Newsletter 3

23/10/2026

Dates for your diary!

AUTUMN TERM 2026

26th – 30th Oct – HALF TERM
2nd Nov – TEACHER TRAINING DAY
5th Nov – Garrison Halloween & Bonfire event
9th & 12th Nov – Parent consultations
16th-20th Nov – Anti-bullying week
20th Nov – Non school uniform (details to follow)
27th Nov – Downlands Christmas Family Quiz Night
10th Dec – Downlands Christmas Disco
15th Dec – Downlands Christmas Party
16th Dec – Foodlinks Christmas Meal
(More details will follow regarding the above Christmas events.)
17th Dec – Last day of term
18th Dec – TEACHER TRAINING DAY

Dear Parents and Carers,

I hope you and your family are well.

Attendance

Well done to Kiwi House for achieving a big swing in their attendance. We will soon get to 10 full weeks of school after half term. At this point, I will look at the attendance record of all children, offering support to families where their child(ren)'s attendance has fallen below 90%. As a whole school, our overall attendance (96.6%) is well above national and local figures for primary schools.

97.5% =	**94.8% ↓**	**97.9% ↑**	**96.7% ↓**

The NHS offer guidance about when it is ok to send your child to school.

Here is a guide for parents and carers on keeping kids healthy this school year.

House points

The house point competition is really gathering pace as more children demonstrate their achievement in school, particularly in relation to our values awards. Jaguar and Falcon have the early lead, but it is very close.

42	**42**	**34**	**32**

Abbey Visit



Working alongside, Kate Parish and Keith Dawson from last summer term, I helped to put together a special project for services children in primary schools across North Dorset. The intention was to celebrate the resilience and perseverance of these children through music and song. Thanks to the hard work of Kate and Keith, the event really snowballed, gaining the support of the Bovington and Yeovil Military Wives Choir and the Band of the Welsh Guards. Furthermore, we managed to secure a brilliant setting in the form of Sherborne Abbey. Over 300 Y6 children attended from primary schools across North Dorset, including our very own Y6 class. All the pupils sang brilliantly and our pupils were fantastic ambassadors to the school. It was a great event performed in front of several parents and a few VIPs such as the High Sheriff of Dorset and the Head of Service for Education and Learning for Dorset Council.



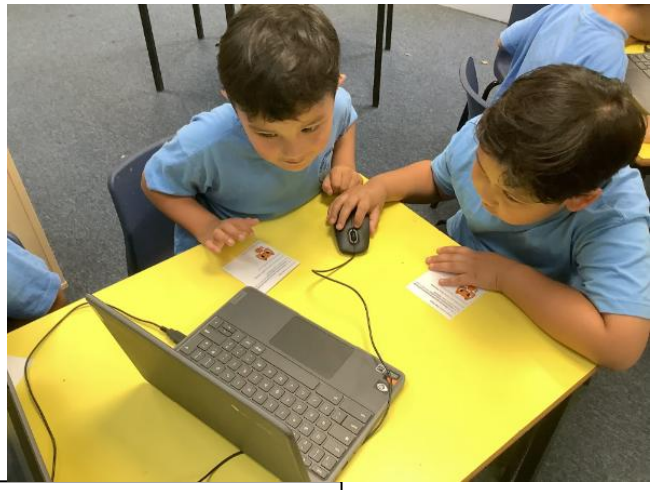
Poster Competition



Thanks to Rabi for organising the Bonfire Night/Halloween poster competition and for Alex and Shea for attending Gold Book Assembly to give out the kindly donated prizes from the Garrison.

Recent Learning





KS1 working on our new Chromebooks and designing and making puppets in DT.





FS1 tasting fruits on Fiji Day and enjoying home cooked food to celebrate Dashain.





4 of our Year 6 students recently went to Gillingham School to train as Sports Ambassadors. They are drawn from each of the 4 houses and will lead their peers during sporting events across the year.







We were kindly donated a number of pumpkins by Pinnacle Housing which the children enjoyed carving, decorating and exploring

Bike & Scooter Safety

As part of our ongoing commitment to keeping all members of our school community safe, we would like to remind families of the importance of **bike and scooter safety when travelling to and from school**. Please ensure that children riding to school follow these two important rules:

- **Wear a helmet:** All children must wear a properly fitted cycle helmet when riding their bikes or scooters.
- **Dismount on school grounds:** Children must get off their bikes/scooters and walk them once they enter the school grounds. This includes young children on balance bikes.

These measures help to keep children, parents, staff and visitors safe, particularly during busy drop-off and collection times. We kindly ask parents and carers to reinforce these expectations with their children and support us in maintaining a safe environment for everyone.

Financial Support for Families from Dorset Council

For all residents:
If you are struggling with the cost of living, help and support is available.
Our Cost-of-Living page has information on financial support, food, housing, energy costs, employment, wellbeing and other services that you may find useful: Get help with the cost of living - Dorset Council

For Families with School Aged Children:
New Free School Meal eligibility started from September. Children from families receiving any level of Universal Credit will now receive a free meal. If you haven't already applied for this year, you can do so here: Apply for free school meals - Dorset Council

Our School's Out! Activity programme is now available at half-terms as well as the main school holidays. All activities are free to attend for those eligible for Targeted Free School Meals. To find out more check out our webpage: School's out in Dorset - Dorset Council

Working parents may be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare for children attending Ofsted-registered childcare providers. For every £8 paid into a Tax-Free Childcare account, the government will add £2.

If you receive Universal Credit, you may also be able to claim back up to 85% of your registered childcare costs. Further information about childcare funding support is available on the Dorset Council website.

Service Pupil Survey

There is still time for schools to share their experiences and help shape future support for Service Pupils and their families. Schools across Dorset and the Southwest are invited to complete a short survey on their experiences supporting Service Pupils and their families.

To complete the 3 - 4 minute survey, please visit:
https://online1.snapsurveys.com/Interview/681f4824-9858-4e5f-b55d-7806c76f08ad

The survey is being delivered by Forces Connect South West, a partnership of local authorities working together to support the Armed Forces community.

Children from Armed Forces families can experience unique challenges, including frequent school moves and changes in family circumstances. This survey provides an opportunity for schools to share their experiences, identify any gaps in support, and highlight what guidance, resources, or training would be most beneficial.
The feedback will help shape future support for schools in Dorset, inform wider work across the South West, and contribute to national discussions on supporting Service Pupils.

The survey closes on Sunday 25 October 2026.

Have a lovely Half Term break 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, Mr Jolliffe (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/