouth has defended itself over time, examining the key buildings and monuments.

The 172 students (60 are on camp in the New Forest) will be split in two: half will be dropped off in Old Portsmouth and will work their way along the seafront and the other half will be dropped near Canoe Lake follow the same route, but in the opposite direction. All students will meet around lunch time on Southsea Common.

Media element: We know who will have opted for Media at GCSE; a number of students will work with Mrs Evans to document the day, exploring filming techniques and video editing the following day.

THURSDAY – students will be back in school doing follow-up work based on the trips the day before. We will also offer a carousel of enrichment activities for two lessons which the students will be able to select. Activities are likely to include Dance, Football, Gaming/Coding, walk in the local area with the Geography/History team etc. We will discuss this with the students nearer the time – this list of activities is not exhaustive.

FRIDAY - On Friday, we return to the theme of community and teamwork from Tuesday. Students will build a shelter on the school cricket field having gathered materials from the woods. Each team will also be provided with a pack of materials too. Teams will have about three hours to complete their preparations and then it will be judgement time.

All teams will need to be able to make a **three-minute pitch**, showcasing their design to a selection of judges. The judges will be listening and asking the teams a variety of questions. They will also be quizzed on their new community by members of staff. Then a collective decision will be made regarding a series of awards:

- ☀ Most innovative and inventive design
- ☀ Best use of materials
- ☀ Best team flag and logo
- ☀ Best presentation
- ☀ Best team spirit
- ☀ The religious aspect of the shelter
- ☀ Water challenge



While students are waiting for the results they will be provided with an outdoor BBQ and some snacks to cook. They will have lunch in their groups and eat together to further strengthen their spirit of community.

Trip day - further information

Times

We will meet in the Gym at 9am for registration. After registration we will board the coaches and return before the end of the school day at 3.25pm

What you will need...

- Packed lunch and water
- Sun cream and / or wet weather clothes
- Sensible footwear (no flip flops)
- Pens and Pencils
- Money if you want to purchase anything from shops/cafés (we recommend no more than £5-10)



You will spend a large part of the day outside in the open, no matter what the weather so you must ensure you dress appropriately and if it is warm and sunny bring sun cream. We will be walking a reasonable distance, so DO NOT wear flip flops. Please ensure that your shoes are sensible and appropriate for the activity.

THE TOTAL COST FOR YEAR 9 is £20

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

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.

The 60 students that are going on Year 9 Camp during Challenge Week will be able to participate in activities such as archery, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, low roping and hiking. They will also be learning the skills of navigation, first aid, teamwork and cooperation. The camp will be based at the Hampshire Outdoor Centre, Tile Barn in the New Forest from the 23rd-26th June. Further details can be provided by Mr Wade.



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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.

Those students who have free school meals and who are going off site can arrange with Mrs Dodds to collect a packed lunch first thing.

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 (£20) 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 22nd June is a normal school day.