



Downlands Community School
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Headteacher : Mr J Rielly

Monday 31st August 2026

Dear Parents,

I hope you and your family have had a lovely summer holiday.

Sadly, the tragic events in Nepal and Tibet have been a sobering end to the holiday period and my thoughts are with the Nepalese Families in our community who must surely be shocked and immensely saddened by the scenes unfolding on the news. Indeed, it seems likely that some families may have direct connections with lives lost or devastated by the floods. I am exploring ways that we might get involved in fundraising as a school community to help with the flood recovery efforts which are now needed. I will provide further details of this in due course.

In the meantime, my colleagues and I are 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.

Returning to school and calendar dates

Dorset Local Authority have set out the term dates for this year (and next) on [this website](#). We have planned to have one INSET day at the start of term, so children should return to school on Wednesday 2nd September 2026 (**children starting in Chestnuts will have a phased return as advised*). The dates of all 5 INSET days are as follows: 1/9, 2/10, 2/11, 18/12, 21/7. You can find a full break down of our school year on [this school website page](#). Families new to the school are warmly welcomed to attend our Registration Morning (Tuesday 1st September, 0900 to 1200hrs) where you will be able to visit classrooms, meet key adults and purchase school uniform. Returning families can also purchase uniform on this morning and we will have stalls set up in the main school hall.

Please note that on the last day of the Easter Term (Thursday 25th March) and Summer Term (Tuesday 20th July), children will be dismissed at 1215hrs from All Saints Church on camp.

Attendance

Improving school attendance and punctuality is still an issue of national importance. I will be writing to all parents in more detail about this 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.

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)
- 1040hrs Morning break
- 1215hrs Lunchtime
- 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 arriving after 0840hrs (but before 9:10am) will be given a late mark - *late but before register closes* (code 'L'). The register will close at 9:10am and pupils arriving after this point will be recorded as *late after register has closed* (code 'U') which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole of the morning session.

* Children and parents using our Dandelions 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. Parents using the rear drive access to the tennis courts must stick to the footpath in the interest of safety and wait in the tennis court area if they arrive early. Other than two disabled parking spaces, all parking on the school site is designated for staff or school visitors only and a safety gate is used to ensure that the rear drive is traffic free during school drop off and pick up times. If you have eligibility for the disabled parking spaces and you intend to use them, please could you inform the school so that we can manage any capacity issues as well as explaining our safety gate system.

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/scoot to school, and stow their bikes/scooters on site, wear a helmet and use a road worthy bicycle/scooter. We will issue 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 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 four 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.

Home-school agreement

After consultation with all stakeholders, we have developed a [home-school agreement](#) to underpin the relationship between parents, children and staff. I have included it with this communication and all children will get a hard copy on their first day. Please could you read this with your child(ren) and return a signed copy to the school for our records.

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.

Classes and teachers

As previously communicated, this is the list of classes/groups and associated adults:

Class/Group Name	Year Group	Adult (Role)
Dandelions	Foundation Stage 1	Julie Palmer (Childcare Leader) Jules McKechnie (Keyworker) Becky Wright (Keyworker) Helen Marshall (Keyworker) Vetinia Ram (Keyworker)
Chestnuts	Foundation Stage 2	Mrs Loveless (EYFS Lead and Chestnuts Class Teacher) Mrs S Gooding (Keyworker)
Oak and Fir Class	Years 1 and 2 (Key Stage 1)	Mrs Le May (Oak Class Teacher and KS1 Lead) Miss Bryant (Fir Class Teacher) Mrs G Legg (Support Teacher) Mrs S Montgomery (Teaching assistant) Mrs P Luke (Teaching Assistant)
Beech and Cedar Class	Years 3 and 4 (Lower Key Stage 2)	Miss C Longworth (Cedar Class Teacher) Miss Hoare (Beech Class Teacher) Mrs C Haggard (Senior TA) Mrs M Hampson (Teaching assistant) Mrs H Mead (Teaching assistant) Mrs M Lewis (Teaching Assistant)
Sycamore and Willow Class	Years 5 and 6 (Upper Key Stage 2)	Mrs K Garton (Sycamore Class Teacher) Mr J Jolliffe (Willow Class Teacher) Miss C Hampson (Teaching Assistant)
The Butterfly Hub	All years	Mrs C Goodall (TBH Lead/SENDCo) Mrs L Culliford (Specialist Teaching Assistant) Mrs C Stewart (Teaching Assistant)

A full list of staff names and roles can be found on the school website [here](#).

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.

Below is a map of the school with the afore mentioned classes/groups:



Parents should **not** routinely enter the school corridors or classrooms upon drop off and collection unless express permission has been granted by the headteacher, or they are invited to do so by a member of staff on singular occasions.

Safeguarding

At Downlands Community School, we are committed to safeguarding children. The safeguarding leads in school are as follows:

- Mrs C Goodall - Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Mr J Rielly - Deputy DSL
- Mrs J Loveless - Deputy DSL
- Mrs Y Le May - Deputy DSL
- Mr J Jolliffe - Deputy DSL

We also have a Governor - Mrs T Pickering - who is the strategic lead for safeguarding matters on the Governing Body.

Safeguarding is seen as something that is the responsibility of everyone in school: staff, governors, visitors; volunteers and even the children. All members of staff receive annual training on safeguarding matters, addressing updates presented in the latest Keeping Children Safe in Education document. The school often seeks advice and guidance from other local authority services in support of children and families, but operates under a consent-based model. If you as a parent or guardian are concerned about the safety or wellbeing of a child

who lives in Dorset then you can contact the Family Support and Advice Line on 01305 228558. Alternatively, any one of the named DSLs above is available to talk, offering advice and support on safeguarding matters.

Y5/6 Pencil cases

We ask that each Y5/6 pupil bring their own stationery to school. Specifically, each pupil will need to have the following items:

- Pencil case
- 2 pencils
- 2 black pens (biros)
- 15cm ruler (or 30cm foldable ruler)
- 1 rubber (eraser)

We also ask that pupils refrain from bringing excessive stationery (e.g. colouring pencils/pens, oversized sharpeners) or stationery that is particularly valuable.

Mobile phones and smart devices

Mobile phones and smart devices have never been allowed in school for our pupils. On rare occasions, parents of older pupils have asked for dispensation in order to allow their child to bring a device into school for safety reasons in relation to independent travel to and from school. In light of recent government guidance for all schools on such matters, a full policy will be put before Governors during this Autumn Term and an update will be provided. In the interim, please be advised of this extract of this new policy which has been our working practice over the last few years:

“Downlands Community School is a mobile phone-free environment throughout the school day. Pupils must not access or use mobile phones at any point during the school day. This includes before school once they have entered the school site, during lessons, breaktimes, lunchtimes and whilst remaining on the school site at the end of the day.*

The school recognises that, in rare circumstances, some older pupils may require a mobile phone for their journey to and from school. Parents are encouraged to consider whether a basic mobile phone, rather than an internet-enabled smartphone, would meet their child's needs. Nevertheless, all requests to bring a mobile phone to Downlands Community School must be put in writing to the Headteacher.

*For the purposes of this policy, the term 'mobile phone' includes smartphones, communication-enabled smartwatches and any other personal device capable of making calls, sending messages, accessing the internet, taking photographs or videos, making audio recordings or using communication or social media applications.”

Weekly Headteacher drop-in sessions

If ever you would like to talk to me in person, I will be available most Friday mornings between 0930 and 1015hrs. 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 5th September.

I hope this initial letter has been informative and I would also highlight the 'Parents' pages of our website where further information about topics such as uniform, snacks/lunches and home learning can be found. In the meantime, my colleagues and I look forward to meeting you and your families in person over the coming days and working with you in the care and support of your children across the course of the school year.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Kelly', is positioned below the text 'Yours faithfully'.