



Dear parents/carers

19th December 2025

As we approach the end of this term, I want to take a moment to reflect on and celebrate the incredible achievements of our Downlands community. This has been a term filled with resilience, optimism, kindness, and a deep sense of community values that drive us in delivering success for all.

The recent publication of national performance data has confirmed the outstanding success of our leavers last year. Their achievements are truly remarkable, and we are immensely proud of the positive legacy they have left behind. At our recent Certificate Evening, it was a joy to share this success with parents, carers, and our former students. Collectively, the year group achieved the highest average grade of any school in West Sussex, a first for Downlands! This milestone reflects the unwavering commitment of students, parents, carers, and staff working together. We wish all our leavers every success as they embark on their post-16 journeys.

This term, our students have demonstrated extraordinary kindness and self-awareness through their charitable efforts. Every year group took part in cake sales for Children in Need, raising over £700 for good causes. As the festive season approaches, we have been mindful of families facing hardship. Thanks to the generosity of our students and staff, we assembled and delivered more hampers than ever before to those in need in our locality, a testament to the strength of our community spirit.

Our Downlands School Association has continued its incredible tradition of fundraising, enabling us to provide transformative opportunities for all students. The Christmas Market and Quiz Night raised over £5,000 this term alone. We are deeply grateful to the team for their time, energy and dedication.

Festive celebrations have been in full swing! Our sell-out Winter Concert showcased the exceptional talent of our students, from the choir to the steel pan band, a truly uplifting experience. Last week, we served over 700 Christmas dinners in one day, a logistical triumph made possible by our amazing catering team and staff volunteers. Their hard work and festive cheer created a memorable occasion for all.

As we enter the final week of term, we look forward to our ROCKs assemblies, a special opportunity to recognise students who have embodied our core values and contributed to the ethos we aspire to.

Thank you to every member of our community for your resilience, optimism, kindness, and commitment. Wishing you all a joyful festive season and I look forward to welcoming you back in the New Year.

Warm regards



Matthew Ashdown
Headteacher

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INSET DAYS

- Monday, 5th January 2026
- Monday, 13th April 2026
- Monday, 29th June 2026

EARLY CLOSURE- LAST DAY OF TERM

On Friday, 19th December school will close at 12.15 pm.

EARLY CLOSURES - STAFF TRAINING

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.

- Wednesday, 7th January 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 MESSAGE - SCOPAY - CAFETERIA

May we take this opportunity to remind you to top up your child's canteen account to ensure sufficient funds are available for them to purchase food, if they use the canteen. Students requesting debt from the Finance department should only be in extreme circumstances.

We thank you for your understanding and cooperation in helping us to promote independence, organisation, and personal responsibility among our students.

Finance Office

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

COMMUNICATIONS FROM FINANCE AND TRIPS OFFICE

Please note all communications for Trips and Finance are now being sent by SCOPAY, we have noted that some parents/carers may have unsubscribed from this in the past. This may mean you miss important communications such as;

Canteen notices such as Christmas lunch dates and payment details

Trip application letters

Reminders about upcoming trips and final details

Please click on the link below to resubscribe and add downlands@scopay.com to your safe email address list;

<https://www.scopay.com/resubscribe>

ORDERING SCHOOL SUPPLIES VIA SCOPAY

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

UPDATING CONTACT DETAILS - MCAS

Please ensure that any updates to your contact information are made through the MCAS app rather than via email. This helps us keep records accurate and up to date efficiently. Thank you for your support!

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
Bestcom 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

Bestcom Consent

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.

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.

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

MESSAGE FROM RECEPTION

As we approach the midpoint of the autumn term, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for your continued support in helping our students settle into their routines and approach their studies with focus and commitment.

Following the half-term break, we kindly ask that parents and carers refrain from dropping off forgotten items at Reception during the school day. By this stage, students are expected to take full responsibility for preparing for their day and ensuring they bring all necessary equipment and materials with them. The only exception to this will be lunch boxes, which may still be dropped off at Reception if required.

IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM THE MEDICAL ROOM

Please ensure that your emergency contact information is up to date. 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 to 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 antihistamines for the symptoms of hay fever. We ask that this be administered at home before the start of the day. Any medication 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.

BEACON COMMUNITY CAKE SALE FOR CHILDREN IN NEED

A HUGE thank you to our incredible BEACON community for making our Children in Need cake sale a massive success! Thanks to your phenomenal spirit, kindness, and all the delicious cakes, we raised an amazing £500 to support children and young people across the UK. You're shining examples of our ROCKS values in action!"



CHRISTMAS MARKET

Thank you to all the students who ran the fabulous stalls at the Christmas Market. They were so creative and fun, everyone thoroughly enjoyed them, and they also helped raise money for the school. 🎄✨



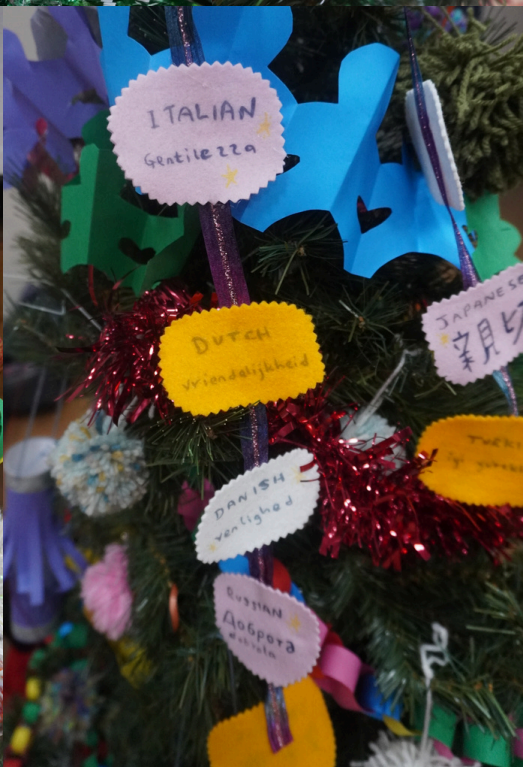
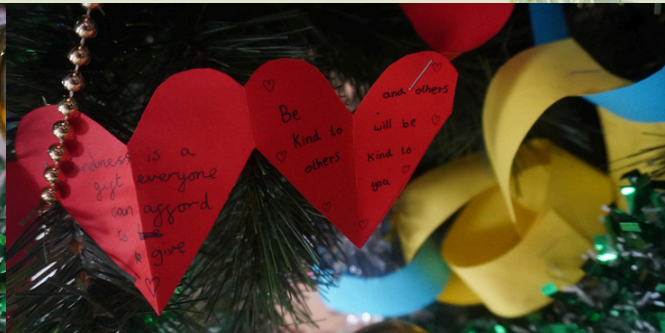
YEAR 7 INTER-COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS TREE COMPETITION - THE POWER OF KINDNESS

This year, each tutor group was challenged to decorate a Christmas tree based on the inspiring theme "The Power of Kindness." Students worked creatively to design and make their own decorations, bringing the message of kindness to life through colour, imagination, and teamwork.

All eight beautifully decorated trees were proudly displayed in the school reception, and during the Christmas Market on Saturday 29th November, visitors were invited to vote for their favourite. With each vote helping to raise funds, the event created a wonderful sense of community spirit.

We are delighted to announce that tutor group 7CHCW were the winners of this year's competition, receiving an impressive 133 votes! A huge congratulations to the group for their outstanding creativity and teamwork. They will receive a prize along with valuable Community Points for their achievement.

A big well done to all tutor groups for taking part and spreading kindness through their designs.



CHRISTMAS HAMPER PROJECT

December at Downlands is always a time for giving, and this year was no exception! As part of the annual Xmas Hamper Project, our school once again rallied together to support families in need across Mid-Sussex. This incredible initiative provides festive food hampers to nearly 300 families, ensuring that everyone can enjoy a special Christmas.

For the past eight years, Downlands has proudly contributed to this cause, and our community's generosity continues to shine. Throughout the start of December, students and staff donated a wonderful selection of items, including biscuits, tinned fish, rice pudding, jelly and teabags. Thanks to your kindness, we collected over 900 donations this year—a truly amazing achievement! A huge thank you to everyone who contributed.

On 3rd December, Mr Smith and Ms Childs accompanied six fantastic Year 10 students to Kings Church in Burgess Hill, where they joined volunteers from across the region. Their task? To date-check donations and help pack them into hampers ready for distribution. Our students were phenomenal ambassadors for Downlands, demonstrating leadership, teamwork, and compassion throughout the day. They worked tirelessly to ensure every hamper was prepared with care and attention.



The Xmas Hamper Project is more than just a collection—it's a reminder of the power of community and the difference we can make when we come together. Downlands is proud to play its part in spreading joy and hope this festive season.

Thank you again to everyone who donated and supported this wonderful cause. Your generosity will make Christmas brighter for hundreds of families.



MUSIC

DOWNLANDS CHOIR PERFORM AT AGE CONCERN

The Downlands Choir recently performed a carol concert at the Hassocks Age Concern. It was a truly lovely event and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.



Congratulations to everyone involved in the Xmas Factor competition! The standard was amazing, and we loved seeing the finalists perform at the Christmas Market. Special congratulations to Hayley on her well-deserved win!

WINTER CONCERT

The Christmas Concert was a wonderful celebration of the incredible musical talent at Downlands. It was fantastic to see so many students involved, including the Steel Pans, Orchestra, Jazz Band, Choir and Brass Ensemble, all showcasing their amazing performances.



STEAM CLUB

QUADCOPTER CHALLENGE

On 25th November we went to the national finals of the Quadcopter Challenge held at the Honourable Artillery Company in London. We had two different assault courses to fly the drone around as fast as possible, gave a presentation and were questioned by the judges.

We were awarded a special prize for our team work.

Thank you to the Stem ambassadors at Collins Aerospace who supported us with this challenge.



FOOD TECH

YEAR 8 - GARDEN BREAD

Year 8 have been working hard designing and making garden focaccia, the results are amazing



GEOGRAPHY

OUR FLAGS HAVE MADE IT TO ANTARCTICA

KS3 were given the optional competition of designing a flag for Antarctica.

The winning designs were sent off in November and we have just received confirmation of their arrival – here they are in situ with the REWIND ice core drilling team, having travelled to the Union Glacier camp. The REWIND team are working on bringing back some of the oldest ice cores, last year the BEYOND EPICA team, which is part of this, found ice thought to be 6 million years old. The REWIND team is made up of ice core scientists.



LANGUAGES

Our Year 10 German students have been busy exploring the rich culture, history and landmarks of Germany. For their recent homework project, they were asked to create a fact file on a German city of their choice.

We're delighted to share a selection of their fact files below, celebrating both their creativity and their growing confidence in using the German language.

KEY WORDS:
Berlin is Germany's capital and largest city known for its rich history (Prussian/Weimar/GDR capital), vibrant culture (museums, opera, parks), and green spaces (100% parks/forests). It is larger than Paris, having more bridges than Venice. It is located on the east side of the city, the longest open air gallery, and being a major European city with many landmarks like the Brandenburg Gate and Reichstag.

It's the capital and largest city.
It has over 400,000 street trees.
Home to the world's most opera.
Its population is over 3.7 million.
over 960 bridges than Venice.
Roughly 3x Paris!
Home to the East Side Gallery, the world's largest open-air gallery.
A capital for veggie food and beer.
Very green with vast forests and allotment gardens.
It has many museums.

Attractions:
- Brandenburg Gate
- Reichstag Gate
- Holocaust Memorial
- Berlin Wall Memorial
- Checkpoint Charlie
- East Side Gallery
- Museum Island
- DDR Museum
- Gemäldegalerie
- Berlin TV Tower
- Berlin Cathedral
- Kurfürstendamm
- Gendarmenmarkt
- Charlottenburg Palace

FOOD:
- Currywurst
- Döner Kebab
- Schnitzel
- Königsberger Klopse
- Kassler
- Buletten
- Ketswurst

DRINK:
- Beer
- Club-Mate
- Coddle
- Feuerzangenbowle

FAMOUS RESIDENTS:
Albert Einstein: Physicist
Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: Philosopher
Karl Marx: Philosopher, economist
Alexander von Humboldt: Geographer
G.W.F. Hegel: Philosopher
Wilhelm Grimm: Linguist, mythologist
Walter Rathenau: Industrialist
Marlene Dietrich: Singer & actress
Richard Wagner: Composer

Berlin 

POPULATION: 3.58 million
GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES: numerous forests, rivers and lakes, also an Age glacial valley, all shaped by glacial history.

located in Northern Europe

Landmarks: Brandenburger Tor, Phantasialand, Schwarzwald

TRADITIONAL FOOD AND DRINK:
- Döner kebab capital! → approximately 950 Döner eaten every day
- Currywurst
- Berliner Weisse

History:
- Berlin wall built by East Germany (1961) after WWII
- November 9th, 1989, border was opened
1990 = German reunification

Landmarks: Brandenburger Tor, Phantasialand, Schwarzwald

Fun Facts:
- Albert Einstein and David Bowie lived in Berlin.
- Over 30% of Berlin is parks, forests and gardens.
- Berlin is almost 9 times the size of Paris!

History:
- Berlin wall built by East Germany (1961) after WWII.
- 155 km long
- November 9th, 1989, border was opened
1990 = German reunification

Population: 3.7 million

Germany's largest city!

Geography:
Mostly flat, marshy land
Rivers + lakes
Forests

Landmarks: Brandenburger Tor, Phantasialand

FOOD + DRINK:
- Döner Kebab capital! → approx 950 Döner spits are eaten everyday
- Currywurst
- Veggie Mecca

BERN SCHWEIZ

Bern is the capital city of Switzerland and is the fifth most populous city in the whole country. The official language is German, however, the main spoken language is a variation of Swiss German known as Bernese German. It is surrounded by the Aare, a river.

Statistics:
- area: 51.6 km²
- population: 134,794
- density: 2,610/km²
- time zone: UTC+01:00
- parliament: 80 members
- mayor: Marlies Thut

Landmarks:
- Bern has many traditional dishes, such as a Berner Platte which includes a platter of various meats, sausages, sauerkraut, beans, and potatoes, and Röstli which are veggie, shredded potatoes that are often served with meat or cheese.
- Bern is officially called the federal city because Switzerland doesn't have a legally designated capital city.
- Many famous and influential people have lived in Bern before, such as Albert Einstein who lived in Bern from 1902-1909, developing his theories during his time at the patent office on Kongressstrasse.
- The old city at the centre of Bern is a UNESCO world heritage site filled with must-see attractions, such as the Zytglogge, a clock tower, the Bundeshaus, a federal palace, and the Bern Minster Cathedral.

YEAR 10 CREATIVE WORKSHOP WITH ARTIST ROB LE GRICE

Year 10 students recently took part in an inspiring workshop led by artist-educator Rob Le Grice, where they were encouraged to take creative risks and work with energy and spontaneity. Challenged to work at speed, students explored expressive mark-making through graphite and ink drawings and experimented with a variety of mono-printing techniques. Drawing from the natural landscape, they produced bold, inventive artworks that showcased both their developing skills and their willingness to push creative boundaries.



FESTIVE CLAY CREATIONS IN YEARS 7 & 8

Year 7 and 8 students have been busy crafting their own clay Christmas decorations, ready to take home and display for the festive season. The sessions were full of creativity and seasonal cheer, and students thoroughly enjoyed designing and shaping their personalised decorations.



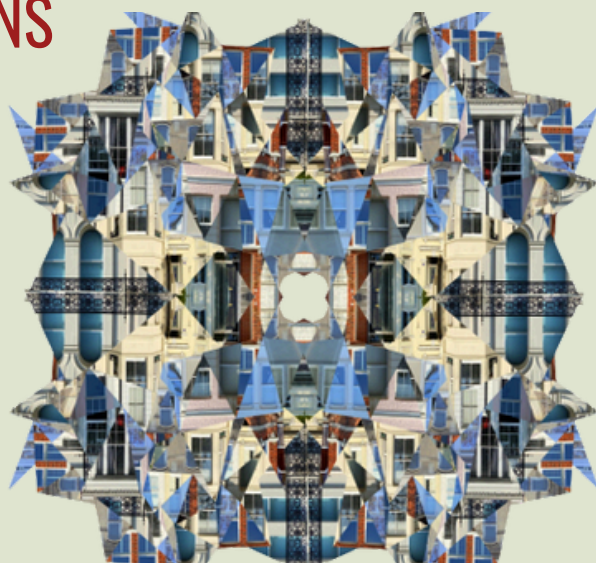
YEAR 9 GCSE PHOTOGRAPHY TASTER SESSIONS

Are you interested in taking GCSE photography?
Do you want to experience the Photoshop editing process?
You have the exciting opportunity to create work on one of the following lunch times:
Sign up for one of the taster session dates below on Bromcom.

Monday 19th January

Tuesday 27th January

One session slot per person.



YEAR 10 VISIT NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM

Year 10 pupils visited the Natural History Museum to kick-start their personal response to the theme Natural Environment. During the trip they explored a wide range of exhibits, from marine life and mammals to impressive dinosaur displays. Students produced observational sketches on site and gathered plenty of primary-source photographs, providing a rich foundation for their upcoming creative work.



YEAR 11 ART UPDATE

Year 11 students have now completed their coursework and are preparing to embark on their Component 2 project, marking an exciting new phase in their creative journey.

SAVE THE DATE

Save the date: 25th June 2026 for our Private View and celebration of students' work — a wonderful opportunity to see their achievements and support their artistic development.

YEAR 9 NETBALL

The Year 9 netball team have continued their fantastic winning run this half term, extending their unbeaten record to an impressive 15 victories across multiple competitions.

In the Mid-Sussex League, they have made a brilliant start, winning all eight of their matches so far, showing skill and great teamwork.

Their County Cup journey began with a first-round match against St Oscar Romero. After a closely contested first half, the team found its rhythm in the third and fourth quarters, pulling ahead and ultimately securing a well-deserved win.

A thrilling second-round home fixture against Roedean saw the teams level at halftime. A focused third quarter helped the girls build a six-goal lead, which they held onto to claim a 31–27 victory and progress to the semi-finals.

This success reflects the team's commitment and dedication, including regular early-morning training sessions. Next, they will compete in the Regional Round of the National Schools Competition in January, with the County Cup semi-finals also taking place after Christmas. An exciting time ahead for a fantastic team.



YEAR 10 NETBALL



The Year 10 team have continued their outstanding season, extending their unbeaten run to 13 consecutive wins.

In the first round of the County Cup against Hurst, the team delivered their strongest performance to date. Excellent movement and cohesion across the court, combined with strong defensive interceptions and accurate shooting, led to a dominant 41–16 victory.

In the next round, the team travelled to Heathfield and made a phenomenal start, taking a 10-goal lead in the first quarter and extending this to 20 by half time. Despite a challenging third quarter, they stayed focused and secured an impressive 60–30 win, progressing to the County Cup semi-finals.

U13 BASKETBALL

The U13s enjoyed their first taste of competitive basketball for the school this week. Despite having never played the sport before, their overall athletic ability shone through, and they adapted quickly to the pace of the game. The team listened brilliantly to coaching points, growing in confidence, technique, and tactical awareness with every quarter. It was fantastic to see 10 students stepping up to represent the school in a brand new sport — and even better to finish the day with a well-earned win!



YEAR 10 GIRLS BASKETBALL

Our Year 10 girls' basketball team displayed excellent quality and teamwork in a match vs Tanbridge House School in December. We won 22–4 with many brilliant performances across the team. We look forward to more matches in 2026.



YEAR 7 RUGBY

The Year 7 Rugby team have had an incredible start to their school rugby careers at Downlands after winning their opening two matches against Warden Park and Oathall. Both matches were Sussex County Cup fixtures and this has meant that they have topped their group and will progress into the higher tier of the competition after Christmas. The boys have been working extremely hard in training every single week and continue to make fantastic progress. We are excited to see how far they can go in the County competition as well as the District Competition. Keep up the great efforts!

YEAR 7 BASKETBALL



The Year 7 Basketball team have made a fantastic start to their school basketball career by winning their first two league games convincingly. The students have been putting a huge number of hours into training and attending morning training sessions before school. The team are continuing to make excellent progress and have made it through to the district semi-final which will take place after Christmas. In addition, the boys will start their Junior NBA campaign after the holidays in which they are hoping to progress through as many rounds as possible with the goal of making it into the play off stages. Well done boys and keep up the great work!

YEAR 8 BASKETBALL

The Year 8 Basketball team have carried on from last year with some impressive performances in the first games of the season. It is still very early days in the season but the team is looking very strong in training and they are hoping to retain the Mid Sussex District title as well as going as far as they possibly can in the Junior NBA championships. Keep up the hard work boys and well done!



U16 GIRLS HANDBALL

The U16 Girls Handball team have played in the first tournament of the year. The team finished second in Sussex which has meant that they will progress to a regional finals day in Chichester in the new year. The girls have been training hard during their lunch times to ensure they are ready for the next competition. Good luck girls and let's hope all the hard work pays off and we can go and win it!

INCLUSION BADMINTON TOURNAMENT

The students took part in an inclusion badminton tournament against The Burgess Hill Academy, and it was a really positive experience for everyone involved.

Players from both schools showed great teamwork, effort and encouragement throughout the matches. It was an inclusive but competitive event where students of all abilities had the chance to get involved, build confidence and represent the school.



YEAR 9 FOOTBALL

The Year 9 Football team have enjoyed an excellent first half of the season, remaining unbeaten in the district league and securing a place in the semi-final. Their strong performances have also taken them into the last 16 of the County Cup, reflecting impressive skill, teamwork and consistency throughout the term. The players have shown a positive attitude throughout, representing the school with maturity and commitment.

We congratulate the team on their achievements so far and wish them the very best of luck as they continue their campaign in the new year.

YEAR 9 HANDBALL

The Year 9 Handball team delivered an outstanding performance at their recent tournament, winning all three of their games and securing first place overall. Their teamwork, focus, and determination were evident throughout, leading to a thoroughly deserved victory.

As a result of their success, the team will now go on to represent the school at the finals day hosted at Chichester University. This is a fantastic achievement and a testament to their hard work and skill demonstrated in the tournament.

Congratulations to the team on their excellent performance and we wish them the very best in the upcoming finals.

YEAR 7 FOOTBALL

The Year 7 football team have enjoyed an outstanding season so far, finishing top of their league after a series of impressive performances. Their success continued in the District Cup semi-final, where they produced a dominant display to defeat Bohunt 7–0. The team now look ahead to a well-deserved place in the District Cup Final, where they will face Oathall. In addition, their strong form has earned them a spot in the County Cup quarter-final, with their opponent yet to be confirmed. The squad should be extremely proud of their achievements to date and remain focused on the exciting challenges ahead.

A further 16 Year 7 boys, all of whom had not previously represented the school in football, have also had an opportunity to showcase their talent as they formed two teams and travelled to Uckfield College for a tournament. They displayed excellent attitude, teamwork and impressive technique throughout the event, representing the school superbly and gaining valuable experience in a competitive environment.

BOULDERING

Students recently took part in a bouldering competition. Every participant approached the challenge with confidence and showed impressive skill across the range of climbs.

A special mention goes to Alfie M who achieved an exceptional score of 248 out of a possible 250 points from all 25 climbs. This is an outstanding accomplishment and reflects remarkable focus and ability. Thanks to their strong performances, the students have qualified for the Finals Day in January. Well done to everyone involved.



YEAR 8 FOOTBALL

The Year 8 football team have delivered a superb season, finishing top of their district league after consistently commanding performances. Their dominance across the campaign has been evident in both their results and their style of play, showcasing strong teamwork, resilience and technical quality. Their league success has secured them a place in the District Cup semi-final, where they will face Forest in what promises to be an exciting fixture. In addition to their district achievements, the team continue to progress impressively in the County Cup, maintaining their momentum as they look to advance even further. The squad should be proud of their continued hard work and determination throughout the season.

YEAR 10 FOOTBALL

The Year 10 football team have enjoyed a dominant league campaign, finishing top after a series of confident and commanding performances. Their strong teamwork, discipline and quality in possession have been clear throughout the season, setting a high standard in every fixture. Their league success now sees them progress to the District Cup semi-final, where they are set to face Oathall. The team should be proud of their achievements so far and will be looking to carry their excellent form into the knockout stages.

LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Sports Leaders play an important role in the PE Department and they are so valuable in assisting with the running of our extra-curricular clubs at lunchtime and after school. Downlands are strongly linked with Mid Sussex Active and we run many events together with our excellent sports leaders.

Mid Sussex Active recently launched their Leadership Academy programme and Downlands selected a small number of our sports leaders to benefit from such extra training and to reward them for being such outstanding leaders and role models. As the photos demonstrate, they had a fantastic morning at The Triangle and St Paul's, and look forward to using their skills in our primary schools next term.



CROSS COUNTRY AND TOUGH RUNNER

Students recently took part in both a cross-country race and a Tough Runner event, showing fantastic determination and resilience. In the cross-country competition, they pushed themselves over challenging distances and demonstrated great stamina and teamwork. During the Tough Runner event, students tackled obstacles, off-road trails, and tough terrain with enthusiasm and a positive attitude. Overall, their effort, sportsmanship, and commitment were outstanding, and they represented the school brilliantly in both events.

DANCE LEADERS

Downlands welcomed five of our primary schools to an event we hosted recently, 'A Christmas Dance'. The primary school students were fortunate enough to spend the morning with our Year 10 Dance Captains who had choreographed a special dance for them to some lovely Christmas songs. The Dance Captains were a credit to the school and the feedback from staff and students was extremely positive.

YEAR 10/11 GIRLS FOOTBALL

The year 10/11 girls football team played a league match vs St Pauls resulting in a convincing win. They have played some excellent football and are one of the standout teams in Mid-Sussex.

We also represented the school at a 6-aside tournament at the Weald; taking two teams including Year 10 students. Both teams competed well in competitive matches against Mid-Sussex schools. At the end of the tournament there was a presentation where the white team were announced as winners of the tournament. Well done to all involved!



YEAR 7 & YEAR 8 NETBALL

Over 30 Year 7 and 30 Year 8 students have represented the school in netball this half term. We have had outstanding results from fixtures against St Paul's, Christ Hospital and Oathall. We look forward to our leagues and more fixtures next term.

The Year 7 netball team have progressed to the semi final of the Sussex Cup due to a convincing win against Oscar Romero. The girls will play Hurst College next term and we look forward to a great game!



U14 GIRLS RUGBY

Our rugby at Downlands continues to grow and we are fortunate enough to have some excellent rugby players who are regularly playing at local clubs in Burgess Hill, Hove and Brighton. At a recent fixture against Ifield, Downlands were convincing winners and we look forward to hearing who we will be playing against in the next round of the County competition.

YEAR 7 GIRLS FOOTBALL

This team is buzzing with energy and hard work. They stick together, play with real quality, and never stop wanting to score more goals! We recently played Warden Park in a league match, winning 5-0, with POM Megan scoring a hat-trick.

The determination and commitment from so many girls in Year 7 makes every game exciting. We look forward to playing many more league matches in 2026.



CAREERS

UNIFROG

FOR PARENTS AND CARERS OF ALL YEAR GROUPS

Unifrog have changed the way that parents and carers can access their platform, so that now you can be linked directly to your child or children's accounts. This means you will be able to see for yourself what they have been doing on the platform, and any careers activities which have been recorded for them, such as guidance meetings and work experience.

The PowerPoint gives an overview of the platform:

[Introduction-to-Unifrog-for-parents-and-carers.pdf](#)

You can only get signed up on the platform once your email address has been linked to your child's or children's account and in order for that to happen, you need to give your express permission by completing this form:

[Consent for my email to be attached to the Unifrog account\(s\) of my child/children – Fill out form](#)

Once you have given your consent, we can request your details are added to their account and then you can follow the instructions on the slide in the presentation above.

YEAR 7

All Year 7s have been given access to Unifrog as well as completing a questionnaire from the Careers and Enterprise Company to establish their current knowledge and confidence around careers, so that we can develop our curriculum accordingly. If your child missed their CDC lesson where these activities took place, please encourage them to follow the instructions on their emails.

YEAR 11

I have had the pleasure of speaking to all Year 11 students during their dedicated careers guidance meetings and have been busy writing their references; hopefully by now all Year 11s have submitted their college applications. Whilst my focus will move to the Year 10s, I am still available Monday – Thursday breaktime to answer any questions or concerns Year 11s may have.

YEAR 10

We launched work experience this term for the Year 10s and already some placements have been snapped up. Please talk to your child during the holiday break, as the sooner you reach out for placements either to myself, or directly to employers, the greater the likelihood that there will be spaces available. All parents, carers and students in Year 10 have been emailed full information about the work experience process, together with a link to the live spreadsheet of placements I am sourcing. Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and New Year.

Liz Hollingdale
Careers Lead

DSA - DOWNLANDS PTA

QUIZ NIGHT

Our recent Quiz Night with the fabulous Mr Smith was a huge success, and we would like to thank everyone who attended and helped make it such an enjoyable evening. Congratulations to our winning team, Fantastic Four, on their well-deserved victory. Thanks to the incredible support from our school community, we raised an impressive **£2,600** for the school – a fantastic result for everyone involved.



CHRISTMAS MARKET- THANK YOU



A massive thank you to everyone who supported our Christmas Market – from donating items to attending on the day, your involvement makes all the difference to our school community. Thank you to all of the parent volunteers who generously gave their time and support to help make the Christmas Fair such a wonderful success. We raised **£3,000** for the school.

DOWNLANDS CHRISTMAS PRIZE DRAW – THANK YOU



A huge thank you to our incredibly generous local businesses for donating such fantastic prizes, and to everyone who purchased tickets in support of the raffle – the draw takes place today, and congratulations to all of our winners. This raised an amazing **£2,734**



PRIZE DRAW
XMAS MARKET
QUIZ NIGHT



Get in touch with us at
dsa@downlands.org



[downlands_school_association](https://www.facebook.com/downlands_school_association)

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 *	Ms Lai	www.westsussexmusic.co.uk
Singing		info@lovmusicschool.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 Ouwend	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.

*Help with the cost for selected lessons is available for qualifying families. You can apply for the West Sussex Bursary here www.westsussexmusic.co.uk/bursary/

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.

Mr A Wardrobe
Head of Music

**Endangered
Instruments
Bursary!**

Ask the music department if you are
interested in learning one of these FOR FREE!

Double Bass

Oboe

French Horn

Viola

Bassoon

SECOND HAND UNIFORM

We have a selection of good-quality second-hand school uniform available for sale. This is a great, affordable option for families and supports our commitment to sustainability. If you are interested, please contact the school with details of your requirements, including the item needed, size, and colour, and we will be happy to help where possible.

UNIFORM PRICELIST

JUMPERS	£5
SKIRTS	£5
TROUSERS	£3.50
POLOS	£3
PE TOPS	£3
PE SWEATSHIRT/RUGBY SHIRT	£5

IF YOU WISH TO PURCHASE SECOND HAND UNIFORM PLEASE
CONTACT US DURING TERM TIME VIA EMAIL:

uniform@downlands.org

VACANCIES

JOIN OUR TEAM



**DO YOU WANT TO JOIN A FRIENDLY,
ENTHUSIASTIC, AND COMMITTED TEAM
IN A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY SCHOOL ?**

**We are currently recruiting for a:
COVER SUPERVISOR AND SPORTS ASSISTANT**

**For more details and to download an application form
please visit:
<https://www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk/join-us/vacancies>**

LETTINGS AVAILABLE AT DOWNLANDS COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Looking for the perfect venue for your next event, club, class or performance? We offer a wide range of high-quality facilities available for hire during evenings and weekends:



- Spacious **Main Hall** – ideal for large events and gatherings
- **STEM Suite** large room with tables and chairs and adjoining **kitchen area**
- **Canteen** space with access to the **school kitchen** (if required)
- Blacked out **Drama Studio**
- Purpose-built **Dance Studio**
- Modern **Classrooms**
- Outdoor **Amphitheatre** – perfect for performances or talks
- Full-size **Astroturf Pitch** – suitable for sports and training

Whether you're running a community group, hosting a workshop or event, or need space for rehearsals or sports, we offer flexible options at excellent rates.

ENQUIRE TODAY
sfairbank@downlands.org

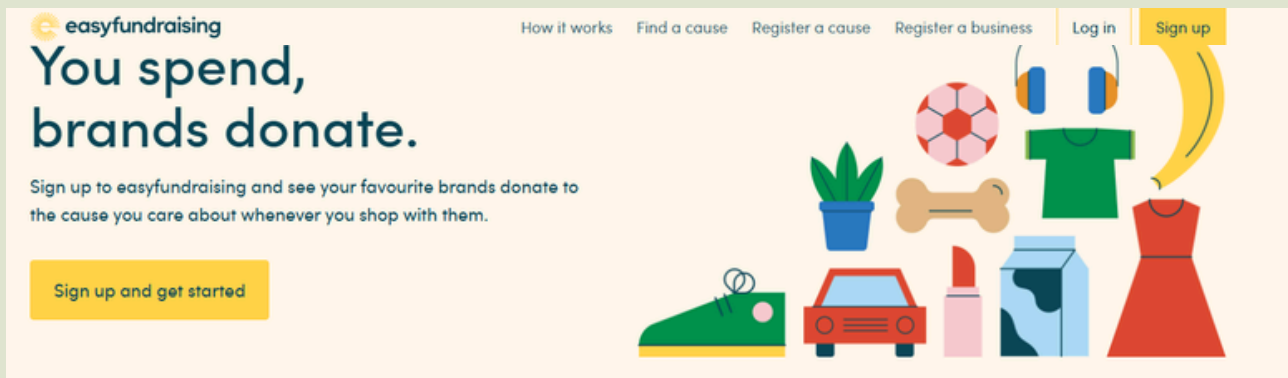

DOWNLANDS
COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Did you know you can support our school effortlessly every time you shop online? With easyfundraising, every purchase you make from your favourite retailers—like Amazon, Argos, eBay, and M&S—**can generate a free donation for us, at no extra cost to you.**

It's completely free, quick to set up, and makes a real difference. Whether you're booking a holiday, doing your weekly grocery shop, or treating yourself to something special, you'll be helping raise vital funds simply by shopping as you normally would. Sign up today and turn your everyday shopping into everyday giving!



<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/>



easyfundraising

How it works Find a cause Register a cause Register a business Log in Sign up

You spend, brands donate.

Sign up to easyfundraising and see your favourite brands donate to the cause you care about whenever you shop with them.

[Sign up and get started](#)

Your fundraising journey starts today

Support a cause

You can pick within a selection of brands national and local causes.

[4 questions, takes around 2 minutes](#)

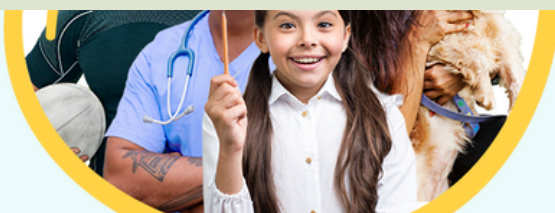
Register your own cause

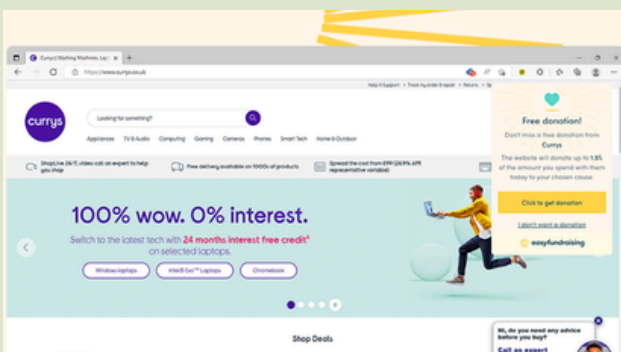
We'll guide you through the entire process, from the registration to getting your first donations.

[8 questions, takes around 4 minutes](#)

What's your cause name?

[Create my profile](#)





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EVERY CLICK COUNTS—JOIN EASYFUNDRAISING TODAY AND HELP MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE WITH NO EXTRA COST TO YOU!

USEFUL INFORMATION

Please find a tutorial explaining the new changes to WhatsApp locked chats to be aware of.

Take a look at this video, 'guidance on locked chats on whatsapp for parents'

<https://share.google/JFerbEqNEvOinJsAT>

At The National College, our WakeUpWednesday guides empower and equip parents, carers and educators with the confidence and practical skills to be able to have informed and age-appropriate conversations with children about online safety, mental health and wellbeing, and climate change. Formerly delivered by National Online Safety, these guides now address wider topics and themes. For further guides, hints and tips, please visit nationalcollege.com.

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about AI-GENERATED VIDEOS

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

AI-generated videos are increasingly difficult to spot and easy to share. From fake news clips to deepfake abuse, children and young people face new risks every day online. These videos can imitate real people, spread false narratives or even generate harmful content from scratch. Understanding these dangers is crucial for schools and families who want to protect children in a fast-evolving digital world.

DEEPPAKE ABUSE CONTENT

Shockingly, artificial intelligence is now being exploited to create child sexual abuse material (CSAM). These synthetic images and videos are a form of digital abuse, often generated by manipulating real children's photos, including ones shared innocently online. Worryingly, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has identified a sharp rise in this disturbing trend. Whether real or AI-generated, this content causes lasting trauma – and its creation or possession remains a criminal offence under UK law.

BLURRED REALITY

Regular exposure to fake content can erode a child's trust in real-world evidence. If everything can be faked, they may begin to question genuine videos – including actual abuse or injustice. This is known as the 'liar's dividend', where real harm is dismissed as fake news. It can discourage victims from coming forward or speaking up.

USED FOR BULLYING

Deepfake technology is already being used by peers to create embarrassing or explicit clips of classmates. These videos can be edited to appear as though a child said or did something they never did. Once shared, they are almost impossible to delete completely. AI-generated bullying adds a new layer of harm that is deeply personal and difficult to prove.

EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

AI-generated videos can be used to provoke strong emotions, including fear, anger or guilt. False footage of crying children, injured animals or burning buildings may be created purely for clicks, donations or political influence. Children may feel upset or powerless, unaware that what they are watching has been digitally invented to manipulate their reaction.

DISINFORMATION

AI-generated videos can spread fake news, making it harder for children to separate fact from fiction. False clips may include deepfake interviews, hoax disasters or fabricated health claims. AI is already being used to produce misleading or persuasive material that appears authentic. If they don't develop media literacy, children may accept false content as truth.

IMPERSONATION AND SCAMS

With just a few photos or voice clips, AI tools can imitate someone's appearance or speech. This makes it easier for scammers or bullies to create fake videos of children, teachers or celebrities. These impersonations can be used for fraud, harassment or humiliation – and can spread quickly through social media or group chats, due to the viral potential of video, in particular, on social media.

Advice for Parents & Educators

TEACH HOW IT WORKS

Explain to children that videos can be faked – and show them how. Demonstrating side-by-side examples of real vs AI-generated clips helps to build awareness. Discuss how faces, voices and even movements can be copied by machines. Understanding the technology reduces fear and builds confidence in navigating digital content safely.

TALK ABOUT TRUST

Always keep lines of communication open. If a child sees something upsetting or unbelievable, they should feel safe discussing it without judgement. Create an environment where they know they will not get in trouble for asking questions. This also helps you step in quickly if harmful content has been shared; trust is vital and needs to be nurtured.

ENCOURAGE CRITICAL QUESTIONS

Help children question what they watch. Who made this? Why was it made? Is it trying to persuade me? These habits encourage digital thinking, especially when videos seem too shocking or convenient. Reinforce that not everything shared by friends or influencers is true, even if it looks convincing at first, and that the initial approach should always be one of speculation.

STRENGTHEN PRIVACY SETTINGS

Advise children not to share voice notes, selfies or personal videos on public platforms. AI tools often scrape content from social media to create deepfakes. Use privacy controls to limit who can see their content and turn off facial recognition where possible. Fewer public images means fewer opportunities for misuse.

Meet Our Expert

Brendan O'Keefe is a headteacher and digital education consultant with over a decade of experience in education. As Director of Digital Strategy across multiple schools and an advisor to The National College, he specialises in digital safety, PREVENT, and pastoral care.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College

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@wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 12.11.2025

USEFUL INFORMATION



At West Sussex County Council, we are committed to promoting road safety and keeping our communities safe. One way we do this is through our West Sussex Road Safety Facebook page, which has been running for approximately three years.

This page provides valuable updates, advice, and resources to help parents, children, and all road users stay informed about key safety initiatives and best practices.

To support this effort and help keep children and families in your community safe, we would greatly appreciate it if you could share the following link with parents:

[West Sussex Road Safety Facebook Page](#)

Together, we can make our roads safer for everyone.

Thank you for your support!

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



Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust

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GET HELP WITH ALL KINDS OF THINGS LIKE...

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VISIT:

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**



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



DISCOVER OUR CLASSES @ DOWNLANDS STUDIO,
HASOCKS SPORTS CENTRE

MONDAY INTERS DANCE 4.15PM – 5.15PM

MONDAY SENIORS DANCE 5.15PM – 6.15PM

TUESDAY DRAMA SESSIONS 3.15PM – 4.15PM

THURSDAY DANCE TROUPE 4.30PM – 5.45PM

THURSDAY COMMERCIAL DANCE 5.45PM – 6.45PM



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**Contact for a free quote:
07460714224**



CHRISTMAS ART WORKSHOPS 2025

WEEK ONE

Monday 15th December: K-Pop Demon Hunters Christmas Special!
Tuesday 16th December: Jamie Smart Christmas Cartoons
Wednesday 17th December: Snoopy Christmas Special!
Thursday 18th December: Kawaii Cute Christmas Workshop!
Friday 19th December: K-Pop Demon Hunters Christmas Special!

Saturday 20th December:

Weekend PARENT & CHILD Christmas printing workshops
10am - 12.30pm and 1pm - 3.30pm

WEEK TWO

Monday 22nd December: Jamie Smart Christmas Cartoons
Tuesday 23rd December: K-Pop Demon Hunters Christmas Special!

ALL DAY WORKSHOPS SUITABLE FOR 6 - 13 YEAR OLDS

£40 PER DAY

9AM - 3PM

www.artroombrighton.co.uk



AS FEATURED IN
THE  TIMES
theguardian
The Daily Telegraph

AS SEEN ON


Teachers are graduates with PGCEs and enhanced DBS

USEFUL INFORMATION

SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD

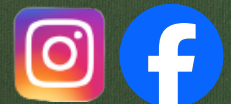


Did you know? The average British 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week – equivalent to a part-time job – on devices, leaving little time for real-world activities and connections. Time spent on a device is time not spent with others: playing, exploring, interacting and developing vital life skills. A national movement, led by parents aims to challenge the new 'norm' of children owning and using smartphones. There are 35 parent groups in West Sussex alone. A group of 60 Downlands parents/carers 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>

THANK YOU

We're incredibly grateful that your likes, shares, and follows on Facebook and Instagram are helping our amazing community continue to grow!



HAVE A GREAT CHRISTMAS BREAK!