

Special Educational Needs Annual Report September 2024- 2025

SEND provision provided at the school

Downlands Community School is a mainstream school. Our aim is to support pupils who have additional needs and challenges through their education at Downlands, using an approach of respect, care and honesty.

Leadership and Management

From September 2024 the SEND department was led by Mrs Vicky Cornish, SENDCO and Mr Zac Shinebourne, in an Assistant SENDCO role, Lead Teacher for Neurodiversity. We additionally have an added middle management structure to our department, with 3 Lead TAs with SEND specialisms, (SEND – Miss Lou Potter, Neurodiversity – Miss Izzy Makin and Dyslexia – Mrs Claire MacRae), a SENDCO PA, Mrs Holly Sweatman and an Adaptive Teaching Lead, Mrs Liz Matthews.

Mrs Cornish meets every term with the SEND Governor to discuss current SEND provision and often to observe certain interventions and support. Mrs Cornish meets with Mr Chris Runeckles who line manages the SEND Department. In January 2025 Mrs Cornish was elected to be part of the Senior Leadership Team as an Assistant Headteacher for SEND as well as the SENDCO role.

Learning Support Area

Learning Support is held in a building specifically designed for SEND students and the supporting staff. Over the summer of 2024 we had an extension built into our area. It now consists of a meeting room for outside agencies, the SEND team, an office for Mrs Sweatman and Mr Shinebourne, a small classroom for Lead TAs and pupils with EHCPs to work 1:1. A small sensory space for when pupils are particularly dysregulated, a larger KS3 classroom area with computers used for pupils out of class for assessments or studying with EHCPs or high SEND need, and a smaller classroom for KS4 independent working and support. The KS3 classroom is fitted with a Smartboard and ten computers. This year it was open before and after school for pupils who needed initial guidance before tutor time or after school before going home, a weekly SEND support homework club, SEND department meetings and staff Team Around the Child curriculum adaptation support meetings for pupils with EHCPs. This space is also highly utilized at break and lunchtimes for a large number of pupils that find being in social areas in the main school as difficult. It is used during social times as a multipurpose space where pupils socialize across year groups supported by the SENDCOs at break and the Learning Support TAs at lunchtime.

Quality First Teaching

It is important that we evaluate the use and need for intervention for our SEND pupils, however it is essential that each pupil receives differentiation within their lessons through Quality First Teaching which is the first wave of SEND support. Through regular feedback and information as needs change, subject staff are given specific strategies that relate to individual needs via BROMCOM in supporting documents. Mrs Cornish and Mr Shinebourne communicate regularly with all staff to achieve this. Staff can access information on individuals via BROMCOM, the SEND register and class trackers which helps staff plan, adapt and deliver lessons to a range of abilities and needs within the school. Learning Support staff have received the same training and regularly meet with the SENDCO to discuss the needs and how to help staff with specific individuals. This year we began our whole staff training with role modelling how to access information on all pupils on our SEND register, why they are flagged on registers, how and where to access specialised strategies, and how to record adaptive strategies on their registers. Staff were given allocated time to do this in our first twilight Preparation to Teach. Furthermore, our second twilight, taken by Liz Matthews, our Adaptive Teaching Lead, demonstrated the use of our adaptive teaching checklist for all pupils in classes, pupil passports, adaptive teaching register marksheets and a resource for staff on Sharepoint where all strategies are explained further as a reference for staff. Pupil passports are documents that are pupil voiced plans that show what pupils enjoy, find difficult in class, need help with and how they can support themselves independently. If adaptive teaching strategies are not working this is the next step in supporting pupils with SEND, when staff highlight any concerns within classes. The pupil passports are agreed by the pupils initially, guided by staff who know them well, and then sent to parent/carers. These are stored on their BROMCOM profiles for all staff to access.

Teaching Assistants

All Teaching Assistants continue to work across the age range and curriculum supporting pupils in class. The priority of support is based on students with an EHCP primarily, however it is vital that independence is promoted. Teaching Assistants are not advised to work with any one pupil, but using their knowledge of other students on the SEND register, they work as a satellite evaluating who and how they support students in need within the whole class environment. Teaching Assistants are required to record their support of pupils with EHCPs to assist with evaluation of targets for students with EHCPs for their Annual Reviews and meet fortnightly with both SENDCos to monitor progress. Each core subject has their own Teaching Assistant which are not part of the SEND support but do assist with exam arrangements, boost academic levels and some aspects of adaptations in class.

The Teaching Assistants are a vital part of the Year 6 transition programme which helps us in getting to know the students and helping them settle into their classes at the beginning of Year 7. Our Lead SEND Miss Lou Potter, is key in helping the SENDCos identify potential needs through this programme. This also ensures that the Teaching Assistants have further support in the day-to-day communication when supporting pupils with SEND. This role is additionally responsible for assisting with the Year 6 Transition programme, specifically looking at our lowest attaining and more complex need pupils with EHCPs with TAs and staff with regards to their learning, setting up, carrying out support staff appraisals, running an induction and mentoring programme for new TAs and helping Mrs Cornish and Mr Shinebourne in the running of the Learning Support Department. Recruitment is always difficult for TA positions however we currently have 6 part time TAs; and 4 full time TAs. Many of our TAs have gone on to teaching careers, SEND related courses or been promoted within the school to pastoral or other support staff roles.

Training for TAs involved signing up to our National College Programme which has webinars on various specific difficulties and SEND matters, as well as our various outside agency professionals that train us on specific individual needs. As well as the induction programme, new staff have allocated time to train in safeguarding, ASC, dyslexia and other needs as appropriate to our cohort.

Support classes in English

This academic year there is one nurture group in year 7 and one in year 8. Pupils identified for these groups have reading ages significantly below their chronological age. Pupils reading ages are assessed using the Simple View of Reading screening process, a fluency measure and standardised reading age tests. Teachers follow the Abigail Steel KS3 Phonics programme and deliver essential end points of the curriculum. Class sizes are small and are supported by an English intervention assistant. Pupils also receive additional reading intervention during registration. Pupils reading ages are regularly tested. Those pupils who meet expected progress return to a mainstream mixed ability English class.

Support classes in Maths

Mr Shinebourne taught a Year 7 and a year 8 class and the Maths Department taught a year 7 and year 8 class for Nurture Mathematics, in class sizes of 8-12. Lessons are taught based on the whole Maths department scheme of work to ensure integration. Schemes of work are differentiated and adapted to the needs of the learners to ensure they are working at an appropriate level. The aim is to fill in any gaps in learning and ensure that they are prepared with the basic skills in order to develop and close the gap with their peers so that learners can work towards their GCSE examinations. Mr Shinebourne observes pupils in their mainstream Maths classes for the first half term to ensure the threshold for nurture is for the right pupils in discussion with their teachers and previous information from their primary school.

Specialised support for Specific Learning Difficulties

Our Lead TA for Dyslexia, Claire MacRae, works part time, Monday to Wednesday. During this time, she works with pupils who have had a screening at primary that shows risk of dyslexia or a pupil who has an independent report from an outside professional that shows evidence of dyslexic traits or diagnoses dyslexia. Mrs MacRae, works with Mrs Cornish, looking at recommendations made from these reports, and meeting pupils 1:1 to help them identify specific strategies to help them in class. This information is shared with pupils, teachers and parent/carers, recorded on BROMCOM and included in a pupil passport if required. Mrs MacRae may also help pupils with dyslexia with practicing their exam concessions.

Our lead TA for Neurodiversity, Izzy Makin, works full time. When she is not in class supporting our pupils with Neurodiversity who have EHCPs, she works with Mr Shinebourne. Miss Makin has a cohort of pupils with Neurodiversity that she works with 1:1 either in tutor time or during some classes. This work was centered around strategies to support regulation, planning activities that support any difficulties, writing

pupil passports and working on any recommendations from assessments or reports. This information is shared with pupils, teaching staff, support staff and parent/carers, and is recorded on BROMCOM. Both Lou Potter and Izzy Makin were part of our twilight training this year on supporting SEND needs and Neurodiversity to all teaching staff, alongside Zac Shinebourne, our Assistant SENDCo. These sessions were on how to identify and support SEND needs, (a resource now on all staff's desktops on what different SEND needs are and specific strategies to support them), supporting and understanding pupils with ADHD and ASC masking and overwhelm.

Option choices in KS4

Pupils on the SEND register are given flexibility in their options pathway choices. Most students who are on the SEND register will follow the yellow pathway this gives them the flexibility to choose an additional option rather than continuing with a language. Downlands also provide a green pathway option which begins by providing additional reading and numeracy support in year 9 so that students are more able to access the curriculum at Key Stage 4. These students will follow a more vocational pathway at Key Stage 4 which includes following the ASDAN personal effectiveness course. The aim of the course is to build confidence and develop key employability skills.

Learning Support Department Break & Lunch Club

This provision is key to supporting many pupils with SEND in school, particularly looking after some of our more socially vulnerable pupils. It supports Years 7-11 and is supervised by SEND staff and Teaching Assistants. It is a nurturing atmosphere providing a safe space for these students to attend on a regular basis. Our numbers have grown so we have 4 spaces now to accommodate the number of pupils that require this support, its busy at times but there is an emphasis on all years to support each other with any difficulties regardless of age. During these sessions staff encourage students to socialise, play board games, complete homework and interact positively with each other.

Learning Support Homework Club

Mr Shinebourne, and the Teaching Assistants ran a weekly homework club exclusively for SEND students. This is attended very well with us having to use two classrooms and four staff to support this year to accommodate the pupils that use this. Many pupils with SEND needs prefer to complete homework in school with targeted support and we can guide and adapt work as we see fit to suit individuals. Pupils can be referred to this by staff, parent/carers and Teaching Assistants if it was seen that homework was becoming an issue in class, particularly with those who lacked organisational skills and needed further support.

Learning Mentor Support

Pupils that fall behind their expected progress were assigned to their respective Learning Mentor; Mrs Whitmore, Miss Hetherington, Miss Carron and Miss Medhurst. In these targeted sessions Learning Mentors work 1:1 with pupils to improve pieces of work that students have found difficult. The Learning Mentors have a classroom and working area in the HUB, which allows them to support similar students and share practice on how to support them best. Learning Mentors also pick up some SEND students that are below target in lessons, need extra assistance with revision, homework or organisation or need confidence and anxiety help.

Pastoral Support

We are very fortunate to have an amazing Pastoral team who support our young people in school. Each year group has a Pastoral Support Officer that have a non-teaching role. They are seen as the first point of contact for parents/carers and pupils if they have a concern. The Pastoral Support Officers (year group responsibility current for 2020-2021), consists of Miss Longhurst – Year 7, Mrs Horn – Year 8, Mrs Ashbridge – Year 9, Mrs Duala – Year 10 Mrs Brough – Year 11. The team is led by Mrs Cobb who is our Lead Pastoral Support Officer. Each Pastoral Support Officer works alongside the SEND staff very closely as they attend Annual Reviews, PEPs, TACs and parent/carers meetings regularly.

SEMH Inclusion Support

Any pupils that have social/emotional/mental health issues are supported in the HUB. This consists of a teaching space for small groups, a calm room and a collaborative working space for pupils and Learning Mentors. This provision is ran by our Assistant Headteacher Mrs Davies, Mr Manning, our Inclusion Centre

Manager, and Miss Wilson, our Inclusion TA who specifically supports subject learning and accessing classes for these students.

Emotional Support

Every week we have been supported by two counsellors who work for one day a week with pupils who are referred by Safeguarding, SEND, and the Pastoral Support Officers. At the end of this year we brought in Mrs Medhurst who is our Mental Health Lead, who also works 1:1 with pupils referred by our Designated Safeguarding Lead, Miss Stodart.

Physical Support

Please see our separate document entitled “Downlands School Accessibility Plan’ for further information on the admission, facilities and policies for disabled pupils.

The school has ramps and a number of entrances enabling wheelchair access to all departments. Our Foreign Languages/Computer and Music Block, a lift grants access to all areas of different floors within the school. There are many disabled toilets in the school, which are easily accessible from most departments. The Food Tech rooms are the only rooms that are not currently accessible, however the adapted kitchen (induction hob only) in the Learning Support Area is set up for this purpose, with a height adjustable cooking station.

Any disabled students that have applied to Downlands have been invited into the school on an individual basis to tour the site to actively prevent disabled pupils being treated less favorably than others and ensure all facilities are fit for purpose.

Our school first aid trained specialist Mrs Bryant, who is also our receptionist, looks after all pupils who require medical attention. Care plans, medication and Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in the event of a fire are all attended to by Mrs Bryant.

Identification and Assessment of Pupils with SEND

Transition planning before a pupil joins Downlands - Primary Liaison

We have a successful transition programme organised by Mrs Cornish which is as follows:

Mrs Cornish and Mr Shinebourne visit all primary SENDCOs and in some instances met the Year 6 SEND students in their schools. Information is shared on SEND students and during Annual Reviews in the last term of Year 6 for all students with EHCPs. Mr Shinebourne and Mrs Cornish invite any pupils with EHCPs in Year 6 to come and attend extra visits to plan for the change of placement, to meet the Learning Support staff who may work with them when they arrive and to see the Learning Support and Year 7 area. They may also meet their Head of Year and Pastoral Support.

Primary SENDCOs also identified students with additional needs that they felt would benefit from more taster visits than the one day that all Year 6 were due to attend. Mrs Cornish organises 3 additional visits, (two in the last term of Year 6 and one the day before they are due to start in Year 7) which gave all SEND students the opportunity to visit the school at different times of the day to experience the full day and some aspects of the whole school environment. Each session is structured to experience vital parts of the Downlands routine to help ease any anxieties or fears. It is helpful for students to get to know others outside of their own schools, work with the teaching assistants and meet key staff before they arrive in September. All staff are trained on the new SEND arrivals and the SEND information is recorded on BROMCOM for all teaching and support staff to access. SEND pupils are flagged on registers for staff to know there is SEND information to read on those pupils and any educational reports or assessments are also held here. If pupils are on the SEND register in Year 6, they will automatically transfer to the SEND register at Downlands in Year 7. Here they will be monitored by Mrs Cornish and Mr Shinebourne, if no SEND intervention is required in Year 7, parents/carers will be notified that they will be removed with permission.

Identification of Additional Needs for pupils in Downlands

Pupils with an EHCP are assessed as part of the Annual Review process by our exam assessor.

Teacher feedback and observations resulted in selection for nurture groups and an update of strategies for learning on the SEND register.

Currently at Downlands we do not test for dyslexia. Many parents have sought private assessments but this is costly, independent assessments are not counted as evidence from exam boards. However, they are sent to the school exam assessor for reference if further assessment is needed.

From the end of Year 9 we do a full year screening which shows us which pupils need further testing, our exams assessor then begins to assess students for exam concessions at the beginning of Year 10. This is an individual or small group assessment that highlights communication difficulties which gives us evidence to apply to exam boards to allow access arrangements in Year 10. We have an external exam assessor that visits us over the year according to need and liaises with our SENDCo and Exams Officer, Mrs Ginette Read. Mrs Holly Sweatman, our SENDCo PA, supports this process in collecting evidence from staff and collating admin to do with exams.

Any outside agency reports or findings are summarised and sent out to relevant staff, then a copy kept on our system should further evidence be required. Strategies to support pupils with SEND are added to BROMCOM for staff to access and all pupils with a SEND need are flagged sensitively on class registers. If concerns are raised by a number of teachers or by our professionals in our Team Around the Child meetings a SEND pupil passport may be collated. This is a pupil voice document that focuses on what the child enjoys, strengths, difficulties and how staff can help them and how they can help themselves. This is shared with parents and added to their BROMCOM profile for all staff to see. These are constructed by the pupil and an adult that knows them well, this can be anyone from the SEND team, Learning Mentor or PSO as appropriate.

Consulting with Parents and Carers

The SENDCO and Assistant SENDCO attend all Parents Evenings and offer an appointment and drop in facility for any parents with SEND queries. They meet with parents/carers regularly on an informal basis as required. In addition, the SENDCO will meet with parent/carers of students with EHCPs as needed during the academic year, this may be termly as well as the Annual Review. SEND parents/carers are welcomed to keep communication about their child regular through contact with their Pastoral Support Officer, Head of Year and SENDCO respectively, if they are on the SEND register for SEND support only. Mrs Holly Sweatman monitors with Mrs Cornish and Mr Shinebourne any parental queries through the email address; sendco@downlands.org. All queries are answered on a priority of need basis, during working hours. We have a Parent/Carer Forum (SPARC) which have built a supportive network where parent/carers of pupils with SEND from all year groups can join. A core group of parents from this group regularly meet with the headteacher, line manager for SEND and both SENDCos termly, to raise concerns and ideas about how we can improve our SEND provision and what is working well in school.

Using Specialised Services

The SENDCO has regular contact with many outside agencies and County Support workers through phone calls, emails and professional meetings. Using the Local Offer and all of West Sussex specific SEND professionals this is a connection we aim to keep as a high priority to support parents/carers, staff and students.

Transition on from Downlands

From Year 10 onwards it is imperative that any Post 16 provision is aware of specific needs and support needed for all our SEND students moving on. This is to ensure that EHCP targets and Access Arrangements are carried on with the student. Mrs Liz Hollingdale, our career advisor meets all pupils who are on the SEND register and supports any pupils with EHCPs through their Annual Review Meetings and 1:1 careers interview in Year 10 and 11 to ensure the transition is smooth wherever they attend. Mrs Hollingdale is a key professional who works with the SENDCO to make sure applications, concessions, interviews, taster days and transport are all successful. Mrs Cornish will ensure that pupils with EHCPs have specific transition programmes for Post 16 and will meet staff they will be working with as part of this transition to ease any anxieties.

For further information on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities please contact:

Mrs. Vicky Cornish - SENDCO email: sendco@downlands.org

Mr. Zac Shinebourne - Assistant SENDCO email: sendco@downlands.org

The SEND Governor is Mrs Clare Brittain, who in addition to the Headteacher, can be contacted if parents and carers wish to take matters further.

To access West Sussex County Council Local Offer for SEND information and services go to: www.westsussex.local-offer.org