



Newsletter 1

11/09/2026

Dates for your diary!

AUTUMN TERM 2026

2nd Oct - TEACHER TRAINING DAY

8th Oct - Fraser Portraits (Individual photos)

16th Oct - Flu Vaccinations

26th - 30th Oct - HALF TERM

2nd Nov - TEACHER TRAINING DAY

9th & 12th Nov - Parent consultations

17th Dec - Last day of term

18th Dec - TEACHER TRAINING DAY

Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome back to the new school year. I hope you and your families had a fabulous summer. My colleagues and I are already enjoying the rewards of caring for your children, creating a nurturing and safe learning environment so that they are happy to come to school and achieve their very best. That is our mission and we look forward to working together with you across the next 11 months. It will no doubt fly by!

For this first newsletter of the year, as well as a few updates, I thought I would mention some school routines and systems by way of a reminder or introduction to new families who have joined us.

School Values

Five years ago, we carried out a community wide consultation to establish our core values. We chose:

- We care
- We share
- We believe
- We achieve

Our rewards system is very much linked to our school values: children earn smiley faces in the hope that they can gain enough to be rewarded with a values certificate.

Safety

Your child is welcome to bring their bike or scooter to school, but we ask that they wear a helmet, and do not use their bike or scooter on the school grounds. I will be issuing bike/scooter permits whilst carrying out spot checks in the coming days.

After half term, as the mornings and evenings get gloomier, we ask that children in Y4 and under are picked up from any after school clubs. Also, it is a good idea for all children to have a reflective strip or badge on their bag or coat in order to improve visibility. We are fortunate to have an input from the Garrison about road safety later in the year.

The school will be carrying out a fire alarm next week (one of three throughout the year). We also carry out a lockdown drill but we will warn you in advance of this.

There is more information about wider safeguarding matters at the end of this newsletter and you can find out key contacts on our website [here](#).

First aid and support for medical conditions

We take support for medical conditions very seriously and have separate policies which govern this. We have recently developed a [policy](#) on allergies in line with DFE guidance in response to Benedict's Law and all colleagues have received additional training. We work with families of children with specific medical conditions to develop health care plans. Please do inform us if you think that this applies to your child(ren).

We will administer prescribed medicines and we have a separate [policy](#) on this to be found here. In summary, prescribed medicines need to be named and brought into the school by an adult along with the box with the prescription label. We will not administer paracetamol if a child has a temperature as [NHS guidance](#) suggests that the child should be recovering at home if this is the case. There are certain circumstances where we will administer pain killing medication in the event of a fracture, for example. All such arrangements will need to be approved by the school.

We have comprehensive levels of first aid training throughout our team. If your child were to hurt themselves in school, we would complete an accident/first aid slip and place this in your child's bag. For children in EYFS and KS1, we would also take a photo of this and upload to Seesaw. If the first aider feels it necessary, we would also make a phone call home to advise of the injury. Also, all head injuries would also warrant a red Tyvek strip to be attached to your child's wrist to enhance the monitoring process.

Behaviour

It has been a very positive and prosocial start to the new school year with children really demonstrating our values of caring and sharing, particularly during breaktimes. Thank you to everyone who has signed our home school agreement ([available here](#)). This is an important expression of our shared endeavour in support of your child.

We teach and remind children of our behaviour expectations using STAR acronyms which can be found within our wider [Behaviour Curriculum](#).

Curriculum

You should have already received a curriculum phase newsletter about what your child will be learning this term. If not – they can be found [here](#). They are a really useful overview which you can use to talk to your child about their day-to-day lessons.

We have many extra-curricular activities and special events to enrich your child's experience of school and we will communicate these with you via newsletters and emails.

Reporting progress

We are committed to tracking your child's progress across the year, allowing us to provide extra support and guidance as necessary. We have two main parent consultation times:

- Monday 9th and Thursday 12th November
- Monday 15th and Thursday 18th March

Nonetheless, you can contact your child's teacher at any time via the school office if you would like an update on progress.

End of year reports will be issued on Friday 16th July or earlier if your child leaves before the end of the school year. We will also provide details of statutory testing such as end-of-year EYFS profile attainment, phonics screener checks and SATS.

House System

For the last 3 years, the school has organised children into Houses: **Kiwi**; **Jaguar**; **Falcon**; **Rhino**

The House system is really important for helping all children feel like they belong, providing a space for children to get together with siblings and encouraging friendships across the age ranges. We organise competitions throughout the year in sport, the arts and cultural events. They are designed to be enriching and fun. We also have House competitions for rewards (House points) and attendance.

Gold Book Assemblies

Most Fridays at 0900hrs, we host our Gold Book Assemblies. This is our chance to celebrate all forms of achievement. As well as Gold Book nominations for those 'wow' moments, children may be presented with Values Awards and other recognitions for achievements across the curriculum. I am also happy to celebrate the achievements of your child from outside school such as swimming levels, man of the match awards and gymnastic prizes. We will endeavour to notify you on Thursday if your child is receiving a school award the following day in order for you attend.

Standards

The school's last Ofsted report was in January 2026 and you can read the report using the QR code below. We are pleased with the written descriptions of this report and the evidence of progress since our last Ofsted inspection in June 2023. We are now being supported by Futura Learning Partnership

to address the areas that need attention as part of the DfE's Targeted RISE scheme.



The Chair of Governors, Padre Carl Stokes, and I are fully committed to engaging with all forms of support so that we can ensure that our school is providing the very best for your child. If you would like to join the governing body, please get in touch with the Clerk to Governors at ccooper@downlandsschool.org.

To achieve the very best standards of teaching and learning, we will occasionally use digital filming to help colleagues to reflect on practice in light of training and professional development. The school is using IRIS connect as a totally secure and GDPR compliant way to store and capture digital records of teaching and learning episodes, which will be used to help colleagues to develop new strategies. I have included a separate letter about this as part of this communication.

I would be happy to discuss any school related matter, whether focused on your child or the wider picture of school leadership, at my **weekly open drop-ins** on Fridays between 0930 and 1000hrs. No need for an appointment, please just come to the school office.

Uniform

Thank you for everyone's commitment to our school uniform policy – the children have looked very smart in the first few days of this new school year. If there is an issue with your child's uniform, please do get in touch – we have a good stock of pre-loved uniform to help out. It is also really helpful

if all items are named so that our lost property systems can work effectively. If your child's teacher notices a problem with regards to uniform, they will get in touch via a note in your child's bag.

Parent Teacher Association – Friends of Downlands School (FODS)

We have an active PTA called FODS who help to run fundraising events throughout the year. The next important events will be our Christmas Quiz and School Disco – dates TBC. FODS are always looking for new helpers, so please get in touch with the school office for more details.

Harvest Festival

Padre Carl has agreed to lead our Harvest Festival on Wednesday 30th September at 1020hrs. This year, I will not be asking the community for donations to the local foodbank. Rather, and in consultation with local leaders, I have agreed with staff and governors that we will raise money to support the Nepal flood relief efforts via The Gurkha Welfare Trust charity which is supporting Gurkha veterans in flood affected areas. I will write to you nearer the time to remind you of this worthy cause.

Seesaw

The Seesaw online platform is an excellent communication tool for your child's learning journey and every parent has the right to have access to it. Here are some pictorial examples of learning in this first full week back:



Using tools to shape modelling clay in The Butterfly Hub.



Making cheese straws in Dandelions.



KS1 Forest School Fun



LKS2 exploring emotions in PSHE.

Have a lovely weekend everyone.

Mr J Rielly
Headteacher

Supporting you and your child

The school is ready and able to support your family and help every child do well in school, build confidence, and have the skills they need for a bright and successful future. We understand that from time to time, families face challenges which might require the support of other agencies. The school has strong links with **Family Help** which is a new way that Dorset Council is offering support to families who need more intensive help and support. It brings together different types of help into one service, so families don't have to keep repeating their story to several workers. You can find out more [here](#).

All staff in school are trained on matters relating to safeguarding and child protection, but the following members of the team have more specialist training and are here to listen and help if needed:

Mrs C Goodall (Designated Safeguarding Lead - DSL)

Mr J Rielly, Mrs J Loveless, Mrs Y Le May, Mrs A Robinson (Deputy DSLs)

Alternatively, you can contact the Family Support and Advice Line on 01305 228558. A friendly team member will listen to your concerns and help you decide what kind of support is right for you.

Lines are open:

- Monday to Friday: 8am to 10pm
- Saturday, Sunday and bank holidays: 9am to 10pm

Speak to a practitioner today if you have any worries or concerns about a child or young person.

Details on all of our policies, including attendance, complaints and uniform, can be found at
<https://downlandsschool.org/policies/>