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Dear Parent/Carer

Downlands Well-Being Garden

Over the summer we received the exciting news that Tesco Bags of Help have awarded a grant of £4000 to our project to provide a well-being garden to help support student and staff mental health and to provide a space to engage with our local community. Thank you to everyone who took the time and effort to request blue chips and vote for us in store, we were humbled by the level of support we received and take it as an indication that we all wish to support awareness and practice of good mental and physical health in our young people.

Autumn is a busy time for gardeners and our garden club has a full diary of activities for this term. The club is open to all students in Years 7, 8 and 9. It runs on Monday after school 3.10 – 4pm and is a great way to meet and make new friends. Two of our club members will be presenting the club in Year 7 assembly next week. We look forward to welcoming new members.

We have ordered our first trees and some storage containers. Some of our Downlands students will be involved in planting the trees and building the containers. Other students are researching our potential plants and writing articles for local media.

Mr Matthews is looking to work with a group of students to design and build some furniture for the garden. Mr Stokes is planning to involve our Forest School students in some of our larger tasks. We are excited that so many of our students are planning to be involved with the garden and appreciate their ideas and effort. Many thanks also to the teaching staff for giving their time to support the project.

Working Party.

There remain a number of tasks which are beyond the remit of work with students in school. We will be running a working party for parents on Saturday 13 October from 10am. Our tasks include-

- Preparing the ground for planter construction
- Cutting Sleepers to size
- Installing wooden gates
- Installing an outside tap
- Removing turf to create planting spaces.

If you are able to assist in any of these tasks, we would be very grateful if you would come and help. We have expertise on team – so no experience is necessary. **Our main challenge at the moment is lack of water on site. If you are, or know of a professional plumber, we would be extremely grateful for your help to install a tap on the outside of an adjacent classroom.** Please email Karen van den Dolder (kdolder@downlands.org) if you are able to come. Hots drinks and cakes will be provided!

Request for items

Thank you to everyone who has generously donated to the garden thus far. We are still looking for a number of items –

- Flower pots (preferably more than 20cm/8 inches diameter)
- Garden Hose
- Plants. It's the perfect time of year to take cuttings from herbaceous perennials. Those which flower early or late in summer are ideal.
- Bulbs. We are looking to plant spring bulbs – Crocus, Daffodils, Anemonies, Tulips, Alliums. These will create an uplifting space in the cooler, dark months
- Seeds. Hardy or Half Hardy Annuals.

If you are a privilege card holder at Notcutts Garden Centre in Ditchling, they have a discount weekend (Thurs 13 – Sun 16 Sept). Please consider using your offer to purchase a gift for the garden.

Please keep an eye on Twitter. We will send out updates as the work progresses through this next term. In the meantime – a huge 'Thank you' to everyone for getting involved in this project. It's especially exciting to be working together with people both within and outside of the school to create this special resource for our community. Please get in contact with me (kdolder@downlands.org) if there is anything you would like to discuss.

Kindest Regards

Karen van den Dolder

