



WELCOME TO DOWNEND SCHOOL

Downend School

PARENT NEWSLETTER: End of Term 6

21st July, 2025

Head's Messages

I can't quite believe that we are now at the end of term 6, this term and the year more generally has flown by in the blink of an eye. As we all stand on the edge of what hopes to be a fantastic summer I wanted to remind parents and carers that the details for the start of the new term including the term dates and INSET dates for 2026/2027 were sent out in the recent [parent newsletter](#).

There has been some recent information shared about us moving away from the South Gloucestershire term dates for next year. As has been communicated in parent newsletters since February, our term dates do differ slightly. Namely these points are the start of term 1 where we start with an INSET day on Thursday 3rd September (South Gloucestershire schools calendar starts on Tuesday 1st) and the end of term 6 where we finish on Friday 23rd July 2027 rather than Wednesday 21st July. All of the holiday dates are exactly the same as South Gloucestershire holiday dates.

Before reflecting on what has been a term filled with wonderful opportunities for learning both inside and outside the classroom, I want to wish every member of our school community a restful, relaxing summer filled with joy. Thank you for the support you have given your child this year, and for the support you have shown to the school. We look forward to seeing everyone in September.

Enrichment Week Gallery

The end of June saw the return of our annual Enrichment Week, and it was undoubtedly our most successful yet.

Enrichment Week is all about learning beyond the traditional classroom. It gives our teachers the opportunity to share their passion for their subjects without the constraints of the curriculum, while providing students with memorable experiences that inspire curiosity, creativity and confidence. It is a week where learning comes to life, memories are made and one that our students look forward to every year.

Headline figures and highlights include

- Over 210 Y7 students attended the ‘Ultimate Adventure’ Residential
- 120 Y8 students spent three days exploring ‘Big London’
- 120 Y9 students completed their Bronze Duke of Edinburgh assessed expedition
- 34 Y10 successfully completed their Silver DofE Expedition assessed expedition
- Over 230 Y10 students spent the week on work experience
- 40 Post16 students spent the week in Krakow

The programme was further supported by over 40 members of the local community, from the Air Ambulance to the Rotary Club volunteers. The feedback about our young people was so positive. To quote one of our visitors, about the students he had worked with

‘ Clearly they are a credit to their parents, but also very much to the school. Those I saw will go a long way! When I hear politicians carping on about 'broken Britain’ I think about young people such as I met today. With such wonderful youngsters Britain will never be broken! ‘

The success of this programme is a real testament to the passion and dedication of our staff, the enthusiasm and positive attitude of our students, and the support of the wider community in helping facilitate what I am sure you will agree is a great and beneficial programme for our young people. As there is so much to share we have put together a separate [gallery](#) where you can see information about what each year group were up to.

Careers and Work Experience

Year 9 spent a day of Enrichment Week completing virtual work experience with Tesco. They took on the roles of product designers and marketing executives as they designed, pitched and promoted their new breakfast meal deals. We were blown away by their teamwork and creativity, although a bit surprised by some of their unusual breakfast combinations!

Year 10 were released into the world of work with over 200 students out on work experience placements. We are thrilled with the feedback from the students and their employers, and are extremely proud of what they have achieved.

Year 10 students not out on placements completed a range of careers themed activities including virtual work experience with Tesco, CV writing and interview skills, and mock interviews with real employers. We had wonderful feedback from the employers that conducted the interviews.

Year 12 students also completed mock interviews with employers and received equally glowing feedback.

We are going to be supporting our Y10 and 12 students to find work experience placements again next year so if you or someone you know could potentially host a work experience placement for one of our students please let us know - dow-wex@cset.co.uk

Design and Technology

Our Year 8 students have recently showcased their fantastic baking skills in Food Preparation & Nutrition lessons by creating a range of beautifully decorated cupcakes.

Students began by making their sponge mixture using the creaming method, carefully combining ingredients to achieve a light and fluffy texture. Throughout the practical lessons, they demonstrated excellent food preparation skills, paying close attention to accuracy.

Once their cupcakes were baked, students were given the opportunity to express their creativity by choosing and designing their own decorations. The results were truly impressive, with a wide variety of colourful and imaginative designs on display. Many students showed great attention to detail, ensuring their finished products looked as good as they tasted.

Particularly impressive was the confidence and skill shown by some students who chose to use piping techniques to decorate their cupcakes. Their precision and patience produced professional-looking results that they should be very proud of.

It has been wonderful to see Year 8 develop both their practical skills and creativity throughout this project. Their enthusiasm, effort, and determination



were evident in the high standard of work produced, and they should be congratulated on creating such amazing finished products. Well done, Year 8!

Another group of Year 9 students have recently completed a creative textiles project, designing and making their own imaginative Mad Hats. The students developed original ideas while exploring a variety of enrichment techniques, including decorative stitching, appliqué, and embellishment.

Constructing the hats required a high level of accuracy, with students carefully measuring, cutting, and assembling their designs. The finished hats showcased not only creativity and imagination but also excellent technical skills and attention to detail.



We are very proud of the impressive range of outcomes and the enthusiasm shown by all students throughout the project.

Year 8 students have been unleashing their creativity and engineering skills in Design and Technology with Mr. Pearce. Over the past few weeks, the classes have dived into the fascinating world of paper mechanisms, learning how flat sheets of card can be transformed into dynamic, three-dimensional structures.

Through hands-on projects, students explored

the core principles of paper engineering, mastering techniques such as V-folds, internal stands, and rotary mechanisms. They put their newfound skills to the test by designing and constructing their own interactive pop-up cards. Mr. Pearce praised the year group for their sharp focus, excellent spatial awareness, and the imaginative themes they brought to life in their final designs.

Our Year 10 Design and Technology students have been super busy. With Mr Pearce they have been stepping into the future of manufacturing. This term, the classes have transitioned from theoretical concepts to hands-on digital production by mastering Tinkercad, an



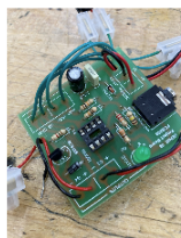
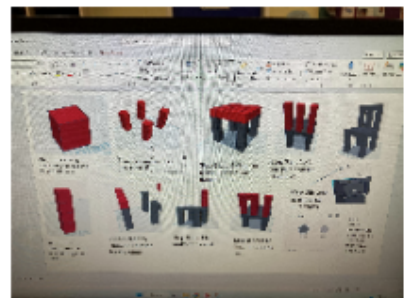
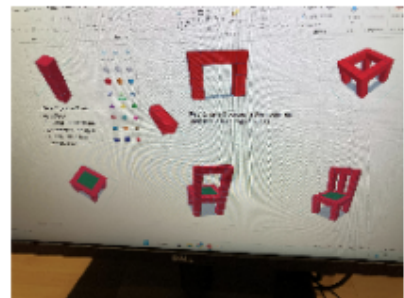
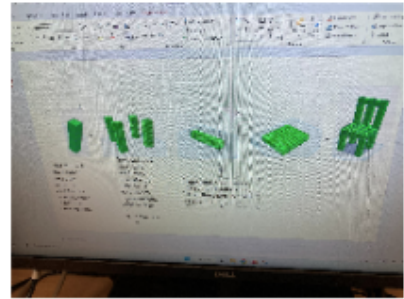
industry-entry computer-aided design (CAD) software. The students faced the exciting challenge of designing and producing a fully functional, custom 3D-printed keyring.

Through this project, they learned critical engineering skills, including:

- Spatial Geometry: Combining, subtracting, and manipulating 3D shapes in a digital workspace.
- Tolerance and Scale: Measuring precise dimensions to ensure the keyrings are durable and practical.
- 3D Printer Slicing: Understanding how digital files convert into layer-by-layer physical plastic prints.

Mr. Pearce has been incredibly impressed by the innovation on display. Students successfully integrated complex geometric patterns, personalized typography, and even multi-part interlocking elements into their final products. The project has given Year 10 a fantastic insight into modern industrial design and the power of rapid prototyping.

In other year 10 classes they have been elevating their technical drafting skills with Mr. Pearce. This week, the classroom transformed into a modern design studio as students used Tinkercad to reverse-engineer and blueprint a three-dimensional chair.



Rather than just building a digital model, the students faced the advanced challenge of creating comprehensive, step-by-step working diagrams. This rigorous process required them to think like professional industrial designers, mastering several key technical skills:

- Orthographic Projection: Translating a 3D object into precise 2D front, side, and top-down plan views.
- Exploded Assembly: Creating sequential diagrams that visually demonstrate how individual chair components fit together.
- Dimensioning & Scale: Applying exact mathematical measurements to ensure the furniture proportions are structurally sound.

Mr. Pearce praised the cohort for their technical precision and patience. Navigating the transition from a 3D digital workspace to a flat, step-by-step instruction

manual requires immense spatial awareness. The resulting working diagrams are of an exceptional standard, showcasing Year 10's readiness for advanced design engineering.

With Mr Commane Year 10 has been shedding light on electronic engineering. The classes have been diving deep into practical electronics, setting up and experimenting with LDR (Light Dependent Resistor) circuits to explore the relationship between different inputs and outputs.

An LDR changes its electrical resistance based on light levels, making it the perfect tool for students to investigate automated technology. Working in teams, Year 10 systematically altered the physical inputs and carefully measured the resulting outputs, mastering several core scientific principles:



- Sensing Inputs: Using torches and shadows to simulate day and night, observing how resistance drops in bright light and spikes in the dark.
- Variable Outputs: Connecting the LDR to various output components, including variable-pitch buzzers and LED lights.
- Real-World Automation: Configuring the circuits to act as automatic night-lights that activate instantly when light levels drop below a specific threshold.

Mr. Commane praised the students for their excellent circuit troubleshooting skills, precise use of multimeters, and strong grasp of Ohm's Law. This hands-on investigation has given Year 10 a fantastic, practical understanding of how modern sensors power the automated world around us.

In other DT classrooms Year 10 students have been busy fusing digital creativity with modern manufacturing alongside. This term, the workshop has operated like a professional design studio as the cohort took on the challenge of drafting and manufacturing their own custom mobile phone docking stations.

Students took complete control of the production pipeline, starting from flat concepts and moving all the way to physical products. Throughout the project, they mastered several high-level industrial skills:

- CAD Drafting: Navigating the intricacies of 2D Design V3 software to draw out their geometric shapes, slotting joints, and personalised engraving paths with mathematical precision.
- CAM Programming: Transforming their digital lines into instructions for the workshop's laser cutter, learning how color-coded vectors tell the machine whether to engrave a pattern or cut completely through the material.
- Material Testing: Ensuring their interlocking acrylic or timber pieces fit together perfectly by accounting for the laser's kerf (the width of the laser cut).

Mr. Pearce was incredibly impressed by the variety of innovative solutions on display, with designs ranging from minimalist, sleek desk organisers to complex, multi-angled docks with built-in cable management. The project has given Year 10 invaluable, hands-on experience in how Computer-Aided Design and Manufacturing (CAD/CAM) drive modern industry.

Science

We are incredibly proud of our A-level Biologists and Chemists, who recently stepped up to compete in the prestigious British Biology Olympiad and the Cambridge Chemistry Challenge.

These elite competitions are designed to push students well beyond the A-level syllabus, introducing complex concepts typically found in undergraduate degree courses. Our students embraced this challenge with remarkable determination and achieved outstanding results, bringing home an impressive haul of certificates:

- Biology Olympiad: Gold, Silver, and two Bronze awards.
- Cambridge Chemistry Challenge: 2 Gold and 4 Copper awards.

Taking on these extra assessments requires immense dedication, critical thinking, and a genuine passion for the sciences. To all the students who took part, congratulations on these phenomenal achievements! Your hard work and academic excellence have truly shone through.

Common Connections Project

Over the course of the year we have been reporting on the various projects that have been taking place to support our school community through educational activities in helping to understand and improve the environment. This has included the planting of the wildflower meadow, bulbs, and the environmental poster competition.

The Common Connections project has provided the school with support to make these opportunities possible for our community. The project contacted us last week to say the following:

‘As the Common Connections Project draws to a close in August, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you, your staff, and most importantly your students for being part of the project.

It has been a pleasure working alongside your school to create and improve green spaces, helping to make them more welcoming for both people and wildlife. The enthusiasm, ideas, and hard work

shown by your students have made a real difference, and we are incredibly grateful for their contribution.'

Through the school's involvement we have been presented with a Common Connections Project Plaque which was awarded last week to students who have been involved. Art Downend School we would like to extend our thanks to the project as our students have learnt so much and got so much from the project. We would also like to thank Lynette Jackson (Education support assistant) who has been a driving force behind these wonderful opportunities.



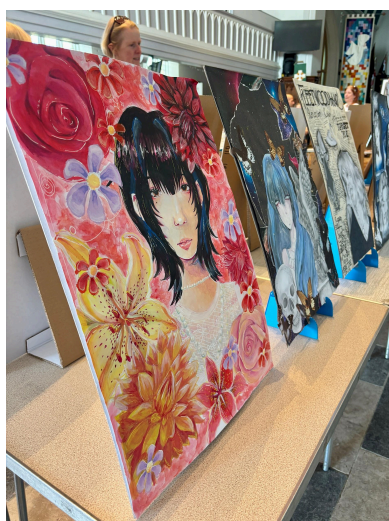
Celebrating Creativity Art and Photography Exhibition

Our GCSE (Year 11) and A Level (Year 13) Art and Photography Exhibition celebrated creativity, dedication, and artistic achievement. Showcasing two years of hard work, it gave students the chance to share their personal journeys and creative outcomes with the school community, families and friends.



The exhibition held at Christchurch Church in Downend featured an impressive range of artwork created across a variety of disciplines, including painting, drawing, sculpture, textiles, mixed media, digital art and photography. Each display reflected the students' individual interests and ideas, exploring themes such as identity, memory, culture, nature, beauty, architecture and the world around them.

Throughout their courses, students researched the work of historical and contemporary artists, photographers and craftspeople, developing their own ideas through experimentation, refinement and thoughtful evaluation. Their final outcomes demonstrated not only technical skill but also creativity, confidence and a strong sense of personal expression.



The exhibition was a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our young artists and photographers. It reflected the pride, resilience, imagination, determination, and excellence they had shown throughout their studies and provided a fitting conclusion to their GCSE and A Level courses.

We are incredibly proud of everything our Year 11 and Year 13 students have achieved and congratulate them on producing such thoughtful, ambitious and inspiring bodies of work. We wish them every success as they continue their creative journeys and look forward to seeing what they accomplish in the future.

Thanks also to Mr Smith for booking the exhibition space at Christchurch and liaising with the local community, Mr Thompson, Mrs Munro, and Mrs Whitcombe-Say for preparing the work and special thanks to Martin and Jim for doing all the bits behind the scenes that no one ever sees.

Music Concert

Our Summer Music Concert was a wonderful celebration of the incredible musical talent, dedication and hard work of our students. The evening showcased a wide variety of ensembles and soloists, providing something for everyone to enjoy.

The Pops Orchestra performed the ambitious Pick Up the Pieces alongside the contrasting colours and technical challenges of Debussy with confidence and maturity. The Lads' Choir performed Rhythm of Life with great energy, while Downend Singers gave the premiere of Year 10 student Oliver K's moving arrangement of Flashlight before whisking the audience through a joyful Sound of Music medley.

Our instrumental ensembles were equally impressive. The String Ensemble gave expressive performances of Adiemus and the spirited La Piragua, while the Woodwind Ensemble delighted with La Cantina from Star Wars and a rich, chocolatey rendition of What a Wonderful World. The Guitar Ensemble brought plenty of flair with Apache and Gershwin's I Got Rhythm, and the Flute Ensemble produced a beautifully blended sound in Country Gardens and The Sailor's Hornpipe.

One of the highlights of the evening was a superb performance from our student band—Daisy A, Joey T and Morgan D (Year 10), alongside Daniel S (Year 11)—who impressed the audience with an original song full of style and confidence, followed by a fantastic Beatles cover. We also enjoyed outstanding vocal solos from Erin D (Year 8), Darcy B (Year 10), Chloe H (Year 11) and Ishmael G (Year 12), while Edward R (Year 9) captivated listeners with a cool Blues clarinet solo.

The concert concluded with a fitting farewell to two exceptional Year 13 musicians. Euan M gave a dazzling performance of Chopin's Minute Waltz on the piano, while Joey B delivered a moving and nuanced rendition of Max Bruch's Kol Nidrei on the cello, expertly accompanied by our own Mr Pitts. Their performances were a reminder of the remarkable musical standards they have helped to establish during their time at the school, and we wish them every success as they move on to the next stage of their musical journeys.

Thank you to all of our performers, staff and families for making the evening such a memorable celebration of music.

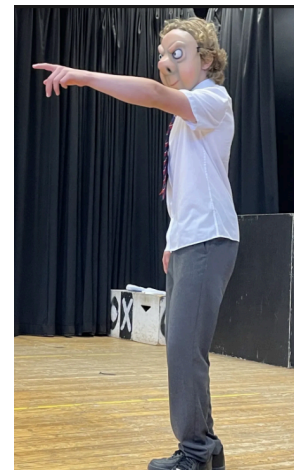
LGBTQIA+ Pride Celebrations

The Downend School Pride event was as fun and lively as ever! Students, parents, and teachers thoroughly enjoyed creative activities like making bracelets, cards, and badges. These crafts, alongside a scrumptious bake sale, helped us raise £64.00 for the UK-based LGBTQ+ cancer charity OUTpatients.

Filled with joy and celebration, the day was sound-tracked by our very own talented DJ Jeff. Thank you to everyone who attended and got involved—we are already looking forward to next year!

Drama

This term our fantastic Drama Club students performed poems in groups, focusing on choral voice and movement, which was a lovely way to finish the year. Drama Club is a safe environment for students to take creative risks and the students have been full of enthusiasm, energy and ideas. The Year 10 Drama students have also been integral to the success of Drama Club, by encouraging, mentoring and supporting the attendees.



Alongside completing their mocks and exploring our set text 'Noughts & Crosses', the Year 10s took part in a mask workshop. They learnt about the rules of performing in a mask such as putting your mask on facing away from the audience and 'clocking' so that we do not lose the illusion of the character. The Year 10s rose to the challenge and entertained

their audience, effectively communicating much more than simply the fixed emotion of the mask.

Sixth Form Leadership Update

From September, the Sixth Form will be led by Mr Alex Garner, as Kate Long moves into her new role as Assistant Headteacher within the main school. Both current Year 12 students and Year 11 applicants

have already been informed of the change. Mr Garner is delighted to be taking on the leadership of the Sixth Form and looks forward to supporting students through this exciting stage of their education.

Year 6 Transition

Over the course of this term we have been welcoming the 240 new year 7 students to Downend. Coming from over 20 local Primary schools, they have all visited for the main transition day which despite being in the really hot week was a huge success. The students demonstrated that they are ready for the move to secondary school as well as already showing how they will be living the Downend Pride values. We are looking forward to supporting them in the next stage of their education and excited to get to know them when they start on Friday 4th September for their transition day.

Term time dates for 2026/2027 and Inset dates

This is just a reminder of the term dates and inset dates for next academic year.

The term dates for **2026/2027** are:

Term 1: 3/9/26 - 23/10/26	Term 2: 2/11/26 - 18/12/26	Term 3: 4/1/27 - 12/2/27
Term 4: 22/2/27 - 25/3/27	Term 5: 12/4/27 - 28/5/27	Term 6: 7/6/27 - 23/7/27

It is important to highlight that the term dates **do not** align 100% with South Glos Local Authority dates (start of term 1 and end of term 6 are different) and therefore if you have a child in another school which is not within the CSET academy, these dates will be different.

The INSET Days for 2026-27 are as follows:

Thursday 3rd September*
2026

Friday 2nd October 2026

Monday 2nd November

Monday 4th January 2027

Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th April 2027

Monday 5th July 2027

Last year we trialled some half INSET days. We can confirm that all INSET days this year are full days and there are no half INSET days.

Next Term's Key Dates

3rd Sept	First day of term for staff: INSET Day (1)
4th Sept	First day of term for year 7 and 12 (Induction day)
7th Sept	First day of term for whole school
10th Sept	Open Evening -Early Closure for all Students (at 12.25pm)
15th Sept	Community Council Meeting (1)
17th Sept	Year 12 Information Evening
24th Sept	Year 7 and 13 Tutor Evening
2nd Oct	INSET day (2)
22nd Oct	Post 16 Open Evening
23rd Oct	Last day of term 1