

School Newsletter | 23rd June 2023

Welcome from the Principal

Welcome to the first edition of our new newsletter. We have been working hard this year to develop our resources and skills to enable a wider range of communication avenues for us to share the fantastic work and achievements of our students, as well as clarify any key messages or expectations. We want to use this newsletter and our social media more frequently to share the successes of our wonderful young people. Newsletters may also have a theme so we can share updates with you easily. Thanks to all of the staff who organise and contribute to this and of course to OSCA students whose hard work and endeavours provide the articles within.

Good News

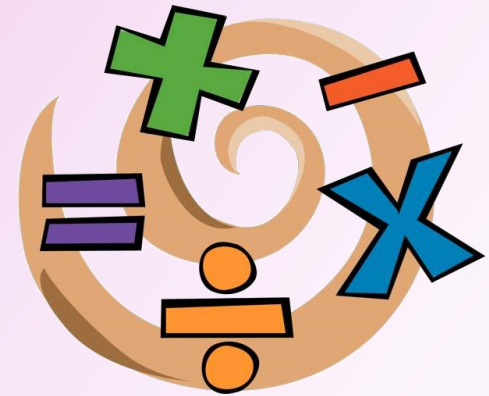
The UK Mathematics Trust (UKMT) is a registered charity whose aim is to advance the education of children in Mathematics. They organise national mathematics competitions and other enrichment activities for 11-18 year old UK school pupils. Over 300,000 students from across the UK sat the Intermediate Challenge in February, which some of our Year 10 students participated in. The Junior Maths Challenge was also taken in April, where some of our Year 8 students participated. The maths department would like to congratulate all those who participated, and in particular those who obtained Gold, Silver, or Bronze awards.

Year 8

- Gold: **Arman and Harry.**
- Silver: **Riley, Owen and Neneh.**
- Bronze: **Katrina, Vikash, Dea, Dylan, Rio, Mercadiz and Manmeet.**

Year 10

- Gold: **Madihah.**
- Silver: **Amaani, Carter, Dariusz, Ethan, Haasham, Jasmine, Jasraj, Milandeep and Milena.**
- Bronze: **Jatinder, Oliwia, Shahnaz, Stella, Kyra, Violet and Wyatt.**



Attendance

1st	Year 7
2nd	Year 9
3rd	Year 8
4th	Year 10

High attendance is vital to ensure that students reach their maximum potential while at school. Having a couple of days of here and there may not seem like it will have much of an impact, but by having just 6-10 days off a year, it can drop the chances of achieving those higher grades by 10%. This equates to over 50 hours of learning lost per year. Huge congratulations to year 7 who achieved the highest attendance last week!

Upcoming Events

PAPA School Production

You are invited to PAPA's annual school production! Join us as we celebrate hits from the musicals featuring songs from various shows. Tickets are on sale now, and can be collected from Miss Mogg before and after school, or during break and lunch times. Alternatively, parents can collect tickets from Miss Mogg in reception at the end of the school day. We look forward to seeing you there!

Tuesday 4th July
Wednesday 5th July
Ticket Price : £4



Social Media

Don't forget to follow us on social media, where you can find any news on school activities as well as updates about recent events.



@OSCATweets



Ormiston Sandwell Community Academy

What Parents & Carers Need to Know about AI VIRTUAL FRIENDS

Artificial intelligence – particularly in terms of how it generates natural language – has seen significant development over the last six months, with companies releasing new AI-based software or adding an AI element to existing apps (such as Snapchat, for example). One form of AI to become especially popular has been the 'AI friend' or chatbot, as children eagerly experiment with these new-found computer-generated companions. There are now numerous apps available with this 'virtual friend' functionality, with the likelihood of it being added to other successful platforms soon.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

CONTENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

AI chatbots may not always be able to recognise when content is age inappropriate or harmful and should be filtered out. So there's a possibility that children could be exposed to offensive language or explicit material while conversing with their virtual friend. The companies producing such AI solutions are also unlikely to take responsibility for any content that their algorithms generate.

REDUCED SOCIAL CONTACT

An excessive reliance on chatbots for social interaction could potentially cause a child to begin reducing the amount of face-to-face communication they have, leading to social isolation. If young people become dependent on chatbots to provide companionship, it could very likely hinder the development of their real-life social skills.

LACK OF SENSITIVITY

Chatbot software isn't always sophisticated enough to pick up on subtle emotional cues or recognise signs of distress in children, as most humans would. It might therefore fail to respond appropriately. AI misinterpreting what it's being told or replying insensitively to a young user who's already struggling could potentially impact a child's emotional wellbeing or exacerbate any existing emotional issues.

UNINTENTIONAL BIAS

AI companions are only as reliable as the information they've been programmed with. The algorithms they use, therefore, may unintentionally promote bias, stereotypes or discriminatory behaviour (as many originate from the USA or the UK, for instance, they can display a distinctly western-centric worldview). This could lead to children developing skewed attitudes and behaviours.

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

Although many are now undeniably advanced, AI-powered chatbots still have limitations in terms of understanding complex concepts, context and nuance. Depending heavily on chatbots to help with learning or solving problems may stunt the development of a child's own powers of critical thinking, creativity and ability to engage in open-ended discussions with other people.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

Chatbots typically collect data about users, including personal information and conversations. This is ostensibly to improve their performance as they gradually learn about our behaviour – but many experts are warning that there may be significant risks associated with how this information is stored and used (the possibility of potential breaches or misuse by third parties, for instance).

Advice for Parents & Carers

CHAT ABOUT CHATBOTS

If your child is already expressing an interest in AI apps, a relaxed, natural chat should help you to discover which ones they're aware of and how they're using them (or are planning to). Discuss these options with your child and perhaps do your own research to ensure you think they're suitable. Once you're totally happy, you could sit with your young one and begin exploring AI chatbots together.

CREATE A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

If your child is keen to engage with AI chatbots, encourage them to do so in a safe environment: ideally in a shared space at home, so you can easily keep an eye and ear on their progress. Set up appropriate content filtering measures in advance – and gently remind them that you'll be close by and ready to help with any questions or concerns that may arise.

FIND A BALANCE

Work alongside your child to establish the right balance in terms of how they might use AI-powered chatbots – and when it's appropriate. It's important to make sure that children are still getting plenty of opportunities to learn to solve problems for themselves, as well as building their interpersonal skills through face-to-face conversations with friends, family members and teachers.

TAKE CONTROL

As with any form of app or game, when it comes to AI chatbots we'd strongly recommend that you consider employing parental controls (either on the device being used or within the software itself) to manage which apps your child can download and use. This is particularly important for younger children, who may be more at risk of being upset or frightened by inappropriate content.

RECOGNISE THE RISKS

It's unlikely that most children will have even considered the potential risks attached to having a virtual companion. So it's probably wise to explain some of the possible hazards and challenges of AI chatbots to your child. In particular, emphasise that AI isn't a real person (however much it might sound like one) and may occasionally tell them something that isn't entirely impartial or accurate.

Meet Our Expert

A Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), Gary Henderson is the Director of IT at a large boarding school in the UK, having previously taught in schools and colleges in Britain and the Middle East. With a particular interest in digital citizenship and cyber security, he believes it is essential that we become more aware of the risks around technology, as well as the benefits.



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