



# WELCOME TO DOWNEND SCHOOL

*Downend School*

## PARENT NEWSLETTER: End of Term 1

23rd October, 2026

### Head's Messages

As we reach the final day of this term, I wanted to take a moment to look back on everything our school community has achieved. It has been an incredibly busy, productive, and rewarding term which has included open evenings and tours, parents information evenings, settling in meetings, the launch of Year 10 work experience and the start of the auditions and rehearsals for the school production. Every day, our students continue to inspire us with their curiosity, resilience, and the demonstration of our PRIDE values in action, and I am immensely proud of the progress they have made. I hope you enjoy reading and looking at the pictures included in this newsletter which is a round up of many things happening across the school both in and outside of lessons.

I wish you all a wonderful half term in which you can all find some time to rest, relax and recharge ready for term 2 which starts for students on Tuesday 3rd November (Monday is an inset day).

Rachael Corns (Headteacher, Downend School)

### Music

Some say it is never too early to think about Christmas, that is certainly true at this time of year in the music department. While most people are packing away their shorts and T-shirts as summer becomes a distant memory, the music department is in full swing with practicing carols and other festive gems.

Our ensemble rehearsals are in full swing and our musicians are busy preparing for the Christmas concert which will take place on Thursday 17th December. The concert is always a wonderful evening that showcases all of the school Pride values in action.

If your child would like to join an instrumental ensemble or choir, or be a part of a rock band, it is not too late! They can come along to any rehearsal and try it out. Contact Mrs Muir, Head of Music if you have any questions. All are welcome!

## Art



Year 8 students have been getting creative in their independent learning Art project this term. The theme was the Mexican Day of the Dead festival which is following on from the work they've been looking at in class.



methods including tonal drawing, collage, 3D model making, painting, sewing, crochet and cake decorating.





## Sport

After the excitement of last year's success in the ESA competition Downend have been straight back into football action this term in the National Cup. It has been a very busy period with a mix of results.

The **year 7** boys team made their debut into the competition. After having a bye in round 1 the boys came up against a strong team from Royal Wootton Bassett who came away with a 3-1 victory.

Off the back of their champions title from last year, the **year 8** boys have made a strong straight to this year's campaign to retain their crown. In rounds 1 to 3 they have scored an impressive 17 goals. This includes a 7-1 victory against Cotham, 6-1 victory to Hans Price and a 4-1 win against Chew Valley.

The **Year 9 and 10** boys competitions have both been exciting affairs with 2 matches going to penalties. The year 9 team had a bye in round 1 before facing a well matched side in St Peter's. After an exciting match it was St Peter's who came away with the victory, winning 3-1 on penalties. The Year 10 boys had a similarly challenging contest in Round 1 with Redland Green but this time it was Downend who came out victorious winning 3-2 on penalties. Round 2 will see the year 10 boys face Orchard School.

The **P16** team have also been in action this term. After a 4-0 win against Chew Valley in round 1 their winning ways were ended in round 2 when they faced a strong team from The Kings of Wessex who put away 5 goals to Downends 1.

The Girls football teams have been very busy this term with Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 all in the national cups. The **Year 7** girls made an excellent start to the competition with a 6-1 win over Millfield Prep school.

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Their second round match is scheduled for the start of term 2 against Denmark Road so we look forward to reporting on that result in the coming weeks.

**Year 8** girls have been on a goal fest, scoring 11 goals and conceding 0 in their last 2 matches. In round 1 they faced Five Acres who they beat 3-0 and in round 2 they beat King's Oak 8-0.

The **Year 9** girls have had mixed fortunes. Following a bye in round 1 they faced Archway and slotted away 7 goals without conceding any. Unfortunately in round 3 the tables were turned and a very strong Gordano scored 8 to our 1.

The **Year 10** girls are yet to start their competition having been given a bye in round 1 and 2. Round 3 sees them face Cleeve School which is scheduled for the first week back after half term. We wish all of the teams the best of luck for their competitions.

### **Boys Rugby**

The Rugby season has started this term and it has been pleasing to see good numbers at training. Our year 7, 8 and 10 teams have also had the chance to play some matches. Our year 7's were the first to play with a 35-15 win over SBL. Our Year 8's were not so fortunate and conceded a last minute try to lose against the same opposition 15-20.

After the narrow defeat to SBL the year 8's traveled to Mangotsfield for matches against Mangotsfield and SBL. Downend beat Mangotsfield 15-0 but were unable to avenge the previous week's defeat to SBL going down 15-10.

### **X-Country**

On Thursday 15th October Downend hosted the annual X-Country event which saw schools from the whole of South Gloucestershire in attendance. The event ran incredibly well and the weather was superb for this time of the year.

## **RPE**

This term has been packed with exciting enrichment opportunities for our RPE students. Our Year 10 and Year 11 GCSE students enjoyed a series of engaging workshops delivered by Encounter Christianity, helping them deepen their understanding of key topics from the GCSE Religious Studies course, including Crime and Punishment and Peace and Conflict. Year 11 students also had the opportunity to take part in a traditional Christian marriage workshop led by Paul, Vicar of Christ Church Downend, which brought their learning to life and provided valuable insight into Christian beliefs and practices.

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Meanwhile, Year 10 GCSE students welcomed Xander, a youth worker from Christ Church Downend, who led an interactive Q&A session and facilitated thoughtful debates on a range of philosophical and ethical issues linked to the GCSE curriculum. Students asked excellent questions and demonstrated impressive critical thinking throughout.



To round off the term, our A Level Religious Studies students attended a subject conference where they heard from leading speakers and scholars on key areas of the OCR specification, including Religious Experience, The Person of Jesus Christ, and The Problem of Evil and Suffering. The conference provided students with valuable subject knowledge, academic insights, and exam-focused guidance as they continue their studies.

We are incredibly proud of our students, who represented the school brilliantly and embraced every opportunity to extend their learning beyond the classroom. We look forward to more exciting experiences in Term 2!

### **Friday 16 th October – Fair Trade Visit**

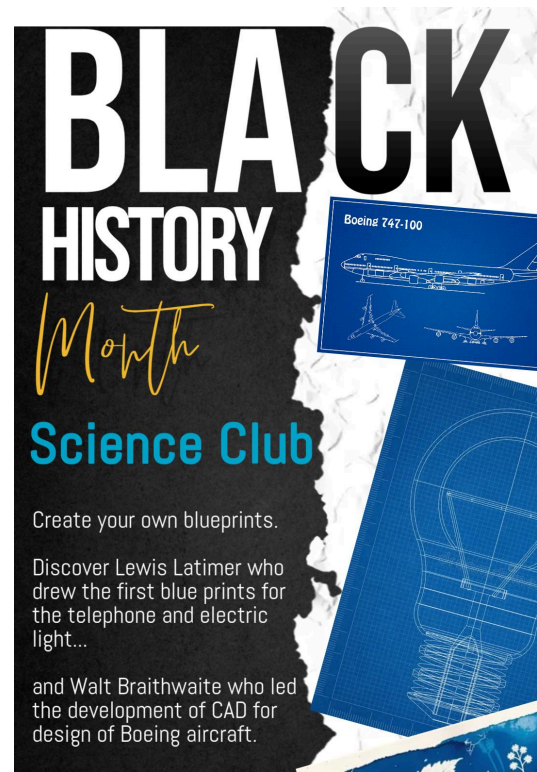
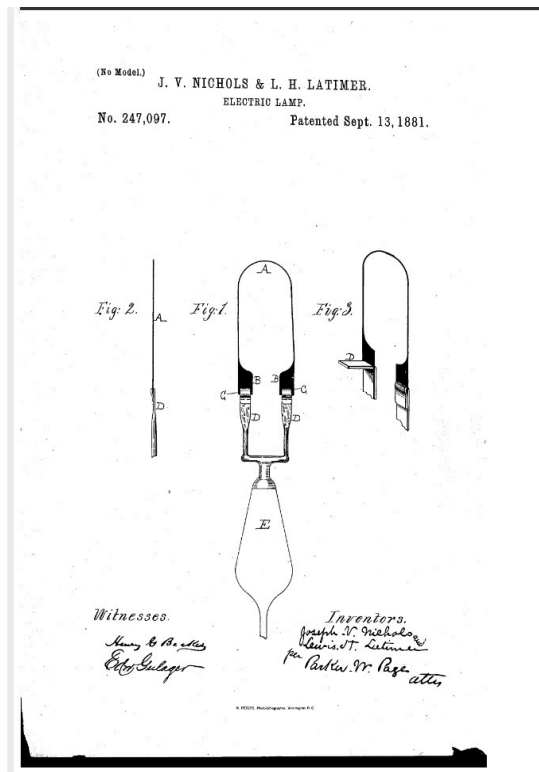


On Friday 16 th October, students took part in a joint Geography and RPE workshop with a special guest from Fairtrade, Yesenia, who is a farmer. She shared her personal story, giving students a valuable insight into the challenges and opportunities faced by farming communities around the world. Students learned about the importance of Fairtrade in supporting farmers, promoting sustainable practices, and ensuring fair prices for their produce. The workshop provided a meaningful real-world connection to topics studied in both Geography and RPE, encouraging students to think about global responsibility, social justice, and the impact of consumer choices.

## **Science Club 2026**

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To celebrate Black History Month students have been learning about the work of Lewis H. Latimer, born in Chelsea, Massachusetts, September 4, 1848. Latimer was one of the first major African American inventors. He first worked as an assistant to Alexander Graham Bell, drawing the blueprints for Bell's patent for the telephone in 1876.

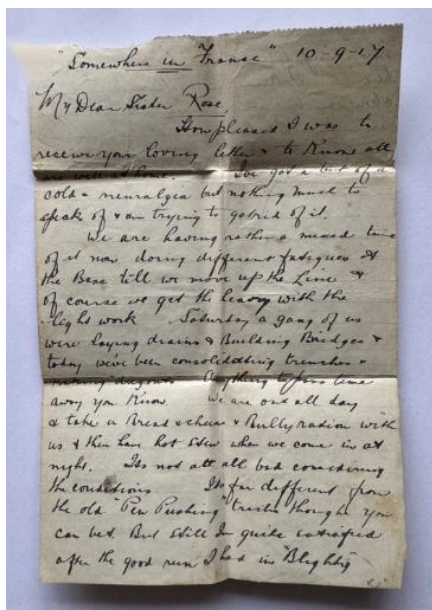


Without Lewis Latimer, the literal blueprints for the telephone, the long-lasting light bulb, and the urban power grid would not have existed. Students have used science and creative design to produce their own blueprints.

If you would like to know more about Science Club please speak to Ms Bowlt or Mrs Momber, or just come along to S3, Tuesdays after school.

## History Enrichment

Year 9 have been studying World War One this term and 9y3 were treated to a visit from a parent who brought in a fascinating letter from a Great Great Great Uncle of one of our students. Horatio Milican was killed during the Passchendaele in November 1917. Students were able to see the letter and listen to a reading of it. What struck us all was not just the details of the trenches but the humanity of the



writer. His main concern was that he wanted his family to look after their mother. We're planning to invite Mr Wheeler back to share the letter with other Year Nine Groups. So a big thank you to him for his visit.

## What his days were like

### Work

Laying drains, building bridges, strengthening trenches and digging dug-outs at the base camp.

### Food

Bread, cheese and "bully" (tinned corned beef) taken out for the day, then hot stew back at camp at night.

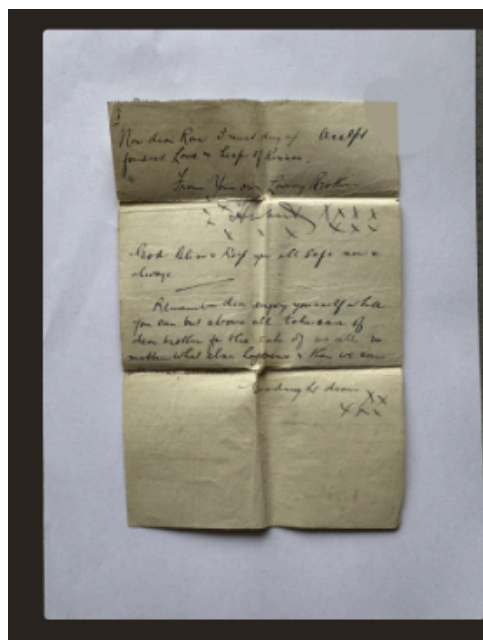
### Waiting

Sleeping in a tent, with a cold and "neuralgia" (sharp nerve pain in the face), waiting for orders to go "up the line" to the front.

### Parcels from home

A parcel from the family arrived "so acceptable after weeks without any such things as it contained".

"It's not at all bad considering the conditions."



*"God Bless & Keep you all safe now & always."*

He signed off "From Your own Loving Brother, Herbert" with rows of kisses, just like we end our messages today.

**We will remember him.**

## Sixth Form

This term has been just as busy in Post 16 as it has been in the main school. Year 12 have been finding their feet with the new routines and independence that being a sixth form student brings and the teachers have been highly impressed by their engagement and enthusiasm. Year 13 have quickly settled back into their courses and the demands that come with A levels. The buzz of chatter around Post 18 options has been wonderful to hear as they talk passionately about their aspirations and next steps. Next term will be a busy term of applications and preparation for them. If at any point you have any questions or feel your child needs support please don't hesitate to contact us.

## P16 Open Evening

On Thursday 22nd October we held our Post 16 Open evening. It was fantastic to see so many of our current students attend alongside students currently studying at other centres. Although the Post 16 centre is part of Downend School we welcome students from any centre. For more information about Post 16 study at Downend and the application process please visit the dedicated section of the school website: <https://www.downend.com/Sixth-Form/>

## DT

Independent learning is a school improvement priority and within Textiles they have been using term 1 independent learning to examine and explore different designers and creating mood boards. Some of these you can see below.

## Drama

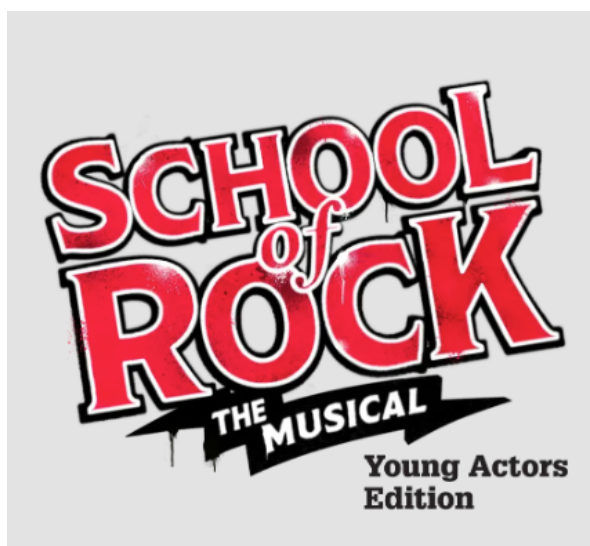
This term our Year 11s have been exploring their set text, *Noughts & Crosses*, through puppetry. The students learnt how to make paper puppets and then how to give them breath and movement.





However, the big news from the Drama and Music departments is the launch of our school show; School of Rock! The response has been fantastic and reflects the students' huge desire for a musical! With a cast of 73 students and a backstage crew of 15, we certainly have our work cut out, but the enthusiasm and dedication the cast and crew have shown so far makes it all worthwhile.

A production of any scale is a huge undertaking but one which will provide wonderful experiences for the students and staff involved and memories that will live on way beyond the final curtain call. If you can help in anyway e.g. with specific services, skills or sponsorship please do get in touch via [dow-admin@cset.co.uk](mailto:dow-admin@cset.co.uk)



## STEM

On Thursday this week 60 year 7s spent the day working with a visitor from the Smallpeice trust (that is spelt correctly!) The day started with designing, building and testing a glider, learning about prototypes. After evaluating the gliders, we moved onto a team challenge where each student had a designated role including marketing, electronics engineer, project manager and lead build engineer.



In the afternoon they used a variety of tools to build their final aircraft design out of balsa wood, before a test flight. Students all showed so much enthusiasm, had lots of great ideas for their designs and learnt



about the skills needed for STEM careers including perseverance and team work.

## Free Breakfast - Message from Morrisons

With many families facing increased financial pressure over the October Half Term, we'd like to highlight a nationwide initiative that could provide immediate support in your local community. We're delighted to let you know that throughout the October Half Term, families can access free Kellogg's breakfasts in all Morrisons Cafes everyday.

Families visiting their local Morrisons Café throughout the October half term holidays can enjoy a free 'Kellogg's Breakfast', which includes a bowl of cereal and a portion of fruit. The best part, it's not just for kids, adults get to eat completely free too. Both kids and adults can choose from much-loved favourites Corn Flakes or Rice Krispies, topped with their choice of dairy or non-dairy milk and a free apple or banana. The October holiday offer will be available from 12th October to 1st November across all Morrisons Cafes nationwide.

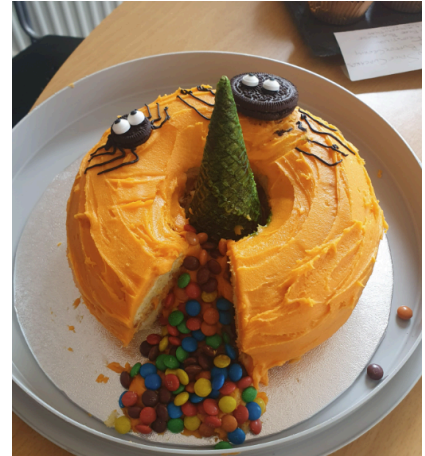


## Halloween Bake Off

It isn't just the students who have been busy this term. Introduced by Mr Joinson (Head of Art) at the start of the year, Cake Club has become a regular fixture in the staff calendar with departments taking

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it in turns to bake (or buy) cake to share in the staffroom. It all got a little competitive this week with the Halloween Bake off competition.



The cake competition was a lovely event to bring staff together and who doesn't like a bit of cake especially when they are as amazing as these ones. It was also used as a fundraiser for St Peters Hospice which staff raised £100.

## Term time dates for 2026/2027 and Inset dates

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

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

|                                      |                            |                          |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Term 1: <del>3/9/26 - 23/10/26</del> | 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 |

**The INSET Days for 2026-27 are as follows:**

~~Thursday 3rd Sept~~

~~Friday 2nd Oct 2026~~

Monday 2nd Nov 2026

Monday 4th Jan 2027

Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th April 2027

Monday 5th July 2027

All INSET days are full days and there are no half INSET days

**We will be in a position to share the term dates for 2027/2028 during term 2.**

## Next Term's Key Dates

|          |                                                                                |
|----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2nd Nov  | Inset day                                                                      |
| 3rd Nov  | First day of term 2 for students<br>Year 11 PPE 1 begin (for the next 2 weeks) |
| 11th Nov | South Glos School cross country                                                |
| 13th Nov | Girls EFL Cup qualifier Year 7 and 8                                           |
| 16th Nov | Year 11 and 13 Art collection                                                  |
| 17th Nov | Community Council meeting 2                                                    |
| 18th Nov | GCSE Art mock (18/11, 19/11, 20/11)                                            |
| 23rd Nov | KS3 road safety event                                                          |
| 26th Nov | Year 12 Parents evening                                                        |
| 27th Nov | Y10 GCSE Food students trip to Good Food show                                  |
| 2nd Dec  | Y7 and 8 Boys football trip to Milfield School                                 |
| 8th Dec  | Y7 Boys rugby festival                                                         |
| 10th Dec | Year 11 Parents evening                                                        |

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|----------|---------------------------------------------------------|
|          | Y8 Boys rugby festival                                  |
| 14th Dec | Y13 Criminology controlled assessment (14th - 16th Dec) |
| 17th Dec | Christmas Concert 6.30pm - 8.30pm                       |
| 18th Dec | Final day of term 2.<br>Students finish at 12.25pm      |

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