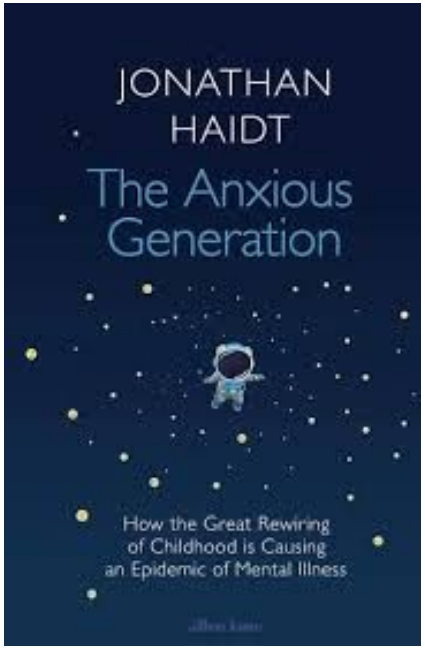
Year 9 PIS: **Independent Learning & Looking Ahead**

As we come together, read the extract from ‘The Anxious Generation’ and talk to a partner.

Does anything resonate with your experience of parenting a teenager?



Today:

This afternoon, we will:

- Share some of the successes and challenges in this Year 9 cohort;
- Share how we are approaching these challenges in school;
- Explore together how you might support your child with these challenges at home;
- Give a brief introduction to GCSEs at TBS, ahead of Options Evening in Term 3.

Where are we now?

- A very motivated and enthusiastic Year 9 cohort, keen to ‘do well’
- Excellent engagement with PSHE content during the new Life Days
- High CCA participation
- 1/3 of the year group met our thresholds for celebration of outstanding progress or AtL in this first report
- Students who regularly share feedback with us, including concerns about others’ well being

Where are we now? Challenges

- Some problematic online behaviour spilling into school (eg. language ‘heard gaming’)
- Increasing reports of AI use as ‘the default’ for homework or project tasks
- Lower than average amounts of reading for pleasure & reading levels
- Test or performance anxiety which is unusually high for this age group

The challenges of an increasingly online generation

- Loss of attention
- Lack of sleep
- Increase in anxiety
- Decrease in reading

The challenges of an increasingly online generation

- The ‘crisis of focus’.
- The average human digital attention span dropped from 2.5 minutes in 2003 to 75 seconds in 2012, and down to 47 seconds in 2024
- Children are now accustomed fast paced digital stimulation and struggle with deep reading.
- The brain expects information in 15 to 30 second bursts, making any task requiring more than a minute of focus feel like a monumental hurdle.

The challenges of AI usage

- More than half of U.S. adolescents say they use AI chatbots to help with schoolwork, according to a 2026 Pew Research Center report.
- Growing up with quick solutions to problems = less likely to develop the skills needed to solve problems on their own.
- Learning requires desirable difficulty
- Think calculators

Tackling these challenges in school

- Mobile phone policy in line with UK guidance that students should not have access to phones during the school day
- Ensuring devices in lessons only used where there is an enhancement on a paper based tool (eg. self-marking features, data collection)

Tackling these challenges in school

- Academic honesty policy & explicit teaching of how to reference etc, earlier in school.
- ‘Desirable difficulty’ as a theme explored with staff and students, embracing mistakes as part of learning.
- Life days and wellbeing curriculum.

Tackling these challenges in school

Homework policy updates.

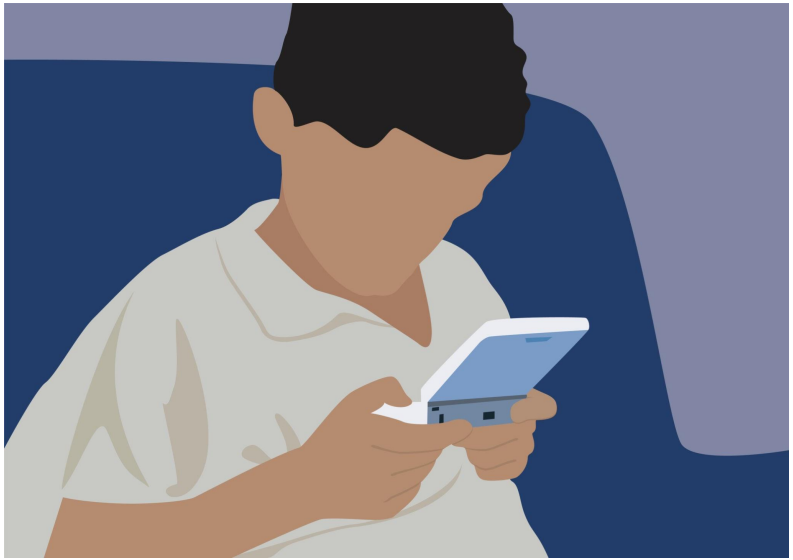
Greater focus on two purposes:

- To pre-teach: prepares students for concepts which will be taught and tested in class. Eg- Learn new vocabulary.
- To consolidate: strengthens learning which has already been taught in lessons through practice, retrieval and spaced review. Eg- Make flashcards of key concepts.

A full parent homework guide, with specific explanations of the homework now given by each subject will be shared by the end of this term.

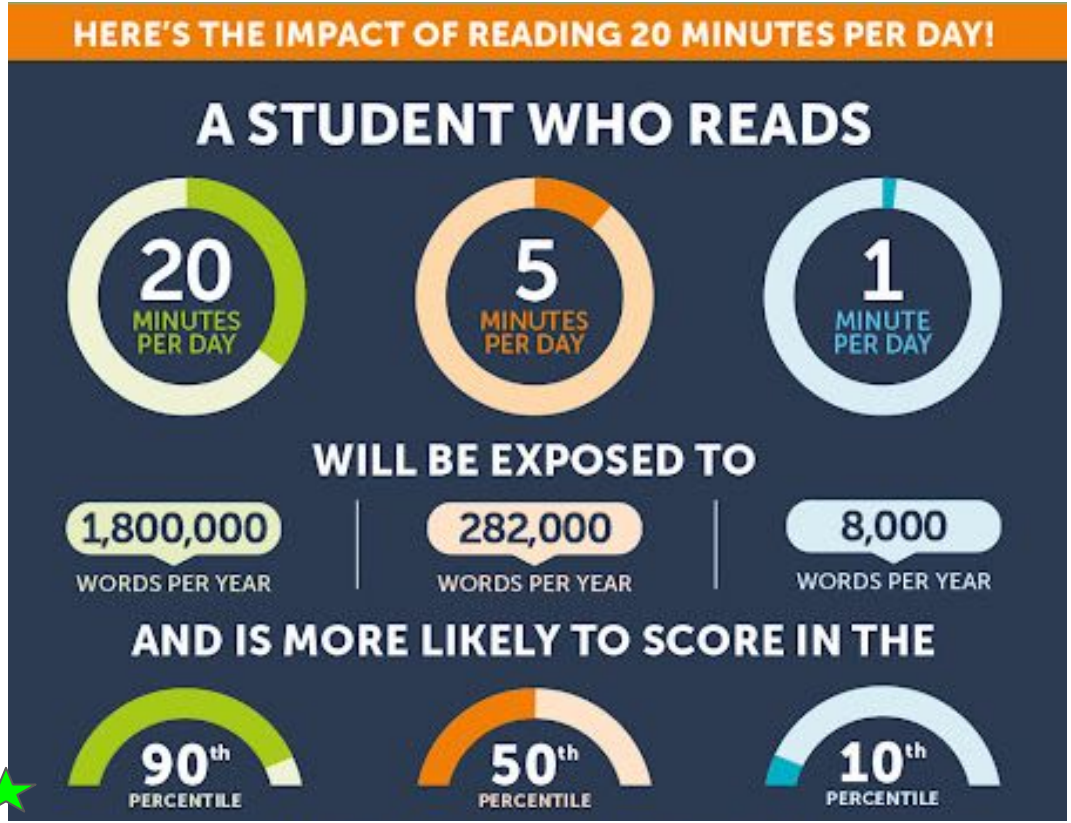
Tackling these challenges at home

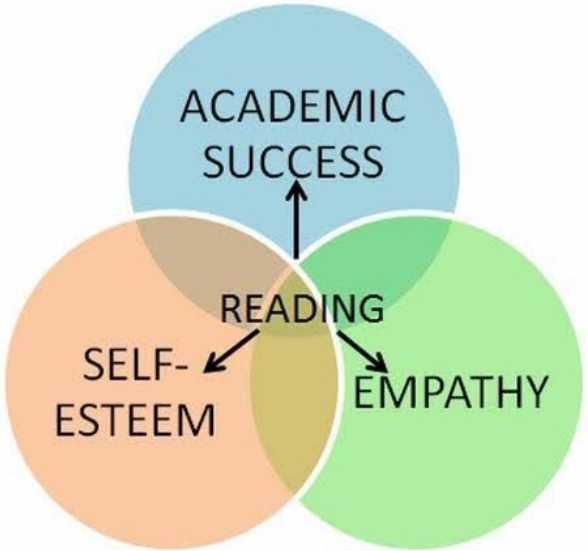
Screen time & AI reliance



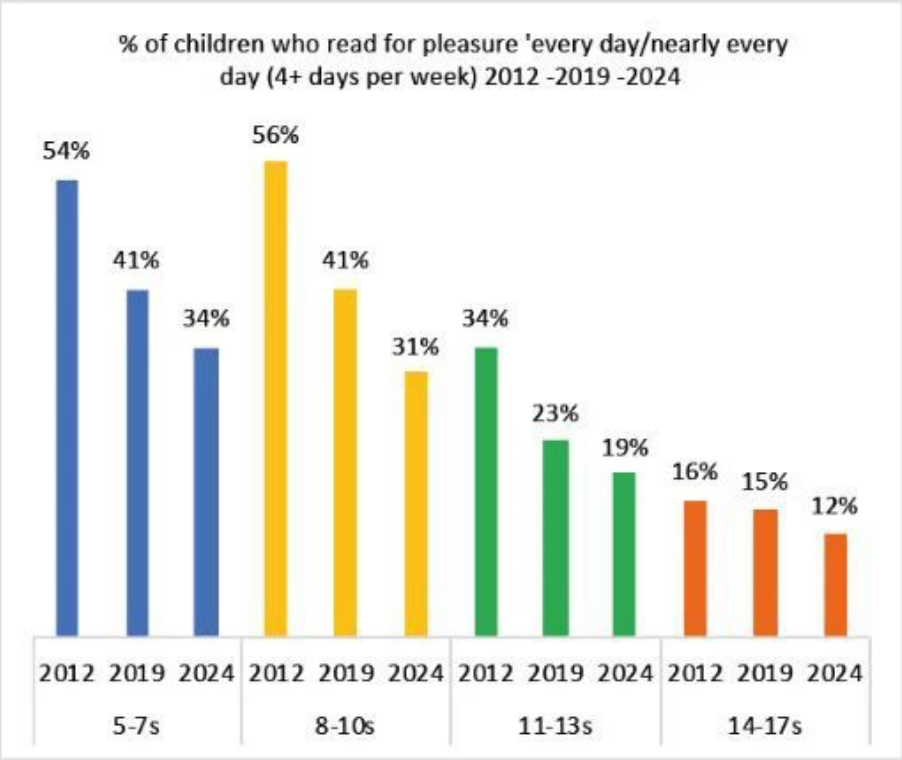
What successes have you had? What are your greatest challenges?

Independent Reading





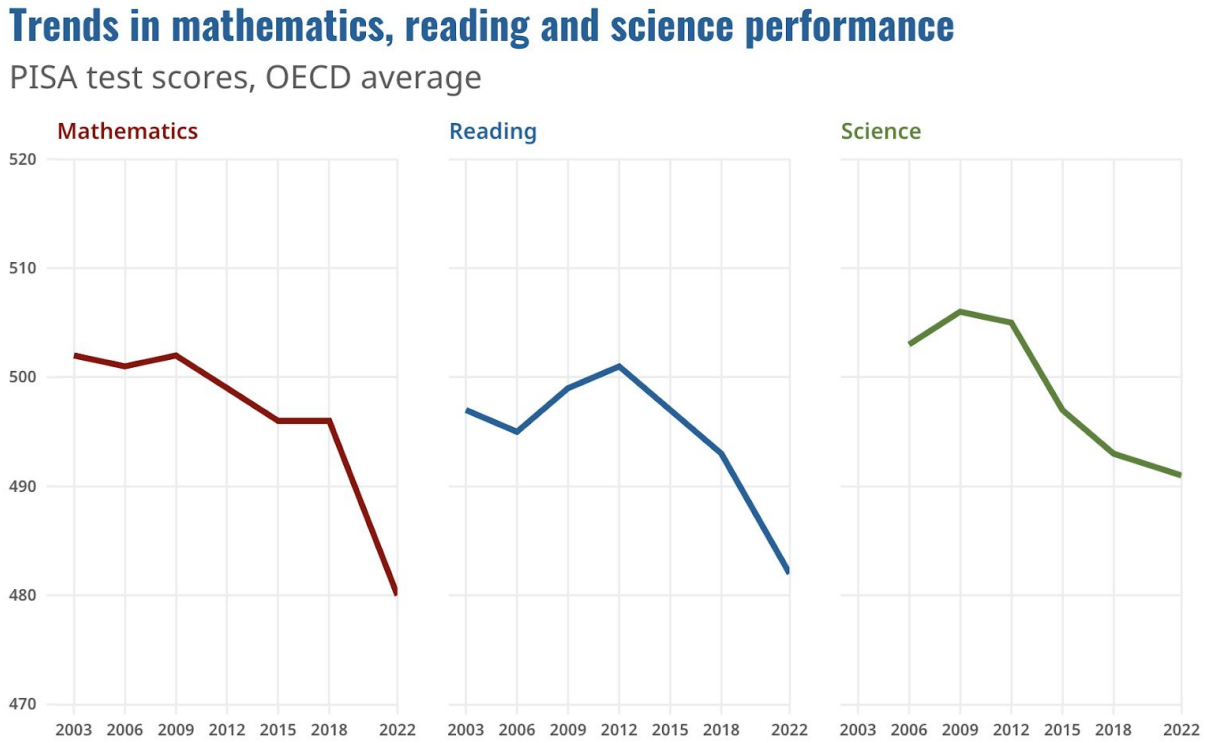
Drop in children reading for pleasure



Source: NielsenIQ BookData's 'Understanding the Children's Book Consumer' 2012/ 2019 /2024

Pupils who read for pleasure gain more in vocabulary, maths and spelling between 10 and 16. The effect is four times larger than having a degree-educated parent (Sullivan and Brown, UCL).

Programme for International Student Assessment data



In reading, PISA saw a decline in the very skills that matter most in the AI age: evaluating information, making connections across multiple sources, and thinking critically about what we read.

Share of "hasty readers" – students who rush through texts and give quick but incorrect answers – almost doubled between 2018 and 2025.

Tackling this challenge in school

- Paper texts and increasing exposure to high quality academic texts across the curriculum.
- Library lessons every week & a mentor group guided reading book (currently Pig Heart Boy,
- Accelerated reader to track and celebrate reading for pleasure at the right level to increase reading age.
- 20 minutes a day reading is homework expectation.
- Improved library catalogue for key demographic of struggling readers.

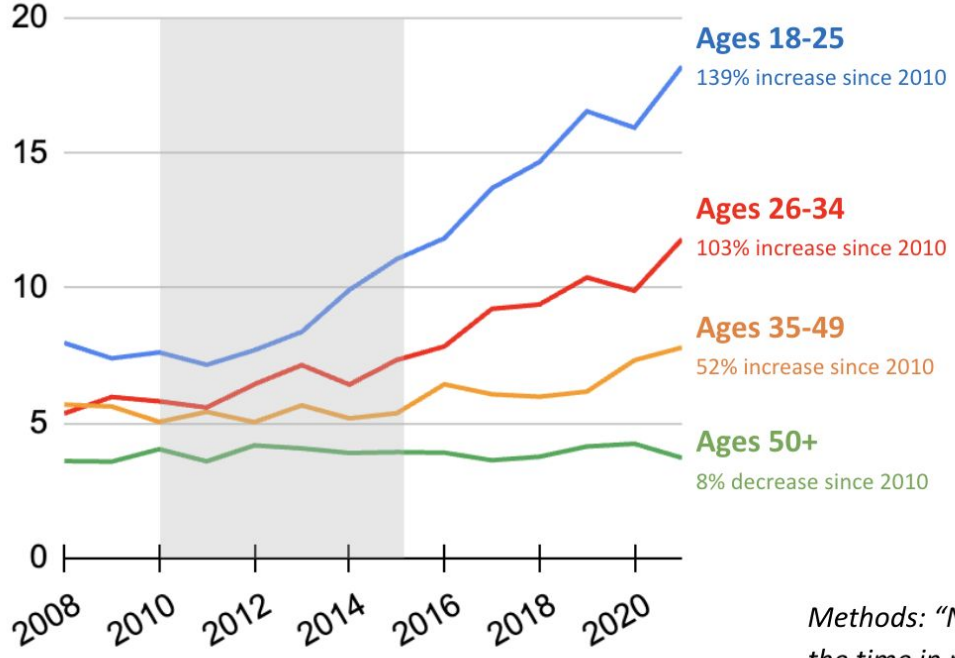
Tackling this challenge at home

Getting your child to read for pleasure independently.

What successes have you had? What are your greatest challenges?

The challenges of an increasingly online generation

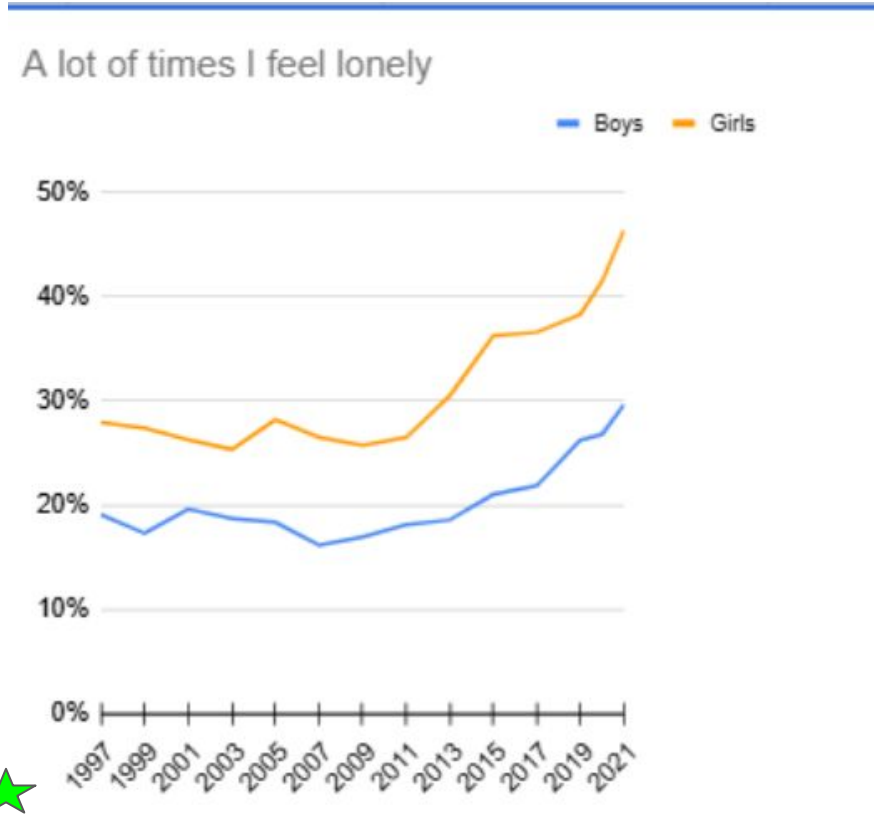
Percent U.S. Anxiety Prevalence

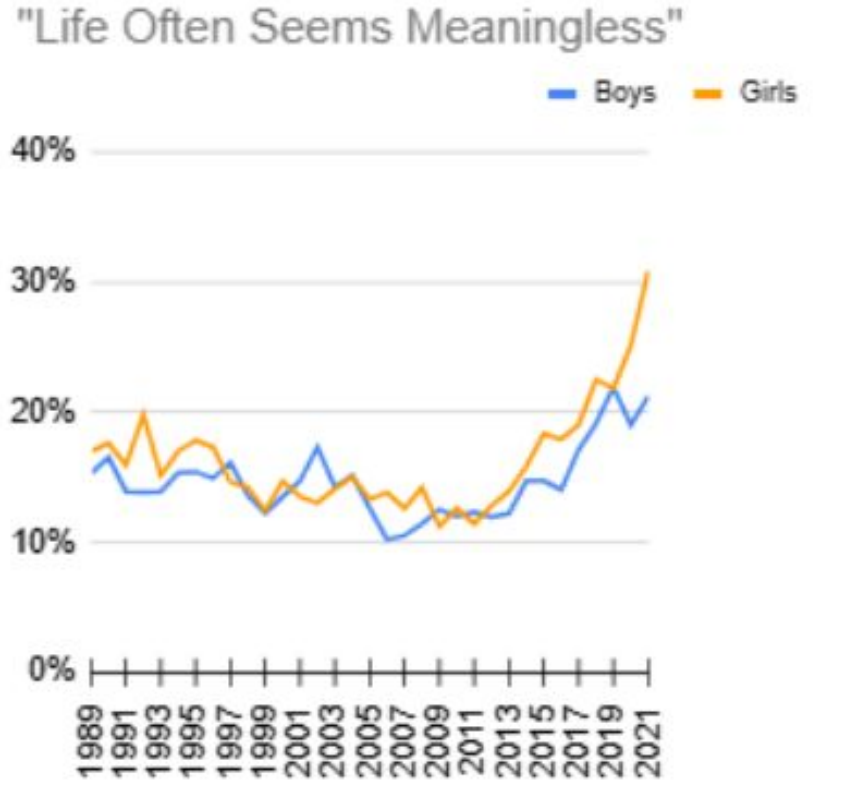


Gen Z hit hardest
Born after 1995

Young Millenials too

Methods: "Nervous all of the time or most of the time in past month"
SOURCE: U.S. National Survey on Drug Use and Health


A lot of times I feel lonely
Boys
Girls
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
1997
1999
2001
2003
2005
2007
2009
2011
2013
2015
2017
2019
2021


"Life Often Seems Meaningless"
Boys
Girls
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
1989
1991
1993
1995
1997
1999
2001
2003
2005
2007
2009
2011
2013
2015
2017
2019
2021

Tackling this challenge in school

- Mentor one-to-ones, school counselor & pastoral support team
- Limiting homework expectations
- Encouraging hobbies and co-curricular activities
- Discouraging extra tutoring or exam preparation
- Explicitly teaching effective and efficient revision habits

Effective Revision: What do we know?

- Rereading and highlighting is the most common form of revision and probably one of the least effective;
- Self-testing and activities which require students to recall information and apply it are far more effective and less time consuming;
- Interleaving topics is harder, but more effective;
- Revision works best in short bursts, 20 minutes, with breaks.

Should we be thinking about GCSEs yet?

Tonight is a good time to start thinking about GCSEs.

- Consider your child's interests and strengths;
- Know that no particular GCSE pathway will limit them later in A level choice etc: enjoyment is the most important factor at this stage;
- Remember that GCSEs are just a part of the wider curriculum at KS4; PSHE, co-curricular activities, the Duke of Edinburgh Award and the TBS diploma ensure a broad and engaging programme for 14-16 year olds.

IGCSE Subject Choices

- Students take 9 iGCSE subjects
- English, Maths and Science are compulsory
- Students will also take at least one language
- This leaves students with up to 3 slots for option subjects
- Students also have 2 lessons of core PE per week and PSHE
- Personalised pathways may be created for students with individual learning needs

Option Subjects*

Business Studies

Design Technology

French

Drama

Computer Science

Geography

Psychology

Art & Design

Mandarin Chinese

Spanish

Music

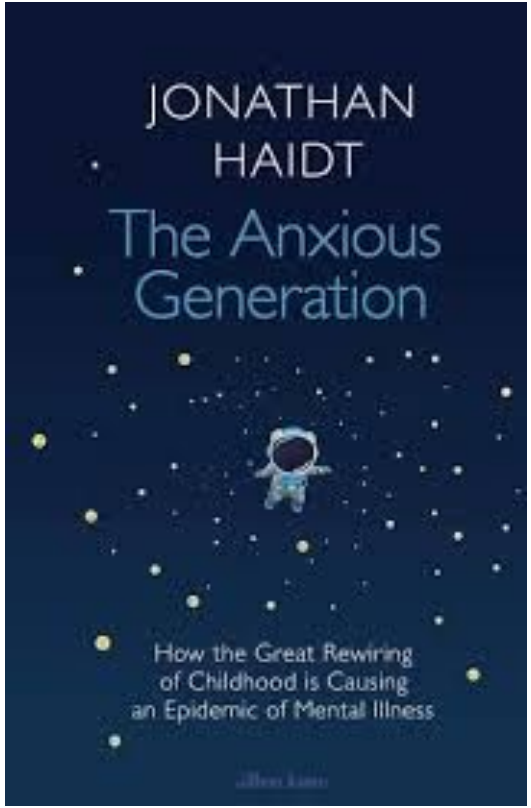
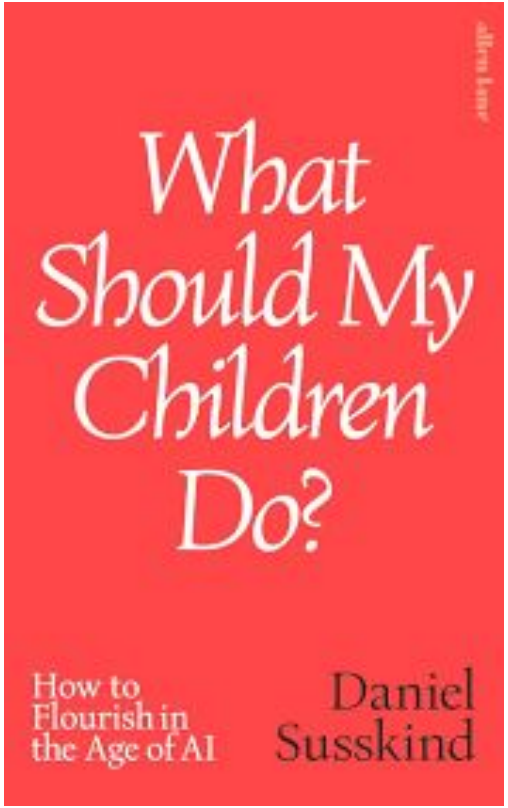
Physical Education

History

Photography

** Subjects we will run at GCSE in 26-28 if sufficient uptake*

Should we be thinking about GCSEs yet?

We look forward to the full options evening on the 1st of March

Recommended reading