

The Downs News—12th January 2024

— WELCOME — BACK TO SCHOOL

We would like to welcome all our families back to the school and also welcome our new families into the community!

Reading Sessions

We had our first reading sessions this week, thank you to those parents who were able to attend. Please be advised as of next week, the reading sessions for Reception will be changing to Tuesday afternoons (starting Tuesday 16th January).

We have also changed on session for Year 1 and Year 2 due to the INSET day on Friday 26th January. The session will instead take place on Thursday 25th January at the usual time.

Year 6 Leavers' Garments

Children in Year 6 can now order their Leavers' Garments via Lofty Creations. A letter was sent earlier this week containing all the relevant information and how to order.

Parents' Evenings.

Parents' Evenings for this term will take place on Wednesday 14th February and Thursday 15th February. You can now book your space via [SchoolCloud](#). If you have any issues accessing the site please contact the school office. Nursery will also be holding Parents' Meetings, please see the letter sent this week for the dates and times.

Year 4 Multiplication Check Parent Meeting

This week we sent a letter regarding the upcoming Year 4 Multiplication Checks. We will be hosting a parent meeting to discuss how the tests work, how we will be supporting the children and how parents can help support their child. Please see the date and time on the final page of this newsletter.

Year 6 SATs Parent Meeting

This week we sent a letter regarding the upcoming Year 6 SATs. We will be hosting a parent meeting to discuss how the tests work, how we will be supporting the children and how parents can help support their child. Please see the date and time on the final page of this newsletter.

Governor

I am writing to all parents to inform you of a vacancy for the role of a parent governor on our local governing body. For further information and how to apply, please complete the form on the link below no later than Monday 29th January.

[Parent Governor Application](#)

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Message from the PTA

The PTA would like to thank all of the children who took part in The Xmas for school and ordered things from their site, by doing this we have raised £126 for the school which will be invested towards some new reading books.

Our Christmas party was a great success and we thank everyone who helped and attended. Santa was very busy that evening and shows that The Downs school children have been very good.

The PTA has 3 members who plan events and make it happen, all 3 members are parents and only 1 member works in the school; another is a Governor. We love planning and organising events because we love to see the children happy. however 3 members is not enough, and we have to always rely on and ask for help from other members of staff.

We are in desperate need of parent helpers so we can have bigger events. Being part of the PTA is also a fantastic opportunity to make friends and get to know the school more. Becoming part of the PTA we often end up being a support circle for each other and build friendships which are for life. I remember walking in to the staff room during the PTA Christmas party and there were parents who were helping at the event, sitting there eating pizza and laughing with the staff; I've never seen parents not wanting to leave the school! Those kind of memories are priceless for the kids and you.

Please get in touch and join us!

friendsofthedowns@downs.essex.sch.uk

Or come and speak to Miss Ramanauskaite in cedar class.

Miss Ramanauskaite

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Census Day

On Thursday 18th January, we have our School Census Day.

Each term we are asked to provide data via the School Census. The School Census collects data from primary schools, secondary schools, special schools, maintained nurseries and academies as well as pupil referral units.

The data is collected to help develop a picture of the education and sector and how well it is performing. It is also needed to provide core funding for schools, this funding includes children who are eligible for Pupil Premium, children in receipt of Universal Free School Meals (Reception to Year 2), provide support for disadvantaged children and free early years entitlement allocations.

We are providing a themed lunch on Thursday 18th January. Each child who takes up a school lunch on Census Day provides funding for the school, therefore we would like to encourage as many children to enjoy one of the options on the menu. (Menu can be found on the next page).

Information about what data items are included in the census is available [here](#).

As you know the Government's Universal Free School Meals initiative means that all children in Reception and Key Stage 1 are entitled to a free meal. However, children in Key Stage 2 (Year 3 to 6) must apply to receive this.

If you are claiming any of the following benefits you may still be able to claim Free School Meals for you child by completing an application at www.essex.gov.uk/free-school-meals

To be eligible you must be receiving one of the following:

- Income Support
- Income based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Child Tax Credit (not Working Tax Credit) with an annual income below £16,190
- Pension Guaranteed Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance, income related
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Working Tax Credit run on, paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit
- Universal Credit, with a household income of £7,400 or less (after tax and not including any benefits you get)

As a school, we can claim extra funding for children who are entitled to Free School Meals. This funding is called Pupil Premium and is used in a variety of ways to support children in their learning. This funding continues to be paid to the school for 6 years (or as long as your child attends the school), even if you stop claiming the above benefits.

Even if your child will be having packed lunches, please still claim Free School Meals if you are entitled to, as this will allow us to access the Pupil Premium funding.

If you don't claim Free School Meals, we cannot claim Pupil Premium. School budgets have been cut for the last few years, so it really is essential that we are able to access this extra funding to support your child.

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In order for us to claim this additional funding please provide the following details via the online form. This will enable the Local Authority to make an assessment to confirm if our school qualifies to receive this funding for your child.

Voluntary Registration for Pupil Premium

In the past, families in receipt of Free School Meals have received school meal vouchers during the school holidays.

Please note this check will not affect any benefits you are claiming.

For more information about how we use Pupil Premium funding please go to our website at www.downs.essex.sch.uk 'About Us' 'Pupil Premium', where you will see our pupil premium expenditure reports.

Thank you in advance for this information and your support.



Census Day Special Menu
Thursday 18th January

Main meal
Spaghetti bolognaise (H)

Vegetarian
Cheese pizza

Menu B
Jacket potato with cheese/bolognaise

Sides
Garlic bread/Salad bar

Dessert
Waffles

GF DF and Halal options available

Please support the school on Census day and allow your child to have a school lunch. Every penny counts!

LUCA

Team Spirit—12th January 2024

Children are able to earn Team Points for their house by working together and showing a good team spirit. Children who have been awarded for Team Spirit are as follows.

| | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|
| <u>Dragon</u> CJ in Birch Ryan in Hazel | <u>Griffin</u> | <u>Lion</u> Mia in Mulberry Chenay in Elm Harper in Cedar Myley C in Willow | <u>Unicorn</u> Mihai in Larch Ephraim in Maple Abdullah in Sycamore Amir in Aspen Newton in Chestnut Ishan in Rowan |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|

Stars of the Week—12th January 2024

To children who have really shone in class and impressed a member of staff.

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Riley in Acorn | Olivia in Sycamore | Beatrix in Birch |
| Mihan in Mulberry | Sharon in Aspen | Lucy in Willow |
| Dolly in Elm | Shania in Cedar | Lilley in Hazel |
| Conor in Larch | Amelia in Rowan | |
| Henry in Maple | Harrison in Chestnut | |



| <u>Total House Points for 2023—2024</u> | |
|---|-------------|
| <u>Dragon</u> | 5296 |
| <u>Griffin</u> | 5548 |
| <u>Lion</u> | 5485 |
| <u>Unicorn</u> | 5253 |

Diary Dates for Spring Term

| | |
|--|---|
| Thursday 18th January | School Census Day |
| Friday 19th January | Year 4 Multiplication check Parent meeting— 2:45pm |
| Monday 22nd January | Year 6 SATs Parent Information Meeting— 2:45pm |
| Friday 26th January | INSET Day—School Closed to children |
| Wednesday 31st January | Oak Class Assembly—Parents invited—please see the letter Doors will open at 9am ready to start at 9:10am |
| Thursday 1st February | Hazel Class Assembly—Parents invited— please see the letter Doors will open at 9am ready to start at 9:10am |
| Tuesday 6th February | E-Safety Day |
| Wednesday 7th February | Birch Class Assembly—Parents invited— please see the letter Doors will open at 9am ready to start at 9:10am |
| Thursday 8th February | Willow Class Assembly—Parents invited— please see the letter Doors will open at 9am ready to start at 9:10am |
| Wednesday 14th February | Parents' Evening—3:30pm—7pm |
| Thursday 15th February | Parents' Evening—3:30pm—6pm |
| Friday 16th February | Non-Uniform Day |
| Monday 19th February—Friday 23rd February | Half Term |
| Monday 26th February | Children return to school |
| Friday 8th March | INSET Day—School Closed to children |