



Year 11 Newsletter

Issue: 1 - Monday 21st September 2026

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been wonderful to welcome Year 11 back this term and to see them settle into the new academic year. There are busy times ahead and we wanted to take this opportunity to share information relating to term 1 so that you can support your child over the next few weeks with planning for Post-16 and getting organised with revision, ready for the upcoming PPEs.

Parents & Carers Information Evening

We hope you will join us on **Tuesday 6th October, 6–7pm** for our Year 11 Parents & Carers Information Evening, held **in person in the main hall**. The session will cover practical ways you can support your child as they prepare for their mock exams (PPEs) and GCSEs, including revision planning, effective study strategies, and guidance on self-care and wellbeing during busy periods.

To reserve a seat, please complete the [Google Form](#). We look forward to welcoming you.

Tutor time revision: retrieval practice

Retrieval practice is a simple but powerful, evidence-based way for students to learn. It involves regularly recalling previously taught information, which strengthens memory over time and makes it easier to remember later. As a school, we use retrieval practice routinely in lessons (for example, through 'Do Now' starter quizzes) and encourage students to use the same approach when revising independently.

This year, KS4 students will continue to have dedicated tutor-time materials to practise retrieving core English, maths and science content. This helps them revise regularly ahead of PPEs/GCSEs and builds a life-long study habit they can use independently.

Getting organised with Google

Students should now be confident using Gmail, Google Calendar and Google Classroom. There is a Year 11 Google Classroom called '**Year 11 2026/27**' where key information about revision, mocks and careers will be posted throughout the year. Subject departments will continue to use their own Google Classrooms for homework.

All Year 11 students should get into the habit of checking Google Classroom daily to complete Independent Learning and to see when their careers appointment is. We also advise students to check their emails every day. Gmail alerts them to new Classroom posts, and staff may contact them directly via email.

Google Calendar is an excellent organisational tool: students can see their lessons, mock exam dates and coursework deadlines. All Google apps can be accessed on a smartphone, tablet, laptop or desktop.

Term 1: Researching Post-16 options

Throughout Term 1, Year 11 will explore Post-16 options during tutor time using *Unifrog*, a one-stop careers and pathways platform. It provides information on local courses, training and apprenticeships, as well as useful tools such as personality and interests quizzes, a CV builder and interview guidance. Students can access Unifrog at any time, so please encourage them to continue their research at home.

Parents and carers can also create an account at www.unifrog.org/parent. You can sign in using your email address (or Single Sign-On via Microsoft or Google), but you must use the same email address you provided to the school.

Further guidance on supporting your child with Post-18 options will be shared by our careers team soon.

Below are the topics your child will be exploring on Unifrog during tutor time this term. Please discuss these with them to support their decision-making.

Week	Topic
1	Lesson 1 Personality Quiz
2	Lesson 2 Interests Quiz
3	Lesson 3 P16 Choices
4	Lesson 4 A-Level choices
5	Lesson 5 Vocational Courses
6	Lesson 6 Apprenticeships
7	Independent research on favourite careers & Post 16 intentions

Downend 6th Form Open Evening

We are extremely proud of our Sixth Form and the excellent results our students achieve each year. Last year, every Year 13 student secured their first or second choice destination, with many progressing to medicine, Russell Group universities, apprenticeships or employment in areas they are passionate about.

Our dedicated Sixth Form centre gives students independence while still maintaining the strong relationships they have built with staff at Downend. We offer a wide range of courses, from traditional A-levels and Level 3 vocational subjects (Maths, English, Sciences) to subjects students may be encountering for the first time (Psychology, Sociology, Criminology).

Our Sixth Form Open Evening takes place on **Thursday 22nd October**. This is an opportunity to learn more about our courses and speak directly with subject teachers. Further information is available on our website: <http://www.downend.com/Sixth-Form/>.

Mr Garner, Head of Sixth Form, will deliver a Year 11 assembly on **Monday 19th October** to explain the application process and what to expect from the Open Evening. More details will also be shared in this newsletter. In the meantime, if you have any questions about our courses, please just ask.

Post-16 Open Days

Schools, colleges and training providers are now sharing information online about their open days and course applications. Please encourage your child to be proactive and explore these websites so they can gather detailed information about the subjects and courses they are interested in.

They will need to check the **entry requirements** for any course they are considering, including how many GCSEs are needed and at what grades. It is also very helpful to visit the places they may apply to, so they can get a sense of the environment and decide whether it feels like the right fit.

Making Post-16 applications

Please note that Post-16 applications are made directly by you and your child — they are **not** processed through the school. However, we are here to support your child whenever they need guidance.

Students can apply to more than one provider and choose which offer to accept later. Your child is very much in the driving seat. We recommend that all students have both a first and second choice for September 2027.

One to one careers interviews

Every Year 11 student is entitled to a careers appointment, whether they already know their next steps or are still unsure. Appointments began last week, and students are informed of the time and location via Google Classroom.

Our friendly, trained careers adviser from Compass Careers meets with each student to discuss their options and help them identify the right pathway. After the appointment, a personalised careers action plan will be sent home to support further conversations and planning.

Important dates 2026/27

Below is a list of important dates for the diary. Currently, it does not contain the interim and final deadlines for Non-Exam Assessment (NEA)/ coursework, which will be confirmed in due course for those subjects with this requirement.

Tuesday 6 October	Yr 11 Parents & Carers Information Evening
Friday 2 October	INSET Day
Thursday 22 October	Downend Sixth Form open evening
Monday 2 November	INSET Day
Tuesday 3 November	PPE1 begins (1st round of mocks)
Start of December	Progress Review 1 issued
Thursday 10 December	Yr 11 Parents Evening 1
Monday 4 January	INSET Day
Monday 1 February	PPE 2 begins (2nd round of mocks)
w/c 22 February	Food & Nutrition practical exams
Middle of March	Progress Review 2 issued
Wednesday 24 March	Yr 11 Parents Evening 2
Monday/Tuesday 12/13 April	INSET Days
w/c 12 April	French & German speaking exams
w/c Monday 10 May	Written GCSE exams begin