

DOWNLANDS NEWS



14 February 2025

Dear parent/carer,

Thank you for your support and messages regarding the challenging circumstances yesterday. Please understand that unfortunately due to the number of messages, we are unable to answer them all individually. The students were amazing, to persevere in such circumstances as if nothing was going on was the very personification of the ROCKS. They are a wonderful group of young people who make us proud every day.

At the time of writing, the school production of High School Musical has just finished its run. It was a wonderful production, everyone who watched it was impressed by the energy, talent and enthusiasm of the students. A huge well done to all the young people involved, and a massive thank you to the dedicated staff team, so expertly led by Mrs. Robertson.

Wednesday, January 22nd was Downlands Character Passport Day. Every year group engaged in a wide range of activities: Year 11 with their English-speaking presentations, Year 10 participated in Enterprise Day, and Year 9 focused on Careers and Options.

Over 500 Year 7 and 8 students ventured to London, where they had the chance to visit West End shows and museums. The day went incredibly well, with many students engaging in activities they had never encountered before. These experiences play a vital role in expanding young people's cultural capital, but they also support their development as successful learners.

For our Year 11 students, mock exams are set to begin immediately after half term. The students have been putting in an incredible amount of hard work, and we wish them all the best. A special thank you goes to our Year 11 prefect team for their commitment and leadership. As they pass on the baton to the Year 10 prefects, we congratulate all the new appointees, especially our Head Prefect team, Blake, Hayley, Lottie and Frank. The new prefects will undergo leadership training after half term to ensure they are well-equipped to carry out their roles effectively.

We recently completed our latest uniform consultation, incorporating student feedback and building on actions from last year's review. As a result, Year 10 students will transition to wearing the blue uniform from next year. Additionally, students voted to keep the skirt uniform unchanged. This decision reflects their preferences while maintaining consistency in the school's dress code. Thank you to everyone who participated in the consultation and contributed their views.

DOWNLANDS NEWS

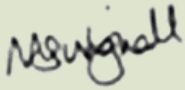
Today is the second meeting of the SEND Parents and Carers Forum, where parent and carer representatives meet with staff to discuss improving outcomes for our SEND youngsters. The minutes will be distributed to all members of the wider forum. If you haven't signed up yet, you can do so here: <https://forms.gle/fZRLCW3owzy64aw5> . This collaboration is already making a difference!

We are delighted to congratulate the following staff on their new roles at the school. Mrs. Cornish has been appointed Assistant Head Teacher (SEND), while Mrs. Radmore takes on the role of Character Intervention Lead. Mr. Manning steps into the position of Inclusion Centre Manager, Ms. Milton joins as PA to SLT, and Ms. Ashbridge becomes the Year 9 Pastoral Support Officer. We wish them all the best in their new roles!

We say a fond farewell to Miss Thomas, our dedicated pastoral support officer, and thank her for all her hard work and support. We wish her the very best for the future!

Today marks the departure of the ski trip to Obertauern, Austria, and we hope everyone has an incredible time. We're all looking forward to seeing the students again after half term and hope you all have a restful week.

Many thanks for your continued support.



Mark Wignall
Headteacher

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INSET DAYS

- Wednesday, 25th June 2025
- Monday, 21st July 2025
- Tuesday, 22nd July 2025

EARLY CLOSURES

On these days, school will close at 2pm for staff training. Transport will be arranged and we are able to supervise students who can't leave early.

- Thursday, 5th June 2025
- Wednesday, 11th June 2025

TIMINGS OF THE SCHOOL DAY

- 8.35am First (warning) bell
- 8.40am Registration
- 9.00am Lesson 1
- 10.00am Lesson 2
- 11.00am Break
- 11.20am Lesson 3
- 12.20pm Lesson 4
- 1.20pm Lunch
- 1.55pm End of lunch
- 1.55pm Lesson 5 (including 10 minutes DEAR Time ** for Key Stage 3)
- 3.05pm End of school day

**** DEAR time – Drop Everything And Read – all Key Stage 3 students are required to bring a reading book.**

The school site is open to students from 8.20am, students will not be able to enter the school building until 8.35am (unless the weather is inclement). Years 8 to 11 will assemble on the playground, Year 7 at the amphitheatre. The gates will be locked at 8.39am and the students will be marked 'late' after this.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

WINTER UNIFORM - PE

As the weather starts to get colder, we want students to continue to enjoy their PE lessons and being warm and comfortable plays a big part in that so a warmer under layer is permitted in the winter months. Typically, this is a base layer or jumper (requested to not be brightly coloured) and the main specification is that this is worn under the Downlands PE polo shirt. Students are not permitted to wear hoodies as they can be dangerous whilst playing sport.

PARKING IN DALE AVENUE

Polite reminder to all parents/carers:

Please avoid parking across residents' driveways when dropping off or collecting your child. Please be mindful of our neighbours. Thank you for your cooperation.

ORDERING SCHOOL SUPPLIES VIA SCOPAY

Please be aware that after ordering supplies on SCOPAY from the Library, Maths or PE department, pupils will need to go to the respective department offices and collect their items. Each department will have a list of students who purchased items.

MCAS - PHOTO PERMISSIONS

We enjoy sharing photos of the students participating on trips, sports and clubs, on our newsletter and on social media.

If you are happy for your child to be included in these photos please ensure that you have given consent by ticking the following on MCAS - Photo Online/Photo and name in Press/Photo Print use externally.

MCAS - PARENTAL CONSENT

**MyChildAtSchool**
Bromcom Parent Portal

Please take a few minutes to ensure that all parental consents are up to date

Click on Data Collection Form to give consent for antihistamine or paracetamol to be given as needed at school.

Please tick EpiPen if your child uses an EpiPen.

Please look at the whole page and complete as needed. Remember to press Submit changes and Save.

Please also look the Parental Consents Page to update your information and remember to press save.

Data Collection Form

Gender
Country Of Birth
Language
Religious Affiliation
Ethnicity
Nationality
Service Child

Other Details

Antihistamine Permission*
EpiPen - uses
Paracetamol Permission*

Parental Consent

Biometric Consent
I consent to fingertip biometric scan for the purpose of making payment for canteen food only. Our canteen operates a cashless system. This scan is held until the student leaves or ceases to use the system. If you wish to withdraw your consent, this must be done so in writing to the school Finance Office

IMPORTANT INFORMATION



If you haven't already, please download the free Studybugs app, or register on the Studybugs website, and use it to tell us whenever your child is ill and unable to attend school. You can call us to leave a message to report an absence, however Studybugs is our preference for absence reporting as it feeds directly in our registers.

Get the app or register now <https://studybugs.com/register>
<https://studybugs.com/about/parents>

Studybugs is quick and easy to register and use, and automatically reminds you to keep us posted. Using the Studybugs app or website, you can report your child's absence due to illness any time from 6pm the day before.

You are required to report absence a day at a time – it's not possible to 'block book' absence. Studybugs automatically email parents a reminder at around 8am the next morning if it's a school day. As an extra safeguard, Studybugs is set to automatically send parents a confirmation email after they report absence via the Studybugs app

MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

Please remember to leave a message for attendance (ext 228) before 8.30am to advise if your child will be late due to medical or illness. Likewise, a child will not be released from school without prior notice (before 8.30am) of an appointment.

NUT FREE SCHOOL

Please can we take this opportunity to remind everyone that students are not to bring bags of nuts, or food containing nuts, into school.

LOST PROPERTY

Please ensure you name all items belonging to your child. All items found around the school are handed in to lost property. Children can look for items at break and lunch time from the Attendance Officer. During the term we give named items to your child's tutor or PSO to return to them, if your child hasn't claimed them. Due to the amount of unclaimed unnamed items, we donate these items to charity at the end of every term. We cannot be responsible for lost items not handed in to lost property.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL ROOM

- Please make sure that you are aware of the current Covid guidance, which can be found here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/people-with-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19#children-and-young-people-aged-18-years-and-under-who-have-symptoms-of-a-respiratory-infection-including-covid-19>
- Please remember to keep the medical room updated of any changes in your child's medical conditions. Your child's welfare whilst in school depends on this information being up-to-date.
- Please ensure that your emergency contact details are current. If you move home, get a new mobile number or your work number changes please remember to let us know; we need to be able to contact you in an emergency or if your child is unwell.
- Please do not send your child into school if they have sickness or diarrhoea. You should keep your child at home for 48 hours after their last episode of sickness or diarrhoea.
- Hay fever – the school does not administer antihistamine for the symptoms of hay fever. We ask that this be administered at home before the start of the school day.
- Finally, please be aware that any prescribed medicines to be administered during the school day must be provided to us in the original pharmacist's container. We would ask that where possible you ask your GP to administer a three-dose medication to avoid the impact on the school day. A 'Request for School to Administer Medicine' form must accompany it. Under exceptional circumstances, where it is deemed that their administration is required to allow the student to remain in school, the school will administer non-prescription medication for a maximum period of 48 hours. Any non-prescription medication administered in school must have been administered in the past without adverse effect. Again, a 'Request for School to Administer Medicine' form must accompany it. **Students must not carry their medication in school, apart from asthma inhalers and Anaphylaxis Auto Injectors, all other medication must be stored securely in the medical room.**

Medical Officer



CHARACTER DAY

On Wednesday, January 22nd, Downlands Community School celebrated its much-anticipated annual Character Day, a cornerstone event in our Character Passport program. This initiative encourages our students to engage in a variety of cultural activities throughout their time with us, fostering personal growth and character development.

YEAR 7: A THEATRICAL ADVENTURE



Our Year 7 students embarked on an exciting journey to London, where they had the opportunity to experience the magic of West End theatre. The students were divided into two groups, with one group attending a performance of the critically acclaimed musical Wicked, while the other group enjoyed the timeless classic The Lion King.

The students were captivated by the stunning performances, elaborate costumes, and unforgettable music. For many, it was their first time experiencing a live theatre production.. The trip not only provided entertainment but also offered valuable lessons in storytelling, creativity, and the performing arts.



Building Character Through Cultural Experiences

Character Day is an integral part of our Character Passport program, which is designed to help students develop a well-rounded character by participating in diverse cultural activities. These experiences are crucial in shaping our students into empathetic, knowledgeable and culturally aware individuals.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the success of this year's Character Day, we are already looking forward to next year's event. We remain committed to providing our students with opportunities that enrich their education and contribute to their personal growth. The Character Passport program will continue to be a vital part of our curriculum, ensuring that our students leave Downlands not only with academic knowledge but also with the character and skills needed to thrive in the wider world.

Thank you to all the staff, parents and students who made this day possible. Your support and participation are what make events like Character Day so special and impactful. We look forward to many more successful Character Days in the future.

CHARACTER DAY

YEAR 8: A DAY OF DISCOVERY

Meanwhile, our Year 8 students also headed to London for a day of exploration and learning at some of the city's most renowned museums. The students had the choice of visiting the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), the Science Museum or the Tower of London.

At the V&A, students marvelled at the extensive collections of art and design, including fashion, textiles, and sculptures from various cultures and time periods. They explored exhibits that showcased the evolution of design and its impact on society, gaining insights into the creative processes behind some of the world's most iconic works.



The Science Museum offered a hands-on experience with interactive exhibits that sparked curiosity and encouraged a deeper understanding of scientific principles. Students engaged with displays on space exploration, medical advancements and technological innovations. A highlight of the visit was the interactive gaming workshop, Power Up, where students had the chance to play and learn about the history and development of video games, from classic arcade games to the latest virtual reality experiences.

Those who visited the Tower of London were immersed in the rich history of this iconic landmark. They learned about its role as a royal palace, prison and fortress. Students explored the Crown Jewels, marvelled at the medieval architecture and heard tales of famous prisoners and historical events that shaped British history.



CHARACTER DAY - CAREERS

YEAR 9 CHARACTER DAY

The students had a day packed full of activities, starting in the morning with Speed Networking where they had to quiz volunteers using only 'Yes or No' questions to try and work out what they did for a living within 3 minutes – the students were very good at honing those questions down to uncover the truth! Then the volunteers talk to them about how they got into their role, the qualifications they needed and answered other questions students had about their careers. It is a great opportunity for students to encounter people from all walks of life, and as ever we are so grateful to our incredible volunteers who gave up their morning to inspire our students.

Year 9 were able to visit a careers fair at school with representatives from almost all of the local colleges, as well as many apprenticeship and training providers in the area, to start to think about where and what they might want to study when they leave Downlands.

We rounded off the day with talks from the University of Sussex, a degree apprentice from Edwards Vacuum and an inspiring entrepreneur, all designed to show students the different routes their post college life could take them. All this on top of finding out about their option choices for their GCSEs and completing quizzes on their careers knowledge and loves!



YEAR 10 CHARACTER DAY

The Year 10s Character Day was spent designing and presenting ideas for solutions to sustainability problems in our local area. Again, we were lucky to be supported by a team of volunteers from the Young Green Briton Challenge, and from local businesses who have a real passion for encouraging the next generation to consider the green issues locally and look to find solutions.

The feedback from the volunteers was wonderful, citing the enthusiasm and ingenuity of the students who came up with a range of initiatives to tackle issues such as food waste, transport, fast fashion and pollution. Students who would like to continue developing their ideas are able to do so, and we have mentors lined up from local businesses to help come and support them, turning their ideas into actionable reality to benefit our community and give them an incredible chance to build skills and knowledge they can take with them in their life journey.



YEAR 10 WORK EXPERIENCE

We also launched Work Experience for the Year 10s in the first week of January.

Thank you to all those who have been in touch to say what their plans for their child's placement are, or to request places from the live spreadsheet shared with all parents, carers and students in Year 10.

If your child is on the India trip, but would like to try and obtain a work placement during the holidays with one of the businesses on the spreadsheet, please do go ahead and contact them directly to see if this can be arranged.

YEAR 11

Many of our Year 11s have now had their college interviews and been offered and accepted places for their continued study in September. Many of our local colleges will still accept applications so please do check the course pages on the college websites if you are considering a change of plan. For those hoping to gain an apprenticeship, remember to ensure that you have a college place arranged as a back up as most apprenticeship opportunities starting in August or September will not yet have been advertised.

I am coming to the end of seeing all of the Year 11s for their individual careers guidance session, and wanted to say what a pleasure it has been to speak to them all about their hopes and aspirations for their future. I wish them all the very best in all they do, and hope that they will stay in touch, as I would love to hear how they are getting on in the future.

CAREERS INFORMATION - WEBSITE

<https://www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk/curriculum/work-experience-careers/>

Please visit the Careers section of the school website where you will find a wealth of information on career pathways and next steps:

- **General Careers Information**
- **Specific Career Fields**
- **Find Your Path**
- **College Open Events**
- **Work Experience**
- **Apprenticeships & T Levels**
- **Careers Education, Advice and Guidance**
- **Careers Speed Dating**
- **Job Vacancies & Competitions**

HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL

Downlands was transformed into 'East High' for our annual school show 'High School Musical'. 170 students brought joyful singing, dancing, basketball and maths decathlons to sell-out audiences across 4 shows.

"What a team...WILDCATS! Get your head in the game!"



HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL



PUBLIC SPEAKING

PUBLIC SPEAKING COMPETITION

Congratulations to both the senior and intermediate teams this weekend at Great Walstead School. The Senior Team are winners and through to the next round.

Senior Team

Motion: Meritocracy does not truly exist.

- Frank won Best Proposer
- Lila won Best Opposer
- George won Best Chair

Intermediate Team

Motion: Death Row is not a moral punishment

- Dewi won Best Proposer
- Violet won Best Opposer
- Otto – a brilliant performance!

All three teams gave an outstanding performance! So very proud of you! You were all courageous and just simply brilliant!

Ms Kashmiri

STUDENT FEEDBACK

It was an amazing opportunity to perform at Great Walstead and was a very topical motion: Meritocracy cannot truly exist, considering that we were performing in a private school and of course it was a great feeling to win.

Public speaking for me is a breath of fresh air in my hectic life, and winning at Great Walstead was one of the best things that has ever happened to me, well second best. The first was probably joining Public Speaking in the first place; it has helped me grow in confidence in the best way possible.

Being able to share my research and carefully crafted speech was an amazing opportunity, and this time we finally won – a breath of fresh air! While the next stage brings new challenges, I feel confident, because even a muddy puddle couldn't stop me from winning!

It was an intensely interesting experience to perform our speech and be judged in the school of Great Walstead. I was gutted to lose, but I have to admit that joking about capital punishment may not have been my best moment. Could've been executed better.

Performing at Great Walstead was a fantastic opportunity to advance our skills and get to know fellow competitors. It is also wonderful to get so much feedback from esteemed judges..... so much feedback.

I enjoyed performing at Great Walstead and that our efforts were well reflected by our achievements and winnings.



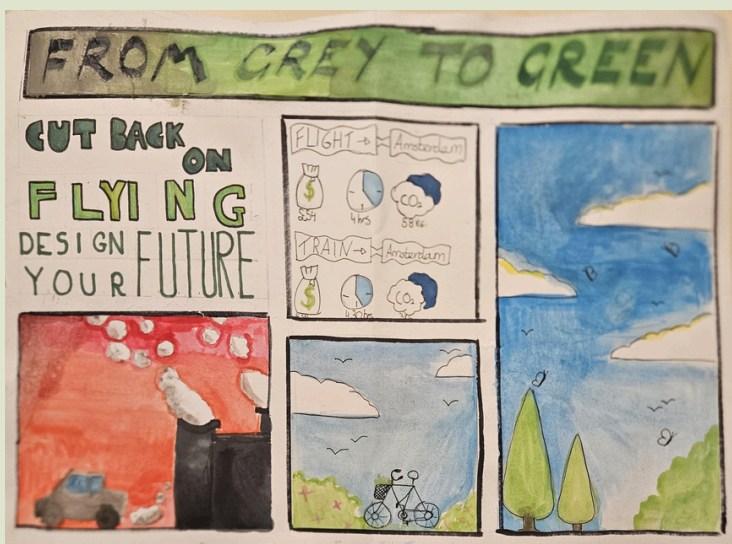
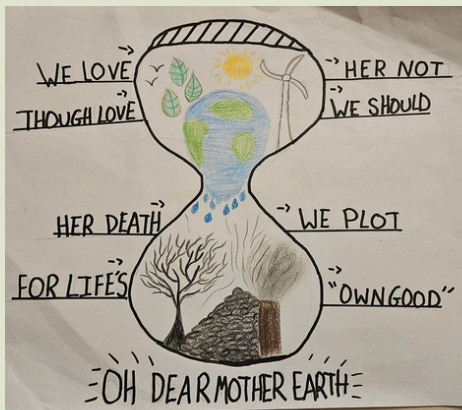
GEOGRAPHY

GRANTHAM CLIMATE ART COMPETITION

A number of pupils have entered this year's Grantham Climate Art competition, run by Imperial College London. This prestigious event challenged young artists and geographers to collaborate on designs reflecting this year's theme, "Grey to Green".

The competition encouraged participants to reimagine urban spaces, transforming them from concrete unsustainable landscapes into vibrant, green environments. The winning entry will receive a £200 cash prize and the incredible opportunity to see their design transformed into a 9x2m mural displayed at Imperial College London, serving as a powerful visual statement for greener cities.

Many pupils embraced the challenge with creativity and enthusiasm, submitting thought-provoking and innovative designs. We wait with anticipation as to whether any of our Downlands entries will become national winners.

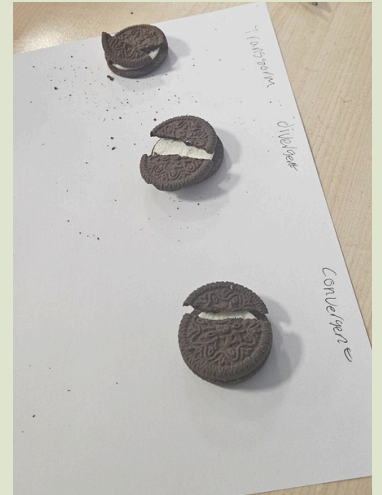


HOW IS OUR EARTH LIKE AN OREO?

Year 8 geographers have been using Oreos in lessons to model the different plate movements of the earth's crust (convergent – towards each other, divergent – away from each other, and transform – sliding alongside each other). Funnily enough the Oreos then lasted less time than an earthquake before they were eaten up! The next step will be to see if we can predict a volcano with party poppers and weights. Take home challenge: can you simulate a volcanic eruption with Coke and Mentos or bicarbonate of soda and vinegar?

<https://www.acs.org/education/whatischemistry/adventures-in-chemistry/experiments/mentos-diet-coke.html>

<https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/edu/resources/project/make-a-volcano/>



ANTARCTICA FLAG UPDATE

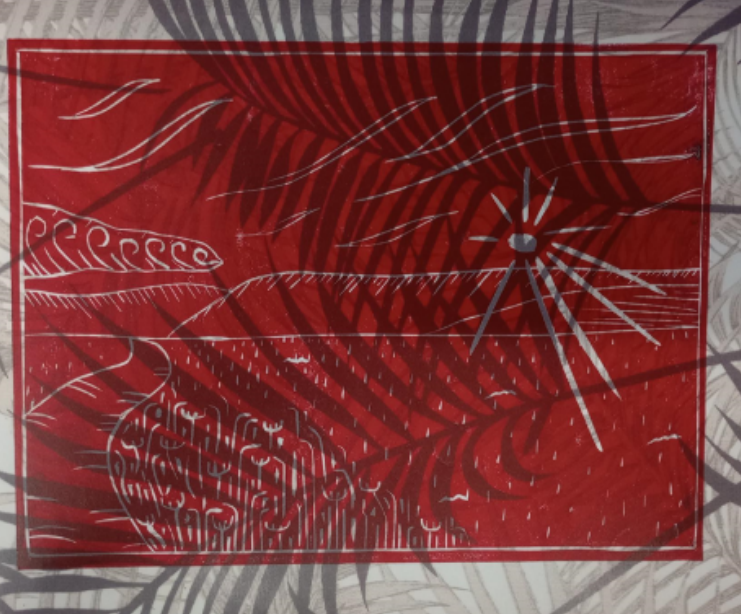
Last newsletter we shared the exciting Antarctica flag competition many students in Years 7–9 had entered. We are delighted to share the exciting update that our flags have made it to Antarctica. They really have been on quite the journey.

The flags were taken to Antarctica by Ciara McDonald, an electronics engineer at Rothera Research Station and here they are!



YEAR 10

Year 10 have been designing and creating a range of lino prints inspired by the natural environment. Here are some stunning examples.



YEAR 9

Year 9 pupils thinking of opting for GCSE Art had the opportunity to attend a taster session. Pupils were experimenting with a new technique called Gelli Printing, a quick and fun way to create interesting images.



DIVERSITY & LGBTQ+



'JUST LIKE US' VIRTUAL TRAINING SESSION

On Tuesday 4th Feb, the LGBTQ+ and Diversity Student Groups attended their second virtual training with the charity organisation *Just Like Us*. During this training session, students had the opportunity to discuss the impact they want to make and the changes they hope to bring around the school. This term's training session was titled 'Speaking Confidently'. Students were coached to understand what makes a good public speaker and how to approach challenging conversations. Our students spoke to other schools and shared ideas on how to continue to develop inclusion. We are indeed very lucky to have such dedicated young people committed to making change.



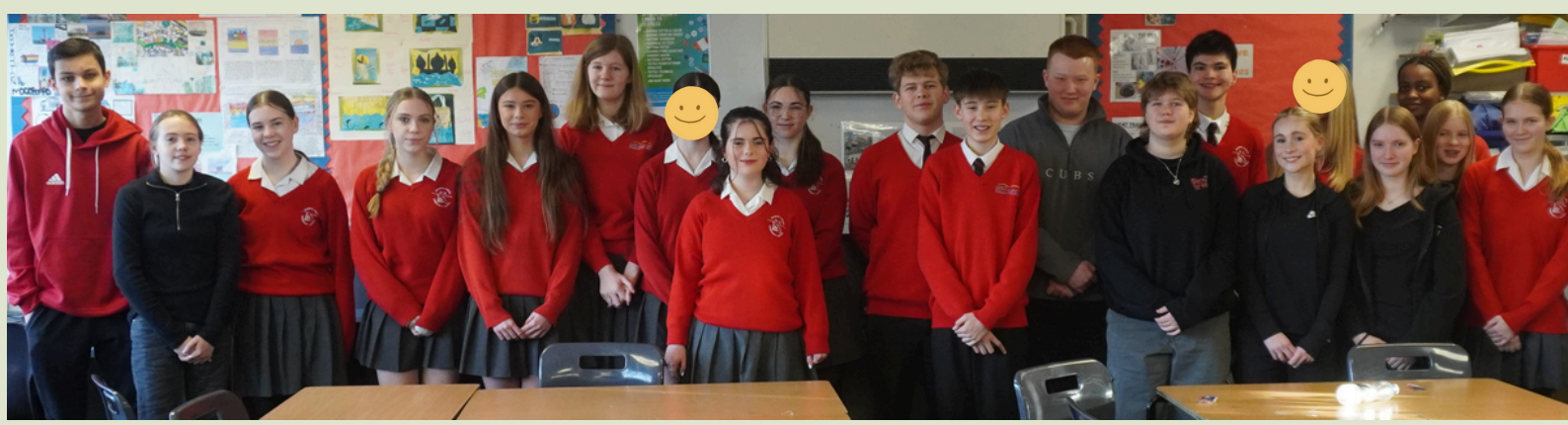
PREFECTS

NEWLY APPOINTED PREFECTS

Before Christmas, our Year 10 students applied for positions on the Senior Team. Each applicant submitted a detailed application form, accompanied by a reference. After carefully reviewing these, all candidates were invited for interviews.

With such a talented pool of applicants this year, making a final decision was incredibly challenging. The passion, creativity, and leadership demonstrated by all candidates were truly inspiring.

Congratulations to everyone who has been appointed. Mr Stokes, Mrs Skelton and Mr Adams look forward to working alongside the whole Senior Team in the forthcoming year.



DANCE & PE

YEAR 9 DANCE WORKSHOP

Jasmin Vardimon

Our Year 9 Gifted and Talented pupils recently took part with the renowned Jasmin Vardimon Dance Company. All pupils thoroughly enjoyed the workshop and were physically challenged with some demanding repertoire!

The esteemed Ceyda Tanc Dance Company, who have worked with Downlands students on many previous occasions, came in and created a piece on our Year 9, 10 and 11 pupils. The piece has been inspired by a blend of Turkish folk dance and contemporary dance and will be performed in this year's dance show.



DOWNLANDS DANCE SHOW - 23RD & 24TH JUNE

Dance pupils are working hard to create pieces for the Dance show, which will now take place on the 23rd and 24th June. We can't wait to show you what we have been working on- it's set to be a fantastic show!

CROSS COUNTRY

We attended the Sussex Schools Cross Country event at Waterhall in January. The competition was for Year 8-11 students and there were over 250 runners for each race. Our students did superbly, working so hard on a soft under foot course to all complete the race, which is massive achievement. We are so proud of everyone who volunteered to take part, and they achieved so much as individuals from completing this.

Year 8 Boys – JACK F, HUGO B, JAMES O

Year 8 Girls – EVIE W, LOIS H

Year 10 Boys – FRANK J, REMI H

Year 11 Girls – ISABELLA P

Isabella in Year 11, broke into the top 25 of her race. Izzy received a letter to represent Sussex in the next round against hundreds of the best athletes in the country. To achieve this is incredible, and Izzy can now say she's represented Sussex in cross country in a national race. Well done!

YEAR 7 BASKETBALL

The Year 7 basketball team have continued their fantastic start to the season and have won 12 games in a row. The team have scored 300+ points and only conceded 84 points across all games. They have finished top of their Junior NBA group and will now progress to the play-off rounds. They finished top of their Mid-Sussex league and will progress to the semi-final after half term. The team have continued to improve each week and are all extremely dedicated to training. They regularly train before and after school and continue to make excellent progress. Keep up the good work boys!



YEAR 9 BASKETBALL

The Year 9 basketball team are currently having a very successful season. They have won the majority of their Mid-Sussex district games and now progress to the semi-finals after half term. They will play Warden Park in the semi-final after February half term. The team have also recently played in the National League competition; they played a very strong Bohunt Worthing team and narrowly lost 90-80. They went on to beat Lewes Priory 98-34 and then lost to an extremely good Bohunt Liphook side who have topped the group. We are looking forward to the fixtures after half term and are hoping to secure some silverware.



YEAR 8 BOYS FOOTBALL

The Year 8 boys football team have had another fantastic season at Downlands. Earlier in this half-term they won the Mid-Sussex District final in a nail-biting game. Downlands were leading but with about 10 minutes to go Sackville scored an equaliser taking the game straight to penalties. The boys held their nerve and scored all of their penalties; Matthew, in goal saved two meaning that the title was theirs. As well as this, the team managed to reach the quarter final of the County Cup, but were unfortunately knocked out on an extremely windy and wet day in January. A huge well done from me and the whole PE department on a brilliant season.

YEAR 8 BOYS HANDBALL

The Year 8 boys handball team are entered into the National Handball competition in which they have already played and won the first round. They managed to narrowly beat Durrington 8-7 but then in their second game they played fantastically well and beat Tanbridge 7-1. Considering this is their first handball competition the standard was excellent and it was amazing to see so much progression from their first game to the second. As a consequence of these wins, the boys have managed to become Sussex champions and will be heading to Leyton Orient in March for the regional round of the competition. A massive well done from me and the PE department and good luck in the next round.

U13 GIRLS BASKETBALL

The U13 Girls Basketball team travelled to Tanbridge this half term in the area basketball tournament. They played 4 games, won 4 games and walked away as tournament winners. Their progress throughout the tournament alone was incredible, with the girls growing in confidence game by game. They demonstrated incredible team work and team spirit throughout. Huge well done!



U13 GIRLS INDOOR CRICKET

The U13 girls cricket team won their first tournament this half term. They competed against BACA, Varndean, PACA and Blatchington Mill. They demonstrated some incredibly tight bowling, consistently finding a line and length that proved difficult to hit. Whilst batting, they consistently hit the ball into gaps within the field, running well between the wickets. The team won all 4 of their games, seeing them go through to the County Finals in March.



YEAR 8 NETBALL

The Year 8 netball team have played 12 games this half term throughout the league. They are an incredible versatile team, with all students being able to play in various positions. They show incredible team spirit and work amazingly as a team to link play, score goals and keep clean sheets. They did phenomenally well to win every game they played in a convincing manner, whilst maintaining high levels of sportsmanship. The team also played in the second round of the County Cup this half term against Hurst College. It was a well fought match that was end to end throughout the entire hour. The team showed great determination, grit and resilience to turn balls over and score goals. Unfortunately, the team lost by 1 goal; however they should be incredibly proud of their performance.

U13 GIRLS HOCKEY

The U13 girls hockey team took part in a local tournament this half term, playing The Weald, Christ Hospital, Millais and Oathall. It was amazing to see such a high level of talent on display and the team gelled so quickly despite having never played before. They walked away with 3 wins and a draw, and should be incredibly proud of their performance. We look forward to more fixtures in the future.



YEAR 9 GIRLS RUGBY

We continued our campaign in the Year 9 (U14) girls rugby league competition, in a league against 6 other schools in the area. The team sat in 4th with 1 win and 1 loss and this month we played against Cardinal Newman and Uckfield. The final scores were 5-3 win v Newman and a 13-3 win v Uckfield.

In a tightly contested first game, and the first time playing 10v10 with scrums, the girls came from 2 try's down to beat a very powerful running Newman team. Standout players from this game were Maisie and Arabella, their forward runs to break the defensive lines were superb, and came at a time to turn the game on it's head. A nod has to go to the whole team for their resolute defending to keep Newman from coming back into the game, Ginny twice holding the ball up on the try line to stop 2 try's.

The second game saw us play a sevens format, which allowed for more space across the pitch, this gave multiple openings for our girls to make brave runs from deep positions and the try count showed the success with this. Lola and Imogen scored multiple try's in this one, but again, we used the subs effectively to keep the team fresh and trying new positions.



A brilliant day for the girls, who now have 3 wins to their name with the final 2 league games to play later on this year. We are extremely excited by the potential being shown from all the girls, with this being none of their preferred/number one sport. Well done all.

YEAR 9 BOYS FOOTBALL TEAM

The Year 9 boys have secured the first silverware of their time at Downlands. Throughout this season they have played some excellent football to remain unbeaten in their league and went through to the playoffs as champions. They successfully navigated the playoffs and then played Forest School, from Horsham, in the final. The game was incredibly tense with both teams giving their all. The game was poised at 0-0 at the end of full time. The first half of extra time saw few chances created.



Then in the second half of extra time, minutes away from penalties, the boys made the breakthrough with some determined play up the wing and a ball put into the area which was slammed home by Ben P. Cue wild scenes from the Downlands fans on the sidelines. The boys have worked incredibly hard to win this trophy, and as a school we couldn't be prouder

YEAR 7 BOYS FOOTBALL TEAM

The Year 7 boys have shown incredible heart and determination on the pitch in recent weeks. They beat a strong Regis School team 4-2 to become the last school from Sussex left in the English Schools FA Cup, a national competition. This then earned them a spot as one of the last 32 schools in the whole country, and a trip to Surrey to face Weydon School. The game was incredibly tense, and Monty pulled off some incredible saves to keep Downlands in the game, and the score 0-0 at half time. The second half started to get exciting, Weydon took the lead against the run of play, only for Downlands to answer back immediately through Will.

Just as we felt the game was heading for extra time, Weydon scored from a corner in the last minute of the match. The Downlands boys showed incredible heart and spirit and refused to give up. From the resulting kick off they pressed and pressed the Weydon goal, only for Will to pop up with the equaliser, and his second of the game, with what would effectively be the last kick of the game. Late, late drama! The game moved to extra time and sadly it wasn't to be the boys day as they finally succumbed to one of the most freak goals you could ever see.

However, the boys can hold their heads high with the incredible character they showed, and they will go again next season.

UNDER 14 GIRLS FOOTBALL TEAM

The U14 girls football team have continued their excellent run of form in the county cup. The girls played the quarter-final match vs Tanbridge House school and won 4-0! They were all excellent and worked so hard for the win. They will now look forward to the semi-final match against Varndean School. They have also played two league matches this term against Bohunt Horsham and Sackville, winning both games convincingly. Well done and keep it going!

UNDER 16 GIRLS FOOTBALL TEAM

The U16 girls have continued their excellent run of form in the county cup. The girls played against The Regis School in the quarter-final. This was a closely contested match, however we scored two late goals to win the game 2-0. This is very exciting as we now play Davison High School in the semi-final after half term. We are looking forward to seeing if this team can make the final at the Sussex county ground.

U15 GIRLS CRICKET

We entered the ECB U15 Sussex indoor cricket competition this year which was hosted at BACA school in Brighton. The competition was made up of 6 teams, with the top two schools going through to the regional finals at Bede's in March. We were placed in a tough group with hosts BACA – boasting a cricket pathway internally at the school, and Blatchington Mill – who brought two teams.

Our first game saw us playing Blatchington Mill, we fielded first in the hope of getting a catchable score to chase for our innings. Indoor cricket rules are tough, with 3 runs scored for NB's/Wides, and a boundary wall behind the bowler; it's important to get good bowls throughout the game not allowing for easy shots or any free points. It took a little while for us to get into a bowling rhythm giving up 38 NB/W points, but we managed 4 outs chasing 89-4; a tough ask in just 8 overs (46 balls). Our girls batted well into good areas but we weren't getting the precision in some of the shots, and then we had to be brave with running in the latter stages. Our final total was 86-4, a very narrow and unlucky loss.

Our second game was tough, fielding first trying to keep a low score with a free-flowing BACA school fresh off a resounding win v Blatchington Mill in their first game. It was always going to be a tough ask. BACA had to retire 3 players on 15 (maximum allowed per batter) and still scored runs throughout their team. Our bowling improved significantly, we were just up against well drilled batters, we were chasing 97-3, a mammoth task. Batting was tough but the girls were very good at defending the fast-paced bowling of BACA, frustratingly we ran out of overs to really mount a tally, and we finished on 44-6.

Our final game was a 5th place play off v Dorothy Stringer, the girls were buoyed by the improvements as the day went on, we fielded very well and restricted Stringer to 44-7, a score we knew we were capable of chasing down. A brilliant start with the bat saw Alvie retire on 15, followed by a flurry of runs from Eliza and Lily. The girls totalled 71-2, a brilliant win to round of the day, finishing 5th.

The girls can be so proud of competing against two very top-quality schools, who will go far in this competition, is nothing to be ashamed of. We had a team of mixed experience and ages, all who did so well to not give up and keep honing in on their skills to improve.

DSA - DOWNLANDS PTA

THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL PTA

The DSA are a fantastic group of friendly, dedicated volunteers who work together to raise much needed funds that directly benefit our students and school projects, including the Character Passport. From organising fun events to supporting essential resources, the PTA plays a vital role in enriching the school experience for our students.

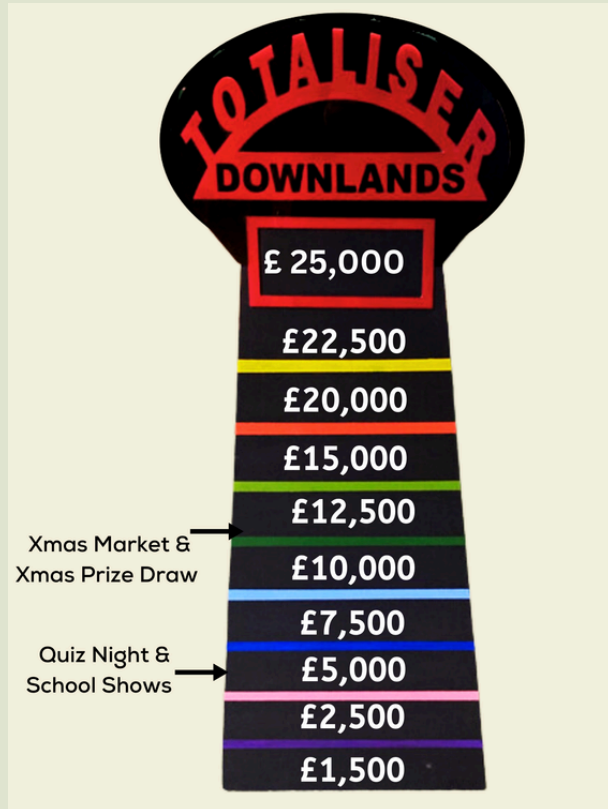
We are very grateful for their help in organising and running the Quiz Night, Christmas Market, and Christmas Prize Draw, as well as providing refreshments at school shows and events.

FUNDRAISING 2025 AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT

We are now halfway through the year and have reached 41% of our £25,000 fundraising goal! This year's funds will go towards new audio-visual equipment for the main hall, allowing us to replace our outdated system. These upgrades will mean we no longer need to hire sound and lighting equipment for school productions, saving significant costs and enhancing performances for students and audiences alike.

So far we have raised an incredible **£10,143!**

Thank you to everyone who has supported our fundraising efforts so far—let's keep going!



THE PTA NEEDS YOU - CAN YOU HELP ?

LOOKING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY?

Our PTA is a fantastic group of friendly, dedicated volunteers who work together to raise much-needed funds that directly benefit our students and school projects. From organising fun events to supporting essential resources, the PTA plays a vital role in enriching our school experience!

WHY JOIN?

- Make a real impact in our school
- Meet other supportive and enthusiastic parents/carers
- Get involved in exciting events and activities
- Share your skills and ideas—everyone's contribution counts!

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

- Whether you can offer a few hours or take on a larger role, your support is invaluable. No experience is needed—just your willingness to help!
- Interested? Come along to our next PTA meeting or get in touch with us at dsa@downlands.org. We'd love to welcome you aboard!

TOGETHER, WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR OUR SCHOOL AND OUR CHILDREN.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



COMEDY NIGHT



*PLUS ONE MORE ACT TBC

FRIDAY, 7TH MARCH 2025

DOORS OPEN AT 7 PM
SHOW 8PM - 10.45PM
REFRESHMENTS AVAILABLE
AGE 16+

TICKETS £15.50

TO BUY TICKETS PLEASE VISIT:

<https://buytickets.at/downlandsschoolassociation/1581969>

Year 11 Written Mock Exams 24th February – 10th March

Before sitting your exams, ensure you know:

- ☐ the date, time and location of each of your exams. You might find it helpful to write this information in a calendar or planner.

Other important information:

- ☐ Listen carefully to the invigilator's instructions which will be specific to your exam. If you are unsure of anything, please raise your hand and wait for the invigilator to respond.
- ☐ Fill in your details on the front of your answer booklet.
- ☐ If you need additional answer sheets, raise your hand and wait for an invigilator who will provide you with one. Remember to add your details to this booklet.
- ☐ If you need to use the toilet or feel unwell, raise your hand and wait for an invigilator who will escort you from the exam room.
- ☐ Remember to stay silent – talking to a fellow candidate could result in disqualification from all your exams.

What you will need:

- ☐ a clear pencil case 
- ☐ at least two black ink pens – blue pens are **not** acceptable 
- ☐ an approved calculator for relevant exams 
- ☐ appropriate apparatus such as a ruler or protractor for relevant exams 
- ☐ a clear water bottle if you wish to take one in – it **must not** have a label 

What you cannot take into exams:

- ☐ any type of phone 
- ☐ revision notes
- ☐ any type of watch (this includes analogue, digital and smart watches)

If you have any questions about your exams, please ask your teacher or exams officer.

gread@downlands.org



MUSIC TUITION



ADDITIONAL MUSIC LESSONS AT DOWNLANDS



Downlands has a strong tradition of music making and this is in part due to the music tuition provided by our team of visiting music teachers. Organising lessons for your young person is straight forward and done directly with the teacher.

If you would like to enquire about additional music lessons with one of our Visiting Music Teachers (VMTs) their contact details, along with the discipline they teach, are listed here:

Brass instrument (Trumpet, Trombone, Horn)	Mr Roff	Nroffbrass@gmail.com
Cello, Double Bass	Mr Merrick	ethanmerrick@msn.com
Drum kit	Mr Hodgson	tom@studiomuso.co.uk
Guitar, Bass Guitar	Mr Paton	Ferguspatonguitarschool@gmail.com
Keyboard	Mr Bedford	Hu.bedford@gmail.com
Piano	Mr Kew	charlie.kew@westsussexmusic.co.uk
Singing	Ms Hawes	info@lovemusicschool.co.uk
Violin, Viola	Miss Wardrobe	blwardrobe@hotmail.co.uk
Clarinet	Ms Dudding	Annduddingmusic@gmail.com
Flute	Ms Van der Klugt	Vanderklugte@gmail.com
Saxophone	Ms Van den Ouweland	www.westsussexmusic.co.uk
Steel Pan	Mr Nelson	bangadrum.nelson@gmail.com

If your child is interested in studying an instrument that is not listed don't hesitate to contact me at school via email awardrobe@downlands.org and I will try my best to find a tutor.

If the purchase of an instrument is preventing your child from starting instrumental lessons you may be interested to hear we have some Trumpets, Violins and Clarinets available to borrow from the department. Please get in contact if this something you would be interested in.

Kind regards
Mr A Wardrobe
Head of Music



SCHOOL FUNDRAISING



DOWNLANDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL are now registered with **easyfundraising**, which means you can raise **FREE** donations for us every time you shop online. Over 7,000 brands will donate to us when you use **easyfundraising** to shop with them – at no extra cost to you.

These donations really mount up and make a **BIG** difference to us, so we'd really appreciate it if you could take a moment to sign up and support us. It's completely **FREE** and only takes you a moment.

Turn your daily shopping into everyday magic for us with **easyfundraising**

You shop, brands donate to us. It won't cost you any extra!



 **easyfundraising**

Help us make a difference when you shop.
Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk



- 1 Visit www.easyfundraising.org.uk
- 2 Sign up and search for us
- 3 Your favourite brands donate to us whenever you shop with them

Shop with 7,500+ brands including:

 Booking.com

 ebay

 M&S

 Groupon

 Argos

 Tui

 JOHN LEWIS



 Viking

 ASOS

 BT

 Uber Eats



Thank you to all our family and friends that are supporting our School Lottery. We are delighted with the support it has received and the money raised will go towards more facilities for the students.

The lottery draw takes place every Saturday evening. Tickets can be purchased by clicking the link below:

<https://www.yourschoollottery.co.uk/lottery/school/downlands-community-school>

Tickets are £1 and can be purchased individually or you can set up a standing order for weekly tickets. There are weekly prizes and national prizes to be won. It's easy to take part and makes a big difference to our school and students.

COMMUNITY NEWS



DRAMA CLASSES IN *Hurstpierpoint*

SCOUT HUT, BROWN TWINS ROAD,
HURSTPIERPOINT, HAS SOCKS, UK

SENIORS (AGES 11 - 15) - FRIDAYS 16.30 - 18.30

BOOK A NO OBLIGATION TASTER SESSION NOW

info@theyoungactorsgroup.com



NEW



TEEN FOOTBALL ACTIVITY CAMP

AT LANCING COLLEGE

Open to ages 12 - 15, our Teen Football Activity Camp sessions focus on football skills and friendly tournaments, led by experienced camp coordinators. Held on our fields, they'll run in all weather, so be sure to dress appropriately!

FEBRUARY

17 - 21



£12.50 per session

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STUDIOS

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WICKED

DAY OF DANCE!

DANCE WORKSHOP
inspired by Wicked

TUES
18TH FEB

FROM
9:30AM -
3:00PM

FOR
BOYS & GIRLS

AGES
11-16

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THRIVING IN EDUCATION

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Thriving in education



Your child's mental health and wellbeing: WhatsApp guide

WhatsApp age restriction is 13+

WhatsApp is a convenient and easy way to keep in touch with others. We know that connection to others is really important in terms of our wellbeing, however we need to be aware that there are also some risks to WhatsApp use, particularly for children and young people.

WhatsApp and emotional wellbeing

To start a chat on WhatsApp, all anyone needs is a person's phone number. If a child has given their number to someone else who then adds them to a group chat, everyone in this group chat will now have access to their number. This means that complete strangers can contact them.

Does your child know what to do if they get a message from someone they don't know?

Who is contacting me?

Be aware of chat lock. Chat lock is a feature which allows WhatsApp users to keep their chats in a separate locked folder, with its own secret code. This allows users to hide conversations, even if someone checks their phone and messages. This could include messages about harmful behaviours such as self-harm and inappropriate sexual content.

Secrecy and chat lock

WhatsApp has a feature which allows messages to be sent and only be viewed once. Unfortunately, this allows users to send inappropriate and abusive content which cannot be re-opened once seen. This means there is no evidence of what has been sent. It also means that if you check your child's phone you won't see a complete picture of what they have viewed.

You can never really know what has been sent or received by your child's account.

THRIVING IN EDUCATION

Disappearing content

Information sharing on WhatsApp can reach a lot of people, very quickly. This means that false information can rapidly gather momentum resulting in sharing of fake news. Children and young people may not have the critical thinking needed to understand what is real and what isn't. This also means that they may be vulnerable to scams. Internet Matters have produced a [toolkit](#) for parents and carers.

Scams and fakes

Teach them to be cautious

Guide them to ask themselves how likely a message from an unknown number is really from someone they know.

Adjust the settings

You can specify who can and cannot add them to group chats. You can do this in the 'Settings' menu under the 'Groups' tab.

Talk to them openly

Without judgment about what they are sharing and how they contribute. Consider with them how they can use group chats safely and that is okay to exit group chats if they feel uncomfortable.

What can we do?

Internet Matters: What is WhatsApp – A Guide for Parents

[Internet Matters](#) is a fantastic website with a huge amount of information about internet safety. There are numerous guides for parent and carers, including WhatsApp.

Social Media Survival Guide

A recommended book for children and young people aged 10+ to empower them to stay safe online when using social media.



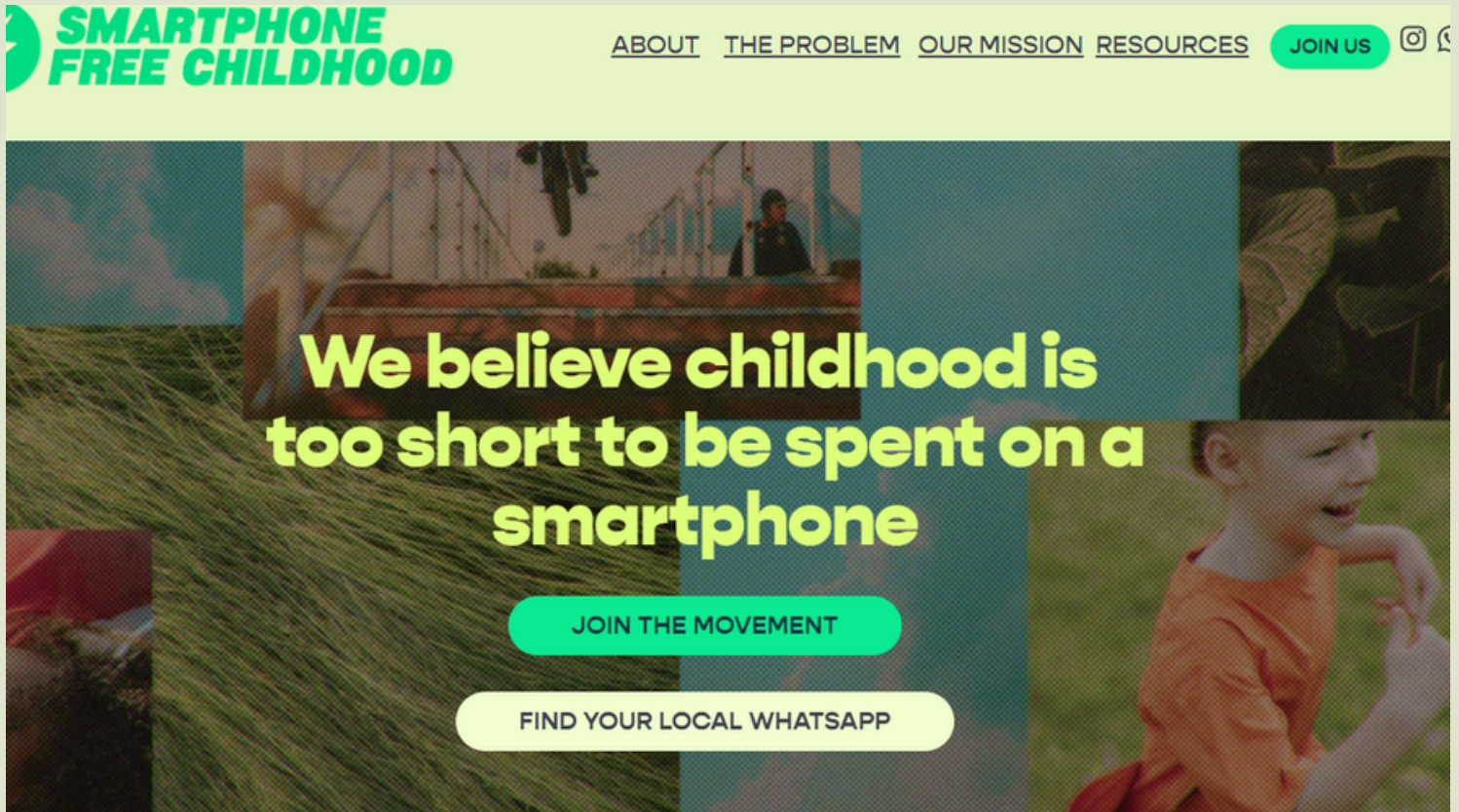
Thriving in education

For more support and advice, please visit our Thriving in Education [website](#) or scan the QR code.



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SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD



Smartphone Free Childhood (SFC)

Did you know? The average British 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week – equivalent to a part-time job – on devices, leaving little time for real-world activities and connections. Time spent on a device is time not spent with others: playing, exploring, interacting and developing vital life skills. A national movement, led by parents aims to challenge the new 'norm' of children owning and using smartphones. There are 35 parent groups in WestSussex alone. A group of 60 Downlands parents have come together as a community and engaged with the school, to discuss the issues, experiences, and practical solutions in a non judgemental way, to limit the harmful effects of smartphones on our children.

Below is a link to the SFC Downlands What's App group should you be interested in joining:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/DzofBQzR5pf72j5rVrwHBj>

USEFUL INFORMATION



Are you entitled?

Downlands receives extra funding for all students eligible for free school meals, called the Pupil Premium. This funding is extremely valuable to us as it enables us to support our students to be happy, confident learners and make the best possible progress.

For more information please visit :

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/free-school-meals/#how-to-apply>.

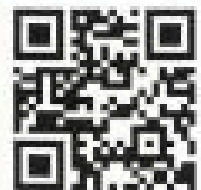
Those children and families that are not eligible for FSM will be able to access urgent support for food via the WSCC Community Hub. The Community Hub can be contacted on 0330 222 7980 and is open 9:00 – 17:00 seven days a week. Further information can be found via the [West Sussex County Council website](https://www.westsussex.gov.uk)

HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD (HAF) FOR CHILDREN

Children and young people aged 4 to 16 who are eligible* for benefits related free school meals can take part in free clubs during the Easter, Summer and Winter holidays. A free nutritious meal is provided as part of the scheme. Visit our website to find activities near you and book your place.

*Check eligibility on the webpage and find information about further support and activities available. Places are limited. Paid-for places may be available, contact individual clubs for availability.

SCAN ME



www.westsussex.gov.uk/HAF

USEFUL INFORMATION

aspens.org.uk
charity no: 1171446



aspens

Empowering people on the
autism spectrum and with
learning disabilities.

Girls Group Mid Sussex



St Andrews Hall, Burgess Hill,
RH15 0LG



Mondays fortnightly
(term-time only)



5pm-7pm

Group B will be young people age 12-14. Group A will be young people age 14-18. These groups will alternate on Monday evenings term-time only. The group ages may alter slightly. Please note we are not currently advertising for Group A!

The cost is £6 per session for each young person.



These sessions are for girls who are awaiting an assessment or on the neurodevelopmental pathway (including but not exclusive to SEMH, ASC, ADHD). They must be aged 12-14 years old (Group B).

These are a wonderful opportunity for girls to meet others who may have similar experiences and carry out fun and enjoyable activities. These environments are relaxed and engaging. Places will be on a first-come first-served basis.

Please email childrenreferrals@aspens.org.uk to book

USEFUL INFORMATION



Sussex Community
NHS Foundation Trust

HEALTH^{FOR}TEENS

GET HELP WITH ALL KINDS OF THINGS LIKE...

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EMOTIONAL HEALTH BULLYING SELF HARM
ALCOHOL & DRUGS ANXIETY SLEEP PUBERTY

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WWW.HEALTHFORTEENS.CO.UK



SEE VIDEOS, FIND HEALTH INFORMATION, TAKE QUIZZES,
AND FIND OUT THE TRUTH BEHIND THE RUMOURS

TEXT YOUR SCHOOL NURSE FOR

CONFIDENTIAL HEALTH ADVICE AND SUPPORT:

07480 635424



THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone is liking, sharing & following our social media pages.

We are delighted to say that our audiences just keep on growing.



Thank you to our generous sponsors who have contributed to our

new camera and filmmaking equipment



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HALF TERM BREAK!