



Downlands Community School
College Road
Blandford Camp
Blandford Forum
Dorset
DT11 8BG

Tel: 01258 453348
Email: office@downlandsschool.org
Web: www.downlandsschool.org
Twitter: @downlandsschool

Headteacher : Mr J Rielly

Thursday 31st August 2023

Dear Parents,

I hope you and your family have had a lovely summer holiday. My colleagues and I are already preparing for the new school year and we cannot wait to welcome your children back to school in the next few days. I just wanted to present some key information prior to starting back.

Training days

Friday 1st of September is a staff training day. Families new to the school will be able to visit classrooms and meet key adults on the morning of Friday 1st September, which we call our registration morning. Other training days planned for this academic year are: Friday 22nd September and Tuesday 2nd January. Unusually, we have chosen to disaggregate the two last days of the official school calendar year: Monday 22nd and Tuesday 23rd July. This will mean that the final day of the school year will be Monday 19th July 2024 and staff will be working several twilight evening training sessions to achieve this. Please see the calendar page of our [website](#) for further details.

Attendance

Improving school attendance is an issue of national importance following the disruption caused by the pandemic. I will be writing to all parents next week, referencing our attendance policy which is approved by governors and the local authority. We will also be celebrating the attendance of pupil groups via our fortnightly newsletter. I look forward to working with all parents in supporting high standards of attendance and punctuality during this academic year.

Start of term

The new school year starts on Monday 4th September for all children, though our reception classes are having a phased start and Mrs Loveless will have informed parents of the first days for the children in Reception.

School day times

Just a reminder of our school day times*:

- 0830hrs Gates open and children are allowed to enter the school building
- 0840hrs School register opens (official start of the school day)
- 1515hrs Home time

School gates will be locked until 0830hrs, so please ensure that children do not arrive too early as the school site is not supervised until gates are opened.

** Children and parents using our pre-school (FS1) should arrive at school for 0850hrs drop off, being collected at 1450hrs if staying for a full day*

Supervision and drop off points

The map shown here shows the access points for the different phases of the school. All children between FS1 and Y2 must be accompanied to school by a responsible adult and supervised until met by a member of staff. Until 0830hrs, parents and children arriving early to the school site should wait in the tennis courts as indicated. Parents using the rear drive access to the tennis courts must stick to the footpath in the interest of safety.



Bikes and scooters

Children are welcome to use bicycles and scooters to get to school. There are bike racks available near the KS2 and KS1 entrances. We insist that all children wishing to cycle to school, and stow their bikes on site, wear a helmet and use a road worthy bicycle. We will issue half termly permits to all children wishing to do so and these will not be reissued if a helmet is not worn or if bicycles are ridden unsafely on or around the school site. All users of bicycles and scooters must dismount before entering the school site – this includes young children on balance bikes. Please could parents support us in this ambition as we do have vulnerable adults and children in the community and everyone's safety is our paramount concern.

Behaviour

We will be using our school values to celebrate and promote positive behaviours throughout the year: We care. We share. We believe. We achieve.

For the last three years, we have also adopted an approach to behaviour management that is underpinned by Therapeutic Thinking, which is promoted by Dorset Council. You can find full details of this approach in our Relationships Policy presented on the [policies page](#) of our website. Alternatively, you can hear myself and other colleagues talking about the philosophy behind this approach, also on our website [here](#).

From time-to-time, extra support and interventions are required to maintain standards in behaviour for the benefit of all within the community. As such, school governors and I have recently developed a clear and graduated approach to managing behaviour where expected standards are not being met and this is presented in Appendix 12 of the Relationships Policy. Parents will be informed if their child's behaviour is causing concerns and they will be expected to support the school where relevant.

Extended provision

We offer breakfast club from 0745hrs and an after school club till 1700hrs. Full details of the pricings and timings of our extended provision are available on [our website here](#). If you intend to take advantage of the MOD wrap around care scheme, please contact the office and a member of the team will be able to help you in this regard.



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New members of the team

I am delighted to welcome the following adults to the Downlands Family:

- Miss S Alston (Y3/4 Class teacher)
- Mrs H Pipe (Office Team)

I would remind all parents that the best way of communicating with teachers is via an office to the email (office@downlandsschool.org). We also use a virtual platform called Seesaw for sharing learning journeys across the school year and all new parents will be given access to their child's individual account.

Recent Ofsted inspection

I wrote to all existing parents in July to explain the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection in June. The full report can be [found on our website here](#). This is a fair and helpful report which clarifies areas for development, which we were already working on, yet it will give fresh impetus and guidance to achieve change quickly and sustainably and my colleagues and I are very keen to accept this challenge. From the above website link, you can also find an audio recording of an interview I did with Jason at BFBS about this matter.

Weekly Headteacher drop-in sessions

If ever you would like to talk to me in person, I will be available most Friday mornings between 0900 and 0945. You will not need to make an appointment, though we will organise meetings on a first come, first served basis. Conversations will be limited to 15 minutes on these occasions, but I would always be happy to arrange follow-up meetings as required. The first drop-in session will start on Friday 8th September.

Yours faithfully