

Downend School

PARENT NEWSLETTER

20th November, 2026

Head's Messages

It is hard to believe we are already approaching the halfway point of this term. I want to start by saying a massive well done to Year 11 on completing their first round of PPEs (mocks). We know a huge amount of preparation went into these exams, and subject teachers will be supporting students with feedback in class over the coming weeks. These results provide a snapshot of where students are right now and a helpful indicator of their trajectory for the summer. However, it is important to remember that much more progress can still be made through continued good attendance, commitment, hard work, and dedication.

It has also been wonderful to see students across Years 7 to 10 working so hard in their lessons and throwing themselves into all the wider opportunities and extracurricular activities available to them. In particular, Year 7 have truly settled into school life, while Year 10 have risen to the challenge of their new GCSE courses. Our school production of School of Rock is also really taking shape, with students showing huge dedication to rehearsals, it promises to be a real treat for audiences in the new year.

Meanwhile, there has been a lot of excitement in Year 11 around next steps, with applications still open for our Post-16 provision as well as other local colleges. Similarly, Year 13 have been busy exploring their Post-18 options, with many currently preparing their UCAS personal statements. While this is an exciting time, we recognise that planning for the future can also feel daunting. Choosing a Post-16 or Post-18 pathway is just as significant as selecting a secondary school. If you or your child would like any advice or support with these decisions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

This newsletter is a series of important notices, information and reminders. The end of term newsletter will be the round up of all the wonderful things that are taking place. Included in this one are the Christmas arrangements, although it may feel earlier it is important that the dates and events are known.

Rachael Corns (Headteacher)

Student Voice - Message from Caterlink

The following opportunity has been shared with the student body to gather feedback for Caterlink who provide our canteen facilities. We encourage all students to participate in the survey as it is an opportunity to share their views on the food offer and dining experience within their school. It takes approximately 5 minutes to complete and will provide us with valuable feedback on what pupils enjoy, as well as where we can make improvements. The survey is open until 20th December.

Class Charts

Now that we have Classcharts well embedded and established within school, we will be making some changes to the negative categories of behaviour that can be seen by parents/carers. At present, both 'defiance' and 'anti-social behaviour' logs are not automatically sent to parents. From Monday 23rd November, these logs will be opened and you will be notified should your child receive one of these behaviours.

Community Safety

We work closely with the local police and our high expectations of students are expected both in school and out in the community. We have received the following letter which Avon and Somerset police have asked us to share.

We are writing to ask for your support in keeping children and young people safe and ensuring families understand the law around privately owned electric scooters (e-scooters). We are increasingly seeing children and young people using privately owned e-scooters to travel to and from school and in other public places. While e-scooters are widely available to buy, this does not mean they can legally be used in public.

What does the law say?

Privately owned e-scooters cannot legally be ridden on public roads, pavements or in public spaces such as parks. They can only be used on private land with the permission of the landowner. The rules for authorised rental e-scooters are different. Rental e-scooters operating within an official scheme may be used in accordance with the conditions of that scheme.

What could happen?

Using a privately owned e-scooter in public can result in enforcement action. This can include; seizure of e-scooter, reporting riders to court , reporting parents or guardians where circumstances indicate

offences relating to permitting unlawful use, potential points on driving licence for those who hold one and impact on future driving licence applications and insurance premiums.

The financial implications of recovering a seized e-scooter can be significant, with recovery and storage fees often exceeding the value of the scooter itself. Riders could receive a fine and penalty points, and the e-scooter may be seized by police.

Safety Concerns

Alongside the legal issues, there are serious safety concerns surrounding the use of e-scooters. Many e-scooters are capable of travelling at considerable speeds and hospitals across the UK are reporting increasing numbers of injuries linked to e-scooters. These range from minor cuts and bruises to serious and life-changing trauma. Importantly these injuries not only affect riders. Other children walking to school, pedestrians, and cyclists can also suffer injury.

Our message to parents and carers

With birthdays and Christmas often bringing new bikes, scooters and other forms of transport, we are encouraging parents and carers to think carefully before purchasing an e-scooter for a child or young person. If you do purchase one, please be clear with your child about where it can legally be used. In particular, children should not be riding privately owned e-scooters to school, as doing so will ordinarily involve riding in a public place.

Our aim is not to criminalise young people. Our aim is to prevent harm, improve road safety and avoid children and families facing unnecessary consequences because they were unaware of the law.

Thank you for your support in helping us keep children and young people safe.

Best regards,



Sarah Crew QPM, Chief Constable



Clare Moody, Police and Crime Commissioner

Online safety / wellbeing

As you will have heard from the news, your child or other online sources, Grand Theft Auto VI (GTA 6) has just been released. We know that everyone has a different opinion when it comes to gaming, some people love it, while others really dislike it, but for many young people and adults alike, it is a big part

of their free time and hobbies. While we understand the excitement surrounding one of the biggest gaming launches in years, we want to share the following link which contains some useful information that parents / carers should be aware of. https://www.breckfoundation.org/post/gta-6-is-coming-what-parents-and-carers-need-to-know

In school, one of the biggest challenges we see is how disrupted sleep, often caused by late-night phone and console use, affects students' attendance, mood, and ability to concentrate in class. We encourage all parents and carers to stay aware of their child's online and gaming habits, agree on clear screen-time boundaries at home, and use tools like parental controls to help stick to them.

Mental Health and Well being Support

It is likely that at some point in everyone's life they may need to reach out for support. This may be from friends, family or their wider network of support at school. There are many organisations which can help with support from home and the attached information will help link you and your child to these fantastic sources of help.



November newsletter Postcard of support

In addition support can also be found at Mind which has a new, all age 24/7 text chat plus emotional support telephone service.

To get support, Text Hello to 80899 (or click the live chat bubble in the bottom righthand corner of website: Mindline South West Text and Chat | Mind in Somerset) for free, confidential mental health support, whenever you need it.

Mindline South West Text and Chat is a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week text and webchat service offering confidential mental health crisis support, offering translation including BSL. It's run by Mind in Somerset, working in partnership with local Minds across the South West of England.

What to expect

Every message is answered by a trained member of our support team. We treat everyone with equality, dignity and respect, and without judgement whoever you are, whatever you're going through. Our staff keep the focus entirely on you; they won't share details about themselves or their own experiences. Beyond the immediate crisis, we can help you find local crisis intervention services and put you in touch with your nearest Mind for ongoing support.

End of term Arrangements

The final week of term includes the Christmas dinner for students on Wednesday 16th and Thursday 17th December. A separate communication was sent last week regarding how to book your child's Christmas dinner. There are 2 different days due to the number of students and the canteen being able to accommodate every student that wishes to have Christmas dinner on that day. If your child does not want to have Christmas dinner other items will still be on sale but the selection will be reduced for these two days.

The Christmas concert which is always an absolute treat is on Thursday 17th December. We hope to see lots of you there to enjoy the music from our talented students and get into the festive spirit.

This term finishes on Friday 18th December at 12.25pm for students. This day will be a non-uniform day which will be in aid of Save the Children and our local food banks. Please see the poster below for more details.

On the last day of term students will be in normal lessons period 1 and 2 and then with their tutor groups for house celebration events period 3. This is an opportunity for each house to celebrate the wonderful things that students individually and collectively within their houses have been doing over the course of the term. Students will then leave school to start their Christmas break at 12.25pm.

Staff Thank you

The end of a term is a good opportunity to send a little message of thanks to staff. Working in education is extremely rewarding but equally it is tough. There are many things that staff do that make school a fantastic place for students to learn and that little bit of recognition goes a long way. If you have a member of staff (please remember teachers, teaching assistants, student support, admin or site team) that you would like to say 'thank you' to or just want to thank everyone, please send your message in to dow-admin@cset.co.uk by Wednesday 16th December. Every message is shared with the staff on the last day of term during our staff Christmas dinner. Your words of thanks go a long way.



Last Day of Term: Friday 18th December

This day will be a non-uniform day which we are terming 'Jeans for Beans'. You can wear non uniform with Christmas jumper/accessories if you would like. In return we kindly ask for donations for the local food banks, or a monetary donation in aid of Save the Children.

Donations for the food bank can be handed in to main reception, student support or to your tutor / head of house. Donations for the foodbank are being accepted until **Friday 18th December.** Suggested donations include:

- Tins of food
- Dried pasta
- Cooking sauces
- Savoury snacks
- Fruit juice (not fresh)
- Long life UHT milk
- Washing powder (small boxes)
- Washing up liquid
- Toilet rolls and personal care items e.g. shampoo, deodorant.

As food banks have a lot of donations before Christmas we will be delivering these donations at the start of January. This will help replenish their stocks. Therefore we politely ask people to avoid donating Christmas themed items where possible.

If you would prefer to make a monetary donation, please bring in **cash on Friday 18th December** which tutors will collect.

Our aim of the day is to provide donations to help make the start of the new year a little bit better for local families who are finding it difficult.

*NB you can wear things other than Jeans and you can donate food other than beans!

Reminders:

- **Term time dates for 2026/2027 and Inset dates**

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

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.

- **Term dates for 2027/2028**

We will be following the South Gloucestershire term dates for the academic year of 2027/2028. These are as follows:

Term 1: 1/9/27 - 22/10/27	Term 2: 1/11/27 - 17/12/27	Term 3: 4/1/28 - 11/2/28
Term 4: 21/2/28 - 31/3/28	Term 5: 18/4/28 - 26/5/28	Term 6: 5/6/28 - 21/7/28

Inset dates will be confirmed in the near future.

- **Reporting student absence**

If your child is too unwell to attend school or has a medical appointment which will mean they miss all or part of the day please contact the following:

Year 7 to 11 Email: dow-studentabsence@cset.co.uk or phone: 01454 862395

Post 16: 01454 862333

- **Class Charts**

If you have not yet set up your account we encourage you to do so. The following guide will help with setting it up but please do contact us if issues with access continue.https://www.downend.com/docs/Parent_Guide_to_Class_Charts__2_.pdf

- **Online platforms**

Please find links to some useful 'how to' guides on our website here, including for Google, the main platform we use for email, file storage and setting work: https://www.downend.com/Online-Platforms/.

- **Scopay** - Please make sure that your child's account is kept topped up if you wish them to use the canteen facilities.
- **What will my child be learning at school?** (Links for the curriculum maps):
  - Years 7, 8 and 9: http://www.downend.com/KS3-Curriculum/
  - Years 10 and 11: https://www.downend.com/KS4-Curriculum/.
  - Years 12 and 13: https://www.downend.com/Curriculum/

This Term's Key Dates

23rd Nov	KS3 road safety event
24th Nov	Community Council meeting 2
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 Y8 Boys rugby festival Aachen trip (10th - 12th Dec)
14th Dec	Y13 Criminology controlled assessment (14th - 16th Dec)
16th Dec	Student Christmas Dinner (1)
17th Dec	Christmas Concert 6.30pm - 8.30pm Student Christmas Dinner (2)
18th Dec	Final day of term 2 Students finish at 12.25pm Non uniform and / or Christmas accessories day for students and staff