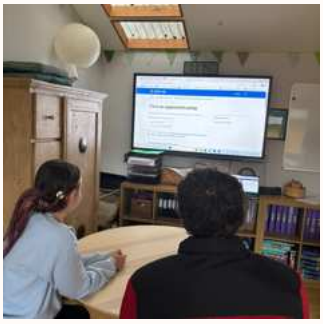
Orchard Round-Up

FRESH FROM THE FARM











A LITTLE NOTE FROM EMILY

A new academic year at Orchard

As we approach the end of our first half term, I would like to reflect on what has been a wonderfully busy and rewarding start to the academic year at Orchard Therapeutic Farm.

It has been a pleasure to welcome both new and returning young people. Over the past seven weeks, we have seen relationships, routines and confidence grow. Some young people have focused on settling in, building trust and feeling comfortable in our community. Others have taken the next steps in their learning, worked towards qualifications, developed independence and discovered new interests. Every achievement is equally important, and we are incredibly proud of them all.

Our half-term theme, 'Harvest, Food and Wellbeing – From Soil to Shelf', has helped us make the most of our farm environment. Young people have explored the changing seasons, harvested apples and blackberries, made crumbles, jams and tarts, and learned about the journey from land to table. They have also used natural materials for bird feeders and autumnal decorations, bringing together practical learning, creativity, environmental awareness and wellbeing.

Across our curriculum, there has been much to celebrate. Agriculture students have explored how farming machinery has evolved, while Animal Care students have developed their understanding of animal health and welfare, including a meaningful learning experience with one of our cows. In Trades, young people have built essential health and safety, woodwork and joinery skills while helping to create three smaller, dedicated trades rooms.








A LITTLE NOTE FROM EMILY — CONTINUED

Every step forward matters

Beyond the farm, our Primary and younger Key Stage 3 students visited the Roald Dahl Museum, where members of the public praised their engagement and conduct. Post-16 Art and Design students visited Tate Modern to experience artwork and exhibitions that will support their creative development and BTEC studies. These visits also help young people build confidence, practise social skills, experience new environments and recognise what they can achieve.

We have continued to develop our curriculum and qualification pathways so young people can access meaningful learning suited to their strengths, interests and aspirations. Through Functional Skills, ASDAN, OCN, BTEC and wider enrichment, our focus remains on helping every young person recognise their potential and take positive steps towards their future.

Progress at Orchard is not measured by qualifications alone. Some of the most significant achievements have been quieter moments: attending a lesson that once felt difficult, making a new friendship, asking for help, trying an unfamiliar activity or managing a challenging situation with greater confidence. These steps show meaningful personal growth and the value of our therapeutic approach to education.

Thank you to our dedicated staff team, who bring creativity, patience and commitment to everything they do. Their willingness to adapt learning, recognise individual needs and celebrate each step forward makes an enormous difference to our young people.

Thank you also to our parents, carers and wider professional network for your continued support and communication. Working together helps our young people feel safe, understood and ready to learn, and we greatly value the relationships we continue to build with you.

As we head towards the half-term break, I hope our young people can look back with pride on everything they have achieved. We have an exciting remainder of the autumn term ahead, with more opportunities to learn, explore, create and grow. At Orchard, we believe every young person deserves the opportunity to discover their strengths, celebrate their individuality and feel proud of their progress. Every step forward matters. Wishing all our young people and families a restful and enjoyable half-term break.

Emily Mayne | Head of Centre

ORCHARD THERAPEUTIC BARN

Exploring South America, building independence





It has been another busy and rewarding term at Orchard Therapeutic Barn, with our young people continuing to make progress in confidence, communication, independence and emotional wellbeing through a range of meaningful, hands-on learning experiences.

As well as welcoming new staff this term Cath, Kay, Simon and Han, as this part of Orchard Therapeutic Farm provision continues to grow our young people have immersed themselves in a variety of creative and practical activities based on South America. From cooking and baking sessions to arts and crafts, photography, animal care and cultural learning projects, young people have been developing important life and learning skills whilst having fun and building confidence. Cooking activities have been particularly popular, with learners practising measuring, weighing, following recipes and working collaboratively to prepare a range of delicious creations, that they have then sat down and shared together.

The Barn provides a calm, nurturing environment where every young person is supported to learn in a way that works for them and looks incredibly different from what they are used to. The smaller groups and young person led curriculum allows us to build positive relationships, create individualised learning opportunities and celebrate each young person's unique strengths and achievements.

Our animal sessions at the end of our day continue to be a highlight for many young people, also giving them time on the Farm to prepare them to transition there as, when and if appropriate. Time spent caring for and interacting with our animals provides valuable opportunities to develop responsibility, empathy and confidence, whilst also offering a calming and therapeutic experience. Whether helping to care for dogs, guinea pigs or chickens, learners have demonstrated growing maturity and understanding of animal welfare.

Developing independence remains a key focus at the 3 Barns, using Exploring and Engaging parts of our mission statement. Throughout the term, young people have been encouraged to take an active role in everyday tasks such as preparing food, organising resources, washing up, caring for equipment and supporting the smooth running of the Barn. These practical experiences help build essential skills for everyday life and future independence, as well as working as a team, making compromises and taking turns.

LIFE AT THE BARN

Growing confidence, one day at a time







We have been delighted to see many young people growing in confidence socially. New friendships have formed, communication skills have strengthened and learners have demonstrated increased resilience when working alongside others. For some, simply joining a group activity or initiating a conversation represents significant progress, and these moments are celebrated as important achievements.

Supporting emotional wellbeing also sits at the heart of everything we do. Through our therapeutic and relationship-based approach, young people are developing a greater understanding of their emotions and learning strategies to help them self-regulate. It has been wonderful to see learners becoming increasingly able to recognise their own needs, access support when required and successfully manage challenges.

Our practical curriculum is designed to make learning relevant and engaging, and this term young people have developed literacy, numeracy and communication skills through hands-on activities and real-life experiences, such as planning and budgeting for a trip to a local cafe. By embedding learning into meaningful tasks, we help learners build confidence in their abilities whilst working towards their individual outcomes and goals.

We are incredibly proud of the progress made by all of our young people this term. Their enthusiasm, determination and willingness to try new experiences continue to inspire us every day. We would also like to thank parents, carers, schools and professionals for their ongoing support and partnership.

As we look ahead to next term, we are excited to continue creating opportunities moving continents to Asia for learning, growth, independence and success, whilst ensuring that every young person feels valued, supported and able to thrive.

Wishing you all a very happy, healthy and restorative half term break.

The Orchard Therapeutic Barn Team

AGRICULTURE

From farming machinery to the local market





This term in Agriculture, our young people have been exploring the fascinating world of farming machinery, looking at how equipment has developed over the years and the important role it plays throughout the farming calendar.

From traditional tractors and machinery used by previous generations to the impressive technology found on modern farms, students have been discovering how agriculture has evolved to become more efficient and productive. They have explored how different machines are used throughout the seasons, from preparing the land and planting crops to harvesting and maintaining farmland.

One area that has particularly captured our young people's interest has been the enormous size and cost of modern agricultural machinery! Students have been amazed to discover just how expensive some tractors and harvesting equipment can be, leading to some fantastic discussions about the investment involved in running a farm and how technology has transformed the industry.

To further enrich their learning, our young people also enjoyed a trip to Thame Farmers' Market, providing an opportunity to explore the connection between farming, food production and local communities. The visit helped bring classroom discussions to life, encouraging students to consider where our food comes from, the importance of supporting local producers and how agricultural products make their journey from farm to market.

Through these experiences, students have not only developed their understanding of agriculture but have also had opportunities to practise communication, ask questions, explore their local community and build confidence in new environments.

It has been wonderful to see such enthusiasm and curiosity throughout the term, with young people developing a greater appreciation of the hard work, innovation and dedication that goes into British farming.

From traditional farming methods to modern machinery and local food production, our Agriculture sessions continue to provide meaningful, hands-on learning that connects young people with the land and the world around them.

ANIMAL CARE

Understanding animal health and wellbeing







This term in Animal Care, our young people have been developing their knowledge and understanding of animal health, welfare and the importance of recognising signs of illness. Through a combination of practical experiences, observation and discussion, students have been learning how to identify when an animal may be unwell and the steps involved in monitoring its health and wellbeing.

One particularly engaging learning opportunity arose when one of our cows became unwell. This provided a valuable real-life experience for our young people, who were able to observe and participate in monitoring the cow's condition, including taking temperatures, recording observations and researching possible causes and outcomes. Students showed genuine curiosity and concern for the animal's welfare, asking thoughtful questions and developing a greater understanding of the responsibilities involved in caring for livestock.

Alongside these practical experiences, students have been working towards their OCN Level 1 Animal Care qualification, developing knowledge and gathering evidence towards relevant units. This term's learning has supported areas including recognising signs of good and poor animal health, understanding common illnesses, monitoring animal wellbeing, maintaining accurate records and recognising when veterinary advice may be required. Students have also explored the importance of safe working practices, appropriate handling and meeting animals' daily welfare needs.

What makes Animal Care at Orchard particularly special is the opportunity for young people to apply their learning in a real working farm environment. Rather than simply discussing animal health in a classroom, students can observe behaviours, recognise changes and develop practical skills while working alongside staff who care for our animals every day.

These experiences also provide opportunities to develop wider skills, including responsibility, empathy, teamwork, communication and problem-solving. Students are learning that caring for animals requires patience, consistency and an understanding that every animal has its own individual needs.

It has been wonderful to see the compassion and enthusiasm our young people have demonstrated this term, particularly when supporting the care and monitoring of our unwell cow.

Through their OCN Level 1 learning and hands-on experiences, our young people are developing valuable animal care skills while building confidence, independence and a genuine appreciation for animal welfare.

COOKING

Autumn dishes from our seasonal menu

This half term, students have been cooking dishes from our summer and autumn menus, moving with the seasons. Our autumn menu includes warming dishes such as cottage pie, apple and blackberry crumble, and pear and cinnamon sponge.

Through this work, students are developing practical skills in preparing ingredients, weighing and measuring, following recipes and using different cooking methods. They are also learning how seasonal ingredients influence menu choices. Practical sessions provide opportunities to build independence, organisation and teamwork while reinforcing safe, hygienic working habits.







HOSPITALITY & CATERING

Building a foundation in food safety

Students have completed their food safety learning this half term. This has developed their understanding of personal hygiene, safe food storage, cleaning routines and preventing cross-contamination.

Students are learning to recognise food safety hazards and understand why safe working practices matter. This knowledge provides an essential foundation for preparing, cooking and serving food safely, both in the classroom and in a hospitality workplace.





ENTERPRISE

From business ideas to Halloween bakes

This half term, students have explored entrepreneurs from around the world, considering how people develop ideas into products and businesses.

They have also put enterprise learning into practice by making Halloween biscuits and muffins to sell.

This project connects classroom learning with a practical product, developing creativity, planning, teamwork and communication. Organising ingredients, resources and responsibilities helps students understand the steps involved in preparing a product for sale.





GARDENING ASDAN

Discovering our farm

This term, students have enjoyed exploring Orchard Therapeutic Farm and discovering the different areas they will be working in, including the kitchen garden, greenhouse and orchard.

Through practical activities, they have been developing important ASDAN skills, including following health and safety procedures, handling tools responsibly and understanding the importance of personal hygiene after working in the gardens around the farm.

Students have also explored plants and have begun to identify their different parts, ready to build on this learning next term when they will discover more about pollination and the vital role insects play in helping plants reproduce.

These activities help students to develop their observation, identification and practical skills, while building their confidence, independence and understanding of the natural environment.

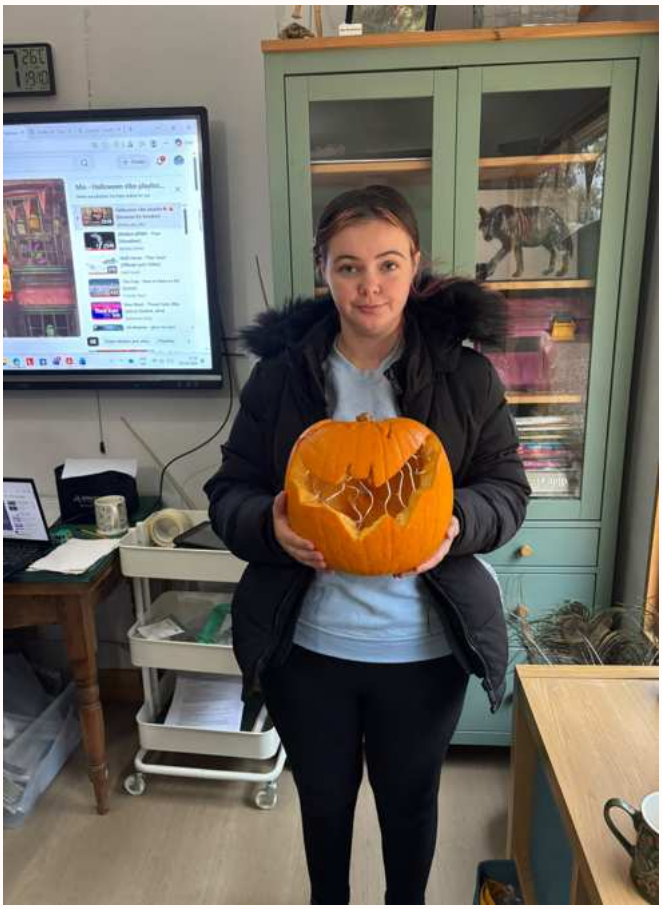






ART & DESIGN

Autumn shapes and spooky landscapes





During Autumn Term 1, our KS2 and KS3 Art and Design students have embraced an autumnal and spooky theme through an imaginative range of practical and digital projects.

Drawing inspiration from the work of Paul O'Neill and artists associated with the Day of the Dead festival, students have developed their skills in continuous line drawing and observational drawing, carefully studying the shapes, textures and details of seasonal vegetables.

They have also experimented with new media, including clay and charcoal, learning how different tools and techniques can be used to create striking effects and atmosphere. Their finished pieces include characterful clay sculptures, dramatic haunted landscapes in charcoal, expressive continuous line drawings and colourful pumpkins crafted from yarn.

As the October half-term break and Halloween festivities approach, students have also enjoyed carving pumpkins, combining creativity with seasonal celebration. Alongside this hands-on work, students have explored digital art using apps such as Procreate and Canva, building their confidence in creating and developing artwork on screen.

It has been wonderful to see their creativity, curiosity and willingness to try new approaches throughout the term.

BTEC ART

First projects and fresh inspiration



During their first term in Art BTEC, our young people have made an enthusiastic and purposeful start to their studies. They have begun mapping out themes and ideas for their individual projects, while exploring new modules designed to strengthen the organisational skills needed to develop and present a successfulportfolio.

Students have also completed their first progression-planning assignment—an important milestone that has encouraged them to reflect on their goals and the next steps in their creative journeys. Throughout the term, they have discovered new artists and media, learned how to research and reference artists effectively, and used this inspiration to inform their own work.

This growing knowledge has empowered them to make confident creative choices, and they are already making excellent progress. A highlight of the term was our trip to Tate Modern in London, where students independently explored the gallery, encountered a wide variety of artworks and engagedwith the work of Frida Kahlo.

The visit offered a valuable opportunity to experience art beyond the classroom and gather fresh inspiration for their developing portfolios.

SCIENCE ASDAN

Investigating the human machine

This term, students have enjoyed discovering more about how our amazing bodies work through a range of hands-on science activities. They have explored how glasses help us to see clearly, tested their reaction speeds, and used infrared thermometers to measure and compare skin temperatures.

It has been lovely to see students growing in confidence as they use scientific equipment, record their results, and share their discoveries. They have developed valuable practical skills and a greater understanding of the human body while enjoying learning through investigation and exploration.





SCIENCE GROUP

Engines, air power and a robotic arm

This term, students have been developing their engineering skills through hands-on projects, including building a remote-control nitro engine car and an air-powered car, and repairing a robotic arm. Working in small groups led by a student who has built his own RC nitro car, they have been sharing knowledge and solving practical problems.

Students have particularly enjoyed using the robotic arm to pick up objects, including Lego. We look forward to completing the cars and testing them around the farm!







TRADES

New skills and new workshop spaces





This half term in Trades, our young people have been getting hands-on with woodwork, joinery and essential health and safety practices, developing practical skills while learning the importance of working responsibly and safely in a workshop environment.

A key focus has been understanding how to use tools and equipment safely, recognising potential hazards, carrying out basic risk assessments and maintaining an organised workspace. Young people have been learning that good health and safety practices are the foundation of every trade, helping them develop the confidence and responsibility needed to work independently and successfully.

Alongside this, students have been exploring woodwork and joinery techniques, developing their skills in measuring, marking out, cutting, assembling and finishing materials. These activities have encouraged accuracy, patience and problem-solving, while providing opportunities for young people to see the results of their hard work.

One of the most exciting developments this half term has been the transformation of our Trades learning environment. Our young people have actively supported the development of the workshop, helping to create three smaller, dedicated trades rooms. These new spaces will provide opportunities for students to practise more refined and specialist trade skills as they progress, allowing us to broaden the practical experiences and qualifications available at Orchard.

TRADES — CONTINUED

Building towards qualifications



For our older learners, these experiences are supporting progress towards their OCN Level 1 Trades and Construction-related units, with learning and evidence focused on health and safety, the safe use of tools and equipment, understanding materials, and developing practical construction and joinery skills. Students are beginning to apply their knowledge through meaningful projects, building both their technical abilities and their understanding of working within the construction industry.

We have also been delighted to introduce the ASDAN Construction unit for our Primary and Key Stage 3 learners. This provides a fantastic introduction to the world of construction through age-appropriate, practical activities. Younger students are beginning to explore different tools, materials and construction techniques while developing their creativity, coordination, teamwork and problem-solving skills. These early experiences provide an excellent foundation for progression into more advanced Trades learning as they move through Orchard.

Beyond the practical skills, our Trades sessions are helping young people develop important qualities such as resilience, independence, perseverance and pride in their achievements. Whether learning to use a tool for the first time, completing a woodwork project or contributing to the development of our new workshop spaces, every achievement represents a meaningful step forward.

We are incredibly proud of the enthusiasm and determination our young people have shown this half term. With our three new trades rooms taking shape, we look forward to seeing their skills continue to grow as they explore the exciting opportunities that construction and skilled trades can offer.

TAXIDERMY

Tools, techniques and natural history

This half term, learners have been exploring health and safety in taxidermy, including how to identify hazards and safely use different tools and chemicals. They have learnt about dry mounting, insect pinning and wet specimens, as well as the history of taxidermy and the importance of laws and regulations.

Next half term, learners will explore the anatomy of butterflies and beetles before learning how to pin and create their own displays. This will combine Science and Art while developing creativity, concentration and fine motor skills.

Learners will also visit the Natural History Museum at Tring to explore its taxidermy collection and hear from a taxidermist.





REPTILES

Reptile detectives and two new arrivals

This half term, learners have been developing their reptile care skills, learning about common health issues, body language, seasonal changes, and the similarities and differences between reptiles and invertebrates.

We have also welcomed two new aquatic reptiles, Tina and Denis the turtles! Learners have enjoyed becoming reptile detectives, carrying out research to identify their species and understand their individual care and environmental needs. This has encouraged curiosity, research skills, observation and responsible animal care.

Next half term, learners will explore diet and nutrition, enrichment and how to create a suitable vivarium. They will also learn about ecosystems and discover how to create bioactive vivariums, developing their Science knowledge alongside practical animal-care skills.





PSHE

Looking after ourselves and planning ahead





During Autumn Term 1, our KS2 pupils have been learning about hygiene, health and wellbeing.They have explored practical ways to maintain good personal hygiene and developed everyday habits that can help them stay healthy and feel confident.

Pupils have also considered the importance of physical health, learning how a balanced diet, regular movement and exercise, and good-quality sleep all contribute to overall wellbeing.Alongside this, they have discussed the importance ofmental health anddiscovered how closely it is connected to physical wellbeing.

Through thoughtful activities and conversations, pupils have learned a range of coping strategies, reflected on the difference between situations that are within or beyond their control, and considered how they can show kindness and support to peers when unexpected or difficult things happen.

They have also explored self-esteem, recognised their individual strengths and learned how positive self-talk can help build confidence and resilience. It has been encouraging to see pupils engage so positively with these important life skills and begin applying them to their everyday lives.

Meanwhile, our KS3 pupils have been focusing on their futures and the choices that will shape their next steps. They have explored post-16 pathways, considering the range of education, training and career opportunities available to them and beginning to identify options that reflect their strengths and aspirations.

Pupils have also developed practical strategies for managing stress and discussed how to recognise and overcome barriers that can arise within peer groups. Alongside this, they have explored identity, personal values and the influences that can affect their choices.

Through discussion and reflection, pupils are learning how to make informed, independent decisions, communicate confidently and approach future challenges with greater resilience and self-belief.

ASDAN NEW HORIZONS

Knowing myself and others

This term, students have enjoyed celebrating what makes them special and learning more about one another. Through creating 'All About Me' posters, completing personal profiles and sharing their favourite activities, foods and hobbies, they have developed their self-awareness, communication skills and confidence in expressing their thoughts and preferences.

Students have also explored family relationships, discussed the qualities of a good friend and enjoyed creative friendship activities and cooperative games. These experiences have helped them develop their understanding of kindness, respect, and positive relationships, while building their teamwork and social skills.

It has been wonderful to see students growing in confidence, celebrating their individuality and learned how to build supportive friendships with others.





THRIVE

Finding confidence through connection

This term in Thrive, we have been exploring what Thrive is all about and how it can help our young people to grow, develop and feel more confident in themselves. Our sessions have focused on building confidence, developing communication skills, working together as a team, and exploring our expressive sides through different activities.

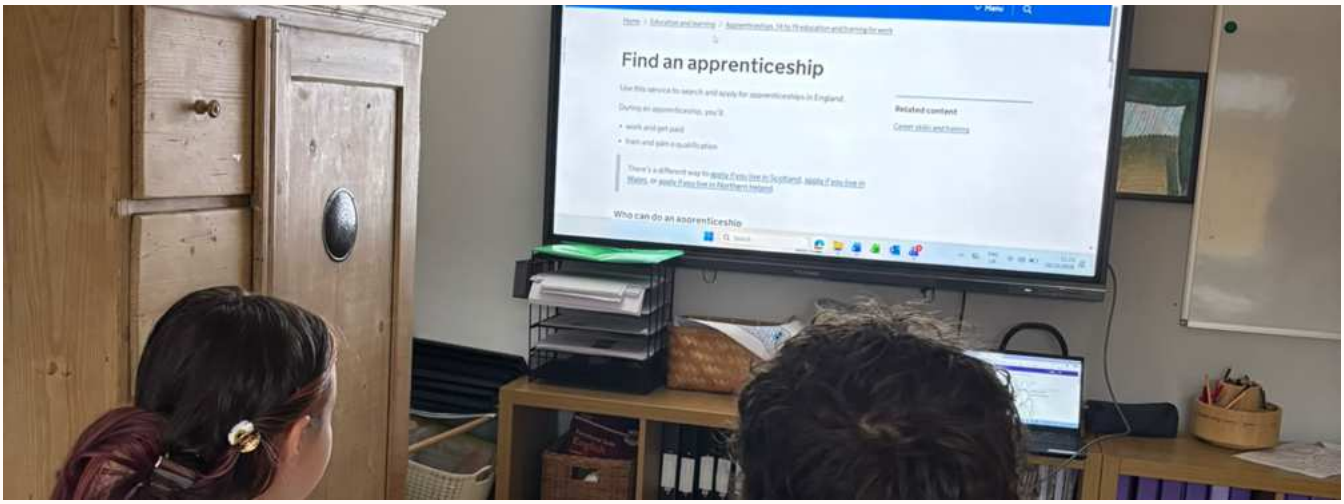
We have encouraged everyone to have a go, share their ideas, express themselves in their own way, and celebrate their individual strengths. Through Thrive, we aim to create a safe and supportive environment where every young person feels valued, develops positive relationships and has the opportunity to Explore, Engage and Empower themselves.





FUTURE ME

Exploring the possibilities ahead



This term, we have introduced Future Me, a new course designed to help our young people explore their interests, recognise their strengths, and start thinking about their future. We have been focusing on building confidence, motivation, and self-belief while encouraging everyone to think about what they enjoy and what they might like to achieve.

We have also begun exploring the different pathways available after their time at the farm, including further education, college, work experience, employment and apprenticeships, looking at how to access these opportunities and which routes might suit them best.

Alongside this, we are developing important communication and relationship skills to help prepare our young people for the next steps in their journey. Future Me is all about helping our young people recognise their potential, build aspirations, and feel more confident about the opportunities ahead!

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Autumn Term 2: 2 November-17 December 2026

Open Day: 3 December 2026, 2.30-4.30pm

Christmas Disco: 10 December 2026

INSET day: 18 December 2026

