



12 February 2026

Dear parent/carers

It has been another busy half term during which our community has achieved so much, there is truly plenty to celebrate. One event that exemplified our mission to provide as many positive opportunities as possible for our young people was our recent production of *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*. This outstanding performance, led by our Head of Drama, Mrs Robertson, brought together over 170 students and staff. From the set design to the acting, everyone involved should be incredibly proud of the exceptional quality of the production, which was widely praised by the audiences across all five performances. Thank you to everyone who supported the show, including our local primary schools and, of course, our amazing and dedicated Parents Teachers Association, who took over £1,000 through the provision of refreshments.

This half term also saw our first Character Passport Day. Every year group took part in a wide range of activities centred around our ROCKS values. Special mention goes to our community volunteers who supported the Year 9 Careers Day, expertly led by our Careers Lead, Ms Hollingdale. A large number of professionals from a wide variety of fields generously gave their time to provide our young people with valuable insights into the exciting opportunities awaiting them in the world of work. Other year groups engaged in enterprise activities, speaking presentations, revision workshops, and excursions to West End shows and London museums. Feedback has been highly positive, and collectively the day offered our students a rich array of opportunities to develop the ROCK character traits that we value and celebrate.

It was also a pleasure to meet with HKD Transition, our sustainability partners who have supported us for over 10 years. They played an instrumental role in raising funds for our initial installation of solar panels, which continue to provide greener and more affordable power. In recognition of our successful partnership, they generously presented the school with a £3,000 donation, for which we are extremely grateful. We look forward to continuing our collaboration as we explore further sustainable projects.

Special thanks and recognition go to our Year 11 prefect team, who are about to step down from their duties as they focus on GCSE preparation. Their contribution to our community has been significant from supporting our new Year 7 students to assisting with numerous school events throughout the year. We are delighted that so many Year 10 students have put themselves forward to serve as prefects, and the selection process for our new team has now been completed.

Thank you again to our governors, staff, parents, carers, and students for your continued support this term. There has been much to celebrate within our vibrant, supportive, and successful community.

Wishing you all a restful half term.

A handwritten signature in grey ink, reading 'M Ashdown'.

Matthew Ashdown
Headteacher

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THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE

The school performance of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe was absolutely amazing, and it was clear how much everyone loved it. The students were outstanding, with fantastic performances brought to life by stunning costumes and an impressive set design. A huge well done to all 170 students involved. Thank you to Mrs Robinson, Mrs Green, and all the staff who worked so hard behind the scenes to make such a large production a huge success.



THE LION, THE WITCH & THE WARDROBE



CHARACTER DAY

On Monday 21 January, our entire Year 7 and Year 8 cohorts embarked on one of the most anticipated events of the school year: Character Passport Day. Designed to broaden horizons, build confidence, and give students the chance to experience the world beyond the classroom, the day delivered everything we hoped for—and more. From the moment students and staff gathered at the station, it was clear we were in for a memorable adventure. Watching more than nearly five hundred pupils navigate trains, platforms and bustling streets of London was, in the best possible way, wonderfully organised chaos.

YEAR 7: A MAGICAL INTRODUCTION TO LONDON'S WEST END

For many of our Year 7 students, Character Passport Day marked their very first visit to a major London theatre. Students split into two groups, heading off to see either *Wicked* or *The Lion King*, both enduring West End favourites known for their spectacular staging and unforgettable music.

Those who saw *Wicked* were swept up in the story of unlikely friendships and the backstory of Oz, with its soaring vocals and breathtaking set design. Many students have since been heard comparing favourite songs or debating whether Elphaba or Glinda stole the show.

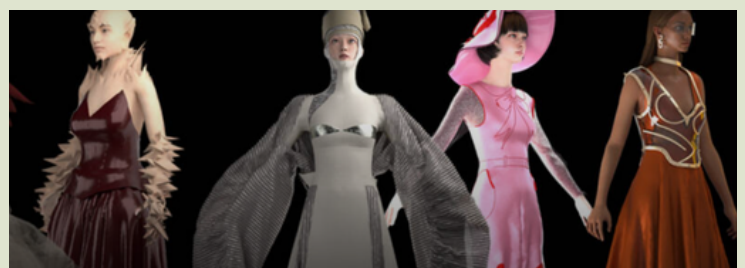
Meanwhile, the group experiencing *The Lion King* were mesmerised by its iconic opening sequence, powerful storytelling and stunning animal puppetry. For some, seeing the Serengeti brought to life on stage was a moment they described as “goosebump-worthy.”

Beyond the performances themselves, the Year 7s also showed resilience and independence navigating their London journeys—an important part of Character Passport Day's purpose. Staff praised their enthusiasm, curiosity and impeccable theatre etiquette.

YEAR 8: CURIOSITY, CREATIVITY AND HISTORY COMES ALIVE

Year 8 enjoyed a diverse set of cultural experiences, choosing between three iconic London destinations: the V&A Museum, the Science Museum, and the Tower of London. Each group came away with memorable highlights.

At the V&A, students explored the museum's collections of art, design and performance. The standout moment? The chance to dress up in an eclectic array of costumes spanning different theatrical eras. From Victorian gowns to flamboyant stage outfits, students embraced the chance to step into character—resulting in some great photos and plenty of laughter.



CHARACTER DAY



Over at the Science Museum, the group were thrilled by Power Up, the museum's hands-on gaming exhibition. From retro consoles to modern favourites, students enthusiastically challenged each other, showcasing competitive streaks and nostalgia for games older than they are. The interactive nature of the exhibition sparked conversations about coding, design and how technology has evolved over time.



Meanwhile, the group visiting the Tower of London enjoyed one of Britain's most iconic historic landmarks. Although meeting the ravens and spotting Beefeaters was exciting, the undisputed highlight was viewing the Crown Jewels. Students were captivated by the glittering regalia, the centuries of history behind them and the sheer spectacle of seeing them up close.



A DAY THAT EMBODIED OUR SCHOOL VALUES

Throughout the day, students demonstrated exactly what Character Passport Day is all about: resilience, optimism, community, kindness and self-awareness. Whether helping each other on busy platforms, stepping out of comfort zones in front of museum displays, or simply sharing the joy of new experiences, our students represented the school beautifully.

A special thank-you go to the staff who organised the logistics, supervised groups across London and ensured the day ran smoothly. Trips of this scale take an enormous amount of planning and we are grateful for everyone's hard work.

Character Passport Day 2026 reminded us that learning doesn't only happen in classrooms. Sometimes the most powerful lessons come from exploring the world, discovering new interests and sharing experiences together. We can't wait to do it all again next year!

CHARACTER DAY/CAREERS

YEAR 9

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 get very good at honing those questions down to uncover the truth!

The volunteers talked to them about how they got into their role, the qualifications they needed and answered questions students had about their career. It was 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.

The year group listened to talks from the University of Sussex, a degree apprentice from Collins Aerospace and an inspiring entrepreneur, all designed to show students the different routes that 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!

We rounded off the day with a Careers Fair at school with representatives from most of our local colleges, as well as many apprenticeship and training providers in the area, to get students to start to think about where and what they might want to study when they leave Downlands.



YEAR 10

The Year 10s Character Day was spent designing and presenting ideas for solutions, to sustainability problems in our local area. The feedback from staff 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. Winners of tutor groups will have a chance to present their ideas to a small panel; Ms Taulke-Johnson will be organising this so keep an eye out!

CAREERS GUIDANCE MEETINGS

These have already started for Year 10 and will continue throughout the year. Please look out for notifications on Unifrog and emails confirming dates and times.

WORK EXPERIENCE

Thank you to all students and parents/carers who have been in touch about work experience. I am delighted to announce that we have about a quarter of all students having placements already agreed. As a reminder, please use the spreadsheet linked here as this is the correct and updated version: [PLACEMENTS AVAILABLE 2026.xlsx](#)

Please remember not to go directly to any of the companies listed on the spreadsheet which say to go via myself. It causes enormous confusion and upset if individuals try to bypass the system.

YEAR 11

College interviews have been taking place thick and fast, with students being offered and accepting places to 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.

Although I have seen all of the Year 11s for their careers guidance meetings, I am still available at break times in the library hub and after school if students have any questions or concerns about next steps.

UNIFROG

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.

**NATIONAL
APPRENTICESHIP
WEEK 2026**
9-15 FEBRUARY

We were proud to take part in National Apprenticeship Week, highlighting the wide range of pathways available beyond traditional routes. Throughout the week, students discussed apprenticeships during tutor time, learning about different opportunities, career pathways, and the skills needed to succeed.

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

[Downloads/curriculum/work-experience-careers](#)

- [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](#)

PUBLIC SPEAKING



PUBLIC SPEAKING EVENT AT DOWNLANDS

Our recent Public Speaking event at Downlands was a fantastic showcase of student talent. Competing on the motion “This House believes that society is becoming a repeat of Nazi Germany,” our students excelled, winning Best Senior Team, Best Chair, Best Proposer, and Best Opposer. We are very proud of their confidence, skill, and teamwork.

PUBLIC SPEAKING CLUB

I first joined the public speaking club in Year 7, and since then I have loved every moment. Public speaking is a breath of fresh air and has helped me grow my confidence in so many ways. I look forward to it every week and love getting to play Just a Minute with my fellow debaters (even if sometimes it gets very chaotic). Debate is a very rewarding hobby (especially when we win 😊) and is so much fun.

Lila, Y11



Mid Sussex
Federation
of Schools

FEDERATION MUSIC DAY

Last month, Downlands students attended Federation Music Day at Oathall Community College, joining students and staff from Imberhorne School and Sackville School. The day was a celebration of musical talent, teamwork and creativity. Students collaborated to rehearse and perform a range of songs, including I’m a Believer and Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds, as well as traditional Greek Rebetiko pieces. Thank you to the staff across our Federation schools, Ensemble Reza and the Rebetiko Carnival for fully supporting and championing this project.



CREATIVE ARTS

YEAR 9 - ARTIST WORKSHOP

Year 9 students considering GCSE Art recently took part in an inspiring workshop led by artist educator **Rob le Grice**. Working on a large scale, students experimented with bold mark-making as they created bright, colourful drawings of inflatable animals and cacti. Using a combination of inks and oil pastels, they explored colour, movement and expressive techniques with great confidence and enthusiasm. The finished artworks are currently on display at **Hassocks Health Centre**, showcasing the creativity and ambition of our young artists to the wider community.



CREATIVE ARTS

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Congratulations to the students who won Photo of the Month
Well done on capturing some great shots!



PHOTO OF THE MONTH
WINNER
LUDO



PHOTO OF THE MONTH
RUNNER UP
ARLO

Submit your entries by the 1st of each month to
chamblywalker@downlands.org

Max 2 entries per person per month

Y10 GCSE ART

Year 10 GCSE Art students are taking part in two after-school **CLAY workshops** led by **Jo Clemens** – ceramicist, artist, art therapist and educator. Working from their own drawings, photographs from their trip to The Natural History Museum and other source materials, students will design and create a ceramic animal head using new clay techniques and raw materials. At a later stage, students will further develop their work by decorating it with glazes and oxides. Here are some examples from previous years.



Y11 GCSE ART

Year 11 GCSE Art students have now begun work on their externally set assignment and have made a strong and confident start. Students are exploring a wide range of themes, including **Nature, Lost and Found, Isolation, Magnificent, and Movement**, developing thoughtful ideas and personal responses. Early progress has been very encouraging, with students demonstrating creativity, independence and commitment to their projects. We look forward to celebrating their completed work at the **Year 11 Art Exhibition in June**.

UNDER 16 BOULDERING COMPETITION SUCCESS

Three of our students recently represented the school in an Under 16 bouldering competition at Boulder Brighton and delivered an outstanding performance. The team, made up of two Year 8 students (Alfie and Lila) and one Year 9 student (Elian), were competing against older and more experienced climbers, many of whom were in Year 11. Despite the age difference, our students rose to the challenge with determination, skill, and confidence. They climbed exceptionally well as a team across a range of demanding climbs and ultimately secured third place overall, an impressive achievement given the level of competition.

This result is a real testament to their hard work, resilience, and positive attitude. They should be extremely proud of their performance, and we congratulate them on representing the school so brilliantly.



U13 HANDBALL

The U13 Handball team began their season with a local qualifying tournament, competing against Tanbridge and Bohunt. Building on their success from last year, including their impressive run to the National Finals in Nottingham, the team demonstrated excellent cohesion, strategy, and tactical awareness throughout both matches. Securing two convincing victories, with goals from many of the team, they have now qualified for the next round in London. Well done to all involved



U14 NETBALL – REGIONAL FINALS

The U14 Netball team qualified for the regional round of the National Schools Competition after defeating all local independent schools; an incredible achievement and a historic moment for Downlands. During the group stages, the team worked exceptionally well as both an attacking and defensive unit. Facing fierce competition, they displayed accurate shooting, strong defensive pressure and excellent interception skills throughout. After seven highly competitive matches, the team finished as the **4th best netball team in South England**. This is a phenomenal achievement, and the players should be extremely proud of their commitment, teamwork and consistently high level of skill. We are incredibly proud of you all!



CROSS COUNTRY

Twelve runners proudly represented the school at the Cross Country event at Waterhall. Despite facing challenging conditions and some very steep hills, the team showed great resilience and determination. Congratulations to everyone who competed, and a special mention to Ruby A (Year 10), who finished an outstanding 5th place in the U16 race while competing against older athletes. Ruby will now go on to represent Sussex in the next round of the competition, good luck!

YEAR 7 BASKETBALL

The Year 7 boys Basketball team have continued their fantastic start to the season by winning 4 out of their opening 5 games. The team are continuing to make excellent progress and putting lots of hours into their training which is really starting to pay off. We are about to start our Junior NBA campaign as the LA Clippers and have our sights set on making the play-offs. The team have progressed to the Mid Sussex District final which will take place after February half term.



YEAR 10 HANDBALL

The Year 10 boys Handball team have done incredibly well and won the U15 Sussex Handball competition. The team will now represent Sussex at the Regional Championships in London in April. The team had to fight hard in their final match of the Sussex tournament in which they overcame a very strong Bohunt Horsham side, and eventually went on to beat them 9-7. Every member of the squad had a big part to play in the competition and they worked very hard for one another. We are looking forward to the regional competition, and with some more training and hard work we believe we can go on to qualify for the national competitions.

U13 BOYS HANDBALL

The U13 Boys Handball team played incredibly well in the Sussex County competition and scored a total of 23 goals and conceded only 2. The team were crowned Sussex Champions and will go on to the regional rounds in London in April. We look forward to seeing how far this team can go, as there is a lot of potential and they put in a lot of hard work. Good luck boys!



DANCE

DOWNLANDS DANCE SHOW - DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

The Dance Department are already preparing for the Annual Downlands Dance Show. The show will take place on 5th & 6th May, more details to follow.

FEDERATION OF SCHOOLS - DANCE SHOWCASE

We are thrilled to announce that Downlands Community School, Imberhorne School, Oathall School and Sackville School are coming together once again for our second Community Dance Performance Platform!

This dynamic showcase celebrates the incredible talent of young dancers from across all four schools, uniting on one stage to share their creativity, collaboration and passion for dance. Get ready for an exciting and inspiring evening that truly highlights the power of dance to connect our schools, our students and our wider community. We can't wait to see you there!

Mid Sussex Federation of schools proudly presents

The Mid Sussex Dance showcase

Chequer Mead Theatre, East Grinstead

1st June 2026 at 7pm



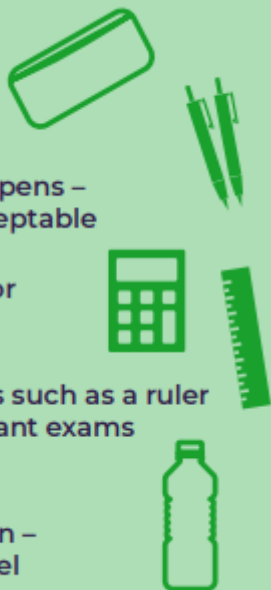
Scan the QR code for more
information and tickets



YEAR 11 - GCSE INFORMATION

What you will need:

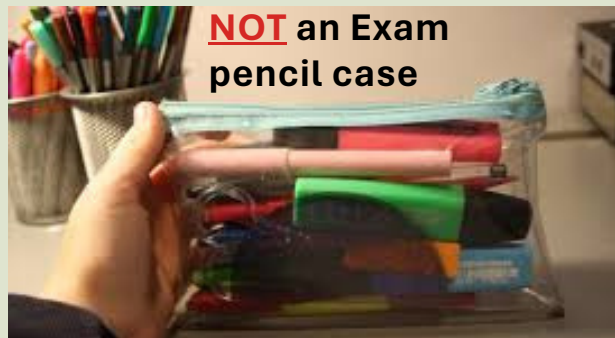
- ☐ a clear pencil case
- ☐ at least two black ink pens – blue pens are not acceptable
- ☐ an approved calculator for relevant exams
- ☐ appropriate apparatus such as a ruler or protractor for relevant exams
- ☐ a clear water bottle if you wish to take one in – it must not have a label



EXAM PENCIL CASE



NOT an Exam pencil case



What you cannot take into exams:

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



Before sitting your exams, ensure you know:

- the date, time and location of your exams – you might find it helpful to write this information in a calendar or planner
- who to contact at school or college in case there's an emergency that makes you late or unable to sit your exam

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.
- 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 too.
- 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.
- Make sure you stay silent – talking to a fellow candidate could result in disqualification from all your exams.

GCSE TIMETABLES

Please find below links to the exam timetables. Further details are also available on the Downlands website.

<https://www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk/news-events/gcse-info/>

YR11-Mock-Exams-Feb2026

SUMMER-26-OUTLINE-TIMETABLE

YEAR 11 LEAVERS INFORMATION

LEAVERS HOODIES

This year, we are using a company called Hoodie Hut. The hoodies cost from £21. They will be delivered to school and distributed to the students along with the Yearbooks and Prom tickets at the leavers' assembly on Friday, 22nd May. You can place your order directly with them via the following link.

<https://www.hoodiehut.co.uk>

The online shop will close at 10pm on Wednesday 4th March, 2026.

YEARBOOKS

Yearbook – £25.00 Available to purchase on Scopay

Deadline for payment 15th March, 2026

The Year 11 Yearbook team have helped us to collate a Leavers Yearbook to reflect the last 5 years at Downlands. All Year 11 students have the opportunity to buy a Yearbook, but there will only be one print run. Students will not be able to place orders after Friday 15th, March 2026.

I cannot stress the deadline enough as we do not want anyone to be disappointed. The school will not be ordering spare copies.

PROM

Our Prom this year will take place on Friday 26th June, at Pangdean Old Barn. Tickets will be available to purchase at a later date, and more information about the evening will follow in due course.



LEAVERS ASSEMBLY

The Year 11 Leavers' Assembly will take place on Friday, 22nd May.

- The Assembly will start at 11.20 am.
- Leavers' hoodies, yearbooks and prom tickets will be distributed afterwards.
- After the assembly, drinks and snacks are served in the canteen. Students can get their yearbooks signed.
- The event will finish around 12:45 pm, and students will be dismissed.



CLASS OF 2026

YOUTH PARLIAMENT

We are incredibly proud to share that Year 11 student Frank Jones is standing as a candidate for the Mid Sussex Youth Parliament. Frank is passionate about representing the views of young people in our community and ensuring that student voices are heard on the issues that matter most. This is a fantastic opportunity for our school to support one of our own and help make a real difference locally. If you are aged 11–18, you are eligible to vote — please show your support for Frank and cast your vote using the link below. Every vote counts!

VOTE HERE www.westsussex.gov.uk/youthelections

YOUR VOICE, OUR FUTURE!

Vote Frank Jones for Member of Youth Parliament (MYP) -
vote for a fairer, safer, more empowered future!

Hi! I'm Frank.

I'm standing to represent young people from Hassocks and Horsham & Mid Sussex as MYP.

What I Stand For



- ✓ Education must open doors.
- ✓ SEND students deserve better.
- ✓ Youth development.
- ✓ Mental health & online safety.
- ✓ Let's lead in responsible tech.



Why does our voice matter?

Young people know the challenges we face, and we should be part of the solution. I believe every young person deserves fair opportunities, safe spaces and a real voice in decisions. When elected, I'll listen, speak up, and ensure your voice shapes our shared future.

**VOTE
NOW**

www.westsussex.gov.uk/youthelections

DSA - DOWNLANDS PTA

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

CAN YOU HELP?

DOWNLANDS PTA

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A

TREASURER

IF YOU HAVE A CLEAR HEAD FOR FIGURES AND A DESIRE TO MAKE A REAL IMPACT ON OUR SCHOOL. WE NEED TO HEAR FROM YOU NOW!

INTERESTED? PLEASE CONTACT:

DSA@DOWNLANDS.ORG

THANK YOU

Thank you to everyone who came to the school show and purchased refreshments.

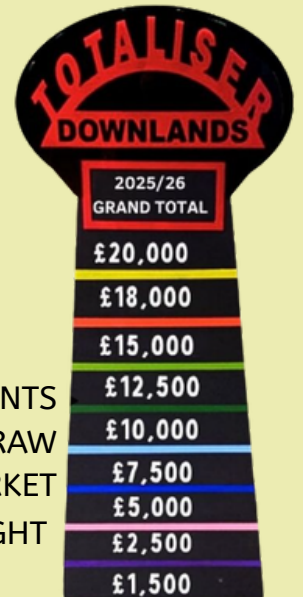
With your support we made over £1,000 !

SCHOOL SHOW REFRESHMENTS

PRIZE DRAW

XMAS MARKET

QUIZ NIGHT



EMPLOYER-SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING

Our School PTA is a registered charity dedicated to supporting and enriching the experiences of all our students. Every event we run — from fundraising evenings to community celebrations — relies entirely on the generosity of volunteers. Many employers now offer paid volunteering days as part of their staff benefits, meaning you may be able to support a PTA event or help with a Friday set-up without using your annual leave. If your workplace offers this scheme, it's a fantastic way to give back to the school community while being supported by your employer — please consider getting involved.

Get in touch with us at



dsa@downlands.org



downlands_school_association



easyfundraising

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday - you could be raising free donations for Downlands with easyfundraising?

There are over 8,000 retailers on board ready to make a donation — including eBay, Argos, John Lewis & Partners, ASOS, Booking.com and M&S — and it won't cost you a penny extra to help us raise funds. All you need to do is:

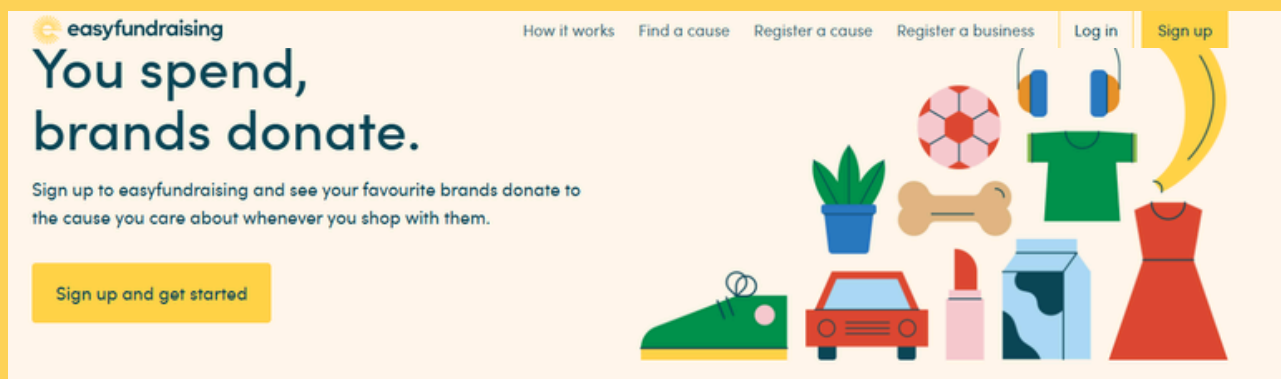
1. Go to <https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/downlandssch/> and join for free.
2. Every time you shop online, go to easyfundraising first to find the site you want and start shopping.
3. After you've checked out, the retailer will make a donation to Downlands Community School - Hassocks at no extra cost to you whatsoever! There are no catches or hidden charges and Downlands Community School - Hassocks will be really grateful for your donations.

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/>



The screenshot shows the easyfundraising homepage. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: 'How it works', 'Find a cause', 'Register a cause', 'Register a business', 'Log in', and 'Sign up'. The main headline reads 'You spend, brands donate.' Below this, a sub-headline says 'Sign up to easyfundraising and see your favourite brands donate to the cause you care about whenever you shop with them.' A yellow button labeled 'Sign up and get started' is prominent. To the right, there's a collection of colorful icons representing various shopping categories: a potted plant, a soccer ball, a dog bone, a green t-shirt, a red dress, a sneaker, a red car, a pink bottle, a blue carton, and a red bag.

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

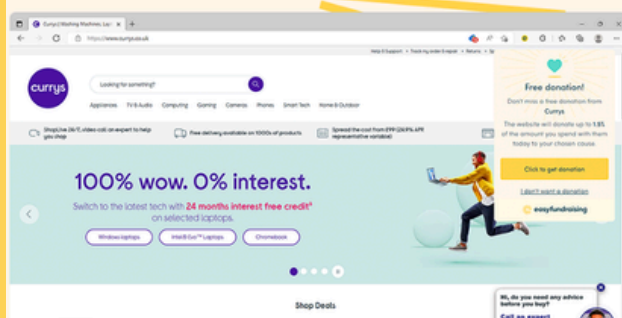
We'll guide you through the entire process, from the registration to getting your first donations.

⌚ 8 questions, takes around 4 minutes

What's your cause name?

Downlands Community School

Create my profile



Get donations in one click!

The Donation Reminder is our browser extension that pops up when a brand will donate as you shop. You can then get your donation in one click.

The Donation Reminder is also available on [your mobile and tablet](#).

Add extension

Trusted by over 420,000 users

And available on

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

UPCOMING SCHOOL EVENTS



YOU ARE INVITED TO OUR **BUSINESS BREAKFAST**

TUESDAY, 17TH MARCH
8-10AM

Join us for breakfast, meet local businesses
and grow your own professional network.

Downlands Community School, Dale Avenue,
Hassocks, BN6 8LP

Please RSVP to smilton@downlands.org

Please share with your colleagues and friends!



DOWNLANDS
COMMUNITY SCHOOL



**THURS
19
MARCH**

TICKETS £6 ON SCOPAY

CHOIR | ORCHESTRA
JAZZ BAND | STEEL PANS
BRASS BAND

7 PM

WORLD BOOK DAY

5 MARCH 2026

**COMIC
RELIEF**

RED NOSE DAY

FRIDAY 20 MARCH

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

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

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

HEAD OF FACULTY TECHNOLOGY
(Design & Technology & Food Preparation & Nutrition)

**For more details and to download an application form
please visit:**

<https://www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk/join-us/vacancies>

GOVERNOR VACANCY

Are you interested in the education of children in your local community?



Have you ever thought of being involved in supporting one of your local schools?

The Governing Board of Downlands Community School in **Hassocks is looking to elect a co-opted governor as soon as possible.** The role of the Governing Board is to provide **strategic leadership and to have oversight of educational and financial performance.**

All governors are volunteers, and no formal qualifications are required. However, as a co-opted governor you may be able to use your professional skills in the role.

Coming from a range of different backgrounds, our governors have a wide variety of skills and experience, but all share a common interest in their commitment to the education of **pupils at Downlands and to the wider community.**

To become a school governor, you must be over 18 years of age. Those in employment are entitled to "reasonable" time off work to carry out their governorship duties.

The governing board exercises its authority collectively rather than as individuals, through committees which focus on different areas of school life. Governors are linked to a subject **area and encouraged to participate in various school events.**

It is important that prospective candidates can commit time to attend meetings during the working day.

If you are interested in joining us and would like further information regarding the roles and responsibilities of a school governor, please contact the Clerk to the Governors, by [emailing ctog@downlands.org](mailto:ctog@downlands.org).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

INSET DAYS

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

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

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.

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

VISITOR PARKING

We kindly ask that parents and carers do not stop on the roundabout outside the school reception at any time. This is a functioning roundabout for moving traffic, and stopping there creates a safety risk for all road users.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM FINANCE AND TRIPS OFFICE

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.

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>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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.

REPORTING ABSENCE



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.

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

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.

USEFUL INFORMATION

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@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.

*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

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>

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'Keeffe 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®

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



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



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](#)

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

COMMUNITY BOARD



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



JOIN US IN SPRING TERM 2026

  @CREATESPACESTUDIOS.COM

WWW.CREATESPACESTUDIOS.COM

ART CLASSES



A PLACE TO BELONG, GROW & CREATE

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TRIAL NOW!

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- + Teen Art Classes
- + GCSE & A-Level Support
- + Holiday Art Workshops
- + Seasonal Family Workshops
- + Birthday Parties & Events

COMMITTED TO SAFEGUARDING

OFSTED REGISTERED

CHILDCARE VOUCHERS ACCEPTED



07746 252 054
burgesshill@art-k.co.uk
art-k.co.uk/class-burgess-hill
Unit 3, 66 Church Walk, RH15 9AS



COMMUNITY BOARD



AGES 11 TO 15

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



VB DANCE
Burgess Hill and Hassocks



Ballet - Pointe - Jazz - Tap - Modern Theatre - Acro - PBT
Under 5's Dance Classes
Recreational, Grades and Vocational Training 4-18 Years

vbdance.com/taster

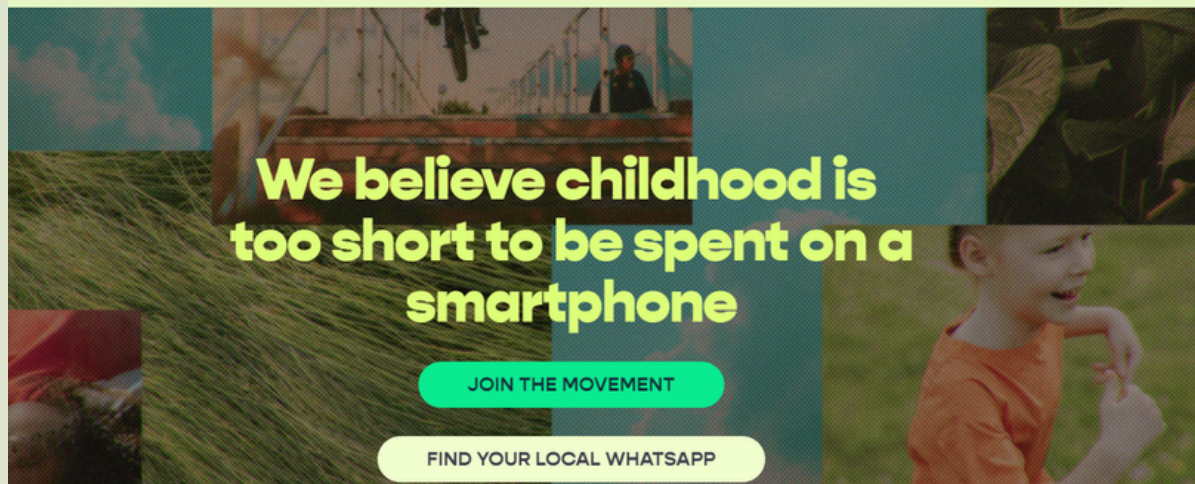


SMARTPHONE FREE CHILDHOOD



[ABOUT](#) [THE PROBLEM](#) [OUR MISSION](#) [RESOURCES](#)

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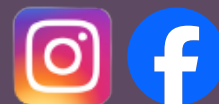


Did you know? The average British 12-year-old now spends 29 hours a week – equivalent to a part-time job – on devices, leaving little time for real-world activities and connections. Time spent on a device is time not spent with others: playing, exploring, interacting and developing vital life skills. 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 HALF TERM BREAK