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Registered in England and Wales, Company No 07721932

Our Ref: AB/SM

22 October 2026

Dear Parents and Carers

The summer break seems all but a distant memory now and students have been at school for eight weeks. Within this letter there are a number of links to important documents that can be found on our school website. I would encourage all parents to read these.

So much has already been accomplished this year, highlighted by the numerous enriching experiences we have enjoyed during our Culture Week activities this week. Looking back at the half term, many students have participated in a range of sporting fixtures and experienced team and individual success, Year 8 took part in the Restart a Heart workshop, Year 7 have had their Teaching Masses, Year 10 Art and Photography students visited Kew Gardens, Year 11 Drama students have been to the theatre and Year 7 came to a Disco last week, run by Year 11. Some highlights will be featured on our school website and social media. I extend my heartfelt appreciation to the staff for their invaluable contributions to the extracurricular life of the school.

Attendance

A key reason for success at school is very strong attendance. I encourage you to ensure that your child attends school every day. If your child is genuinely ill, please ensure that you follow the school procedure and contact the absence line. I want to remind you that any holiday taken during term time is highly likely to be unauthorised.

Sixth Form College Open Event

Thank you to all families of Year 11 students who attended the Sixth Form Open Evening on Thursday 15 October. More information about joining the Sixth Form can be found by following ***this link***.

If any families were unable to attend and would like to come and have a meeting with Sixth Form staff about subject combinations or application concerns, please do contact us via email, thesixthform@oaklandscatholicschool.org or telephone, 023 9225 9214.

Year 11 Mocks

The mock examinations for Year 11 will take place towards the end of the term; details will be issued separately. Students should already be preparing for these, and I have written a letter to Year 11 Parents and Carers regarding expectations and areas of support during their final year.

Homework

It has been encouraging to see our Year 7 students make such a positive start to their time at Oaklands. The phased introduction of homework to this year group continues after half term with the addition of Geography, History and Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish). The homework timetable can be found on the school website by following ***this link***.

Over the years, homework has featured as a regular topic, parents talk of too much or too little in equal measure. This year we have altered the frequency of homework for all students in Key Stage 3. Additional homework tasks to stretch and challenge students can be found on the school website by following ***this link***.

Expectations

Our expectations, as you would want them to be, are high. Our teachers are continuously improving the quality of their teaching and the standard of feedback, together with target setting to ensure that your child knows what to do to in order to succeed. The atmosphere that is created within a classroom by staff and students alike is crucial with regard to maximising progress. Students must arrive ready to learn; this includes having the correct equipment and a reading book. I would ask that over half term you check your child's school equipment and replace anything that is missing or broken. If any family is struggling with the cost of these items, please contact your child's Head of Year and we can provide preloved or subsidised equipment.

We are delighted with how many praise points have been awarded across the year groups already. Parents can access these through the ClassCharts App. Details can be found by following ***this link***.
If you have any issues logging into ClassCharts or would like your login details, please email classcharts@oaklandscatholicschool.org**.** It is crucial that you have access to this, as valuable information about your child's education, including important announcements are placed on there.

Positive behaviour is a fundamental part of the school's ethos as it impacts on the daily life of everyone in the school and the wider community. The Havant Federation of Schools, of which Oaklands is a part, has issued several joint statements regarding a collective approach to reinforcing high standards across a range of school issues which we support. The statements can be found on our website, ***Havant Federation Joint Statements***, and focus on:

- Relational Conflict and Bullying
- Standards, Expectations and Attendance
- Vaping, Smoking and Banned Substances

I would ask that you take time to read them again as they form the basis of the approach taken by all schools in the Havant area.

Cycling to School

When the clocks go back and the nights draw in, the British weather invariably gets worse which leads to a loss of visibility on the roads, and pedestrians and cyclists are particularly vulnerable. Whilst I would want to encourage students to cycle, they must wear an appropriate safety helmet. We all know that a cycle helmet can be a life saver.

Parent Parking and End of the Day Routines

Due to parking restrictions and to safeguard the students we cannot accommodate any parents parking and waiting on site unless they have a pre-arranged meeting and have signed in at Reception.

In the morning, children should be dropped off on the school drive by the bus shelters. There is no capacity for parents to park on site and wait for friends to arrive or for the bell to ring.

An increasing number of parents are still driving onto the school site before the end of the day. This is not permitted and the main gates to the school will now be closed during the afternoon until 3.50pm, once the school buses have left. Please do not come on to site early and park your car and wait; if you do this you will be asked to leave. This is to ensure that all students are safeguarded and no authorised persons are present on the site.

I have asked my staff to take the registration plate of any car that contravenes the systems we have put in place and identify the parents concerned. Our driveway is now monitored by CCTV.

A reminder of the FAQs regarding transport issues is at the end of this letter.

Mobile Phones and Pouches

I would like to thank you for your support in implementing the phone pouch system at the start of this half term. Students have quickly settled into the routine of 'pouching' their phones during muster every morning and the process of unlocking at the end of the day is working well. Data analysis has shown that negative behaviour points relating to phone use and subsequent disruption during the school day has reduced significantly, which is having a positive impact on student learning and engagement.

A reminder that if the pouch is damaged or lost, parents will need to purchase a replacement. This can be ordered via ***this link***.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As artificial intelligence (AI) becomes increasingly common in everyday life, we want to work in partnership with families to help our young people use these tools safely, responsibly and effectively.

AI technologies, such as chatbots and online study assistants, can be valuable tools to support learning at home. When used well, they can help students to understand difficult concepts, generate revision questions, create flashcards, summarise information, and provide additional explanations when they are stuck. Used in this way, AI can encourage independent learning and help students develop their knowledge and confidence.

However, it is important that AI does not become a replacement for learning. Students still need to read, think, practise and complete their own work. Homework is designed to help pupils develop their understanding, strengthen their memory and build important skills. If AI is used to complete tasks for them, students miss out on these vital learning opportunities and may find themselves less prepared for assessments and examinations. Similarly, AI can be a useful tool for creating revision resources, but it should not be relied upon to provide answers or mark schemes without students first attempting the work themselves. AI-generated responses are not always accurate and can sometimes provide misleading or incorrect information. Students should therefore use AI to support their revision rather than as a shortcut to avoid the learning process.

We also encourage families to discuss online safety with their children. As with any online tool, it is important that students understand how to use AI responsibly and never share personal information. The NSPCC has produced a helpful guide for parents and carers which offers practical advice on keeping children safe when using AI technologies: NSPCC Artificial Intelligence Safety Tips for Parents https://www.nspcc.org.uk/about-us/news-opinion/2025/artificial-intelligence-safety-tips-for-parents/

DocsPlus

As part of our review of available provision, we have subscribe to DocsPlus, this is a reading and writing tool for secondary school students that can be used to support the completion of written work as well as providing additional support for reading extended text. This link, ***DocsPlus - secondary writing support software*** will give you an indication of what this application can provide.

Whilst students with an agreed access arrangement to use a laptop may be able to use this in class, all students have access to the programme at home if they wish to use it to support home study and independent revision. This can be downloaded to a PC, laptop or tablet. It is not compatible with a phone due to the size of the screen.

To download the App, click on this link: ***https://activate.cricksoft.com/h?b3sW9LFNXKzKFlc3my3Dx*** The student should then use their school email address to register. This is usually in the format of "firstname.surname@oaklandscatholicschool.org"; this is part of their 365 account – Outlook.

There are lots of guidance notes and tutorials on the DocsPlus website to help you navigate all the features of this App should you choose to use it, but if you have any further questions, please feel free to email Mrs Harvey, n.harvey@oaklandscatholicschool.org, or your child can go to JP14 before school, break or lunch for support and additional guidance.

Prom Attire Sale – Monday 2 November

The Oaklands Friends and Parents' Association (OFPA) are holding a sale for Prom attire, including dresses, suits and accessories on Monday 2 November from 6.00-8.00pm in the main hall; we hope this will attract and help our Year 11 students and parents.

There is no need to book, just come along and look and the items on offer, try on and hopefully purchase. Payments can be made by card or cash.

Parents and friends in the Oaklands community will also be able to sell suitable items, setting their own reserve price, with a small percentage fee for the OFPA. If you would like to receive more information about selling or donating items, please email the OFPA at opa@oaklandscatholicschool.org

Halloween

All schools in the Havant area work closely with local partnership groups, these include representatives from the police and local community organisations. Concerns have been raised about the behaviour of youngsters whilst out in the local community over the Halloween period. This year particularly so as 31 October falls in the half term, which means that all students will not be at school.

As we approach Halloween, we normally remind students about keeping safe and behaving appropriately and so we wanted to take this opportunity to remind both you and your children about the importance of safety and responsible behaviour during this time, as well as showing consideration for others in the community. The following websites provide good advice for parents and children about keeping safe over Halloween.

Child Accident Prevent Trust
First Aid for Life

As always, we expect our students to represent the school in a positive manner, whether in or out of uniform. We would appreciate your support in encouraging your child to make thoughtful choices and show kindness and maturity during the Halloween period. To this end please can you have a conversation with your child about behaving respectfully towards others in the community. This includes avoiding any inappropriate or disruptive behaviour, such as causing unnecessary noise or engaging in pranks that may distress or inconvenience others, particularly the elderly or vulnerable.

By following these guidelines, we can all ensure that Halloween remains a safe time for everyone.

Winter Weather and Uniform Reminders

With the weather now changing, please can parents ensure that their child has a suitable coat, particularly when rain is predicted. Students should remember, however, that coats do not replace their blazers.

Communication

If you change address, e-mail address or mobile phone number then please let us know. It is now a requirement for schools to have at least two emergency contacts for each child, so if we do not already have this information, you will be contacted and asked to provide it.

Important Dates

Monday 2 November	OFPA Prom Sale, 6.00-8.00pm in the Hall
Thursday 5 November	Year 7 Parents' Evening
Monday 9 November	Year 9 Tests Week
Tuesday 10 November	Ski Trip Parent Information Evening, 6.00pm in the Hall
Friday 13 November	Community Mass, 8.00am in the Chapel; parents and carers are welcome to attend
Wednesday 25 November	Year 11 Mocks commence (until Friday 12 December)
Thursday 3 December	Year 9 Parents' Evening
Monday 7 December	OFPA Meeting, 7.30pm
Thursday 10 December	Christmas Music Concert, 6.00pm
Tuesday 15 December	Religious Carol Service, 7.00pm
Thursday 17 December	Students' Last Day of Term
Friday 18 December	Staff INSET Day
Monday 4 January 2027	All students return to school

Thank you for your prayers and continued support for the school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs A Bonnington
Head of School

Transport Related FAQs

Where do I drop my child off in the morning?

Children should be dropped off on the school drive by the bus shelters. Please note that this is a 'drop off' area only as access is required by buses and other parents. Please only use the visitors' car parks if you have an appointment or need to visit Reception. No parking is permitted in other areas of the school.

What time do students finish?

At the end of the day, the dismissal of Key Stages will be staggered (KS3 at 3.25pm, KS4 and KS5 at 3.30pm). Students will be escorted down the drive by their class teachers. Students will need to leave the school site as soon as their day ends in order to clear the buildings. Students should go straight home. Key Stage 3 students will be permitted to board buses as soon as they arrive. In the event of bad weather and a known delay to buses, students will be given the option of waiting in the Hall.

What time are the school gates open?

The school gates will not open until 3.50pm, as the buses need to vacate the drive. Please do not try to park in front of the school gate before 3.50pm as you could obstruct buses that are trying to enter the site.

What time do the buses arrive?

The buses should be on site by 3.20pm ready for the first students. If a bus is late, the school will contact the bus company.

If I am collecting my child by car where do I pick them up from?

You will drive on to the school site at 3.50pm (no earlier), around the roundabout then back down the drive. The pick-up point is on the playing field side of the drive. Parents must not stop on the bus shelter side of the driveway or on the roundabout.

Where can I park locally to wait for my child?

Parking approximately 10 minutes walk away from the school site is the best option if you are picking up your child by car. Please park with consideration for local residents. If you park in roughly the same area each time your child will become familiar with this. You will then be on your way by approximately 3.40pm rather than waiting until 3.50pm for the gates to open.

Am I permitted to collect my child from the school site on foot?

No: the school drive is very busy and parents will need to wait outside of the gates.