

Newsletter | Friday 26th September

Welcome back

A very warm welcome back to all our families as we begin another exciting school year! We are especially delighted to welcome our new Nursery, Reception, and all new families joining our school community. It's wonderful to see so many eager faces ready to embark on a year of learning, growth, and fun. Following our incredibly positive OFSTED inspection, which all staff are incredibly proud of, we are more committed than ever to creating a positive, nurturing environment where every child can thrive. We look forward to working together with all our families to make this another successful year for everyone. Here's to a fantastic year ahead!



Girls Football

Last week, girls from Years 4 and 6 visited Passmores School for a football tournament.

They all showed great spirit and sportsmanship and represented the school superbly. Mr Esteves was extremely proud of every single one of them!



Reception Highlights – A Fantastic Start to Phonics and Our Topic 'All About Me'

This week, our Reception children have made an exciting start to their phonics journey! They've begun learning their first letter sounds, focusing on how to form each sound correctly and exploring words that begin with the sound of the day. The children have enjoyed decorating sounds and using peg boards to create and practise making the sounds in fun, hands-on ways.

Alongside phonics, we've been diving into our topic for this term: 'All About Me'. The children have been exploring what makes each of us special and unique. We've had thoughtful discussions about how we are all different — including the types of homes we live in, the languages we speak, and the things we enjoy.

As part of this topic, we've also been learning about friendship — what it means to be a good friend and how we can show kindness and respect to one another in our classroom community.

It's been a wonderful start to the term, and we're so proud of how confidently the children are settling in and engaging with their learning!



A Strong Start to the School Year – Thank You!

We're delighted to share that a significantly higher number of children are arriving on time this year compared to last. This is a fantastic improvement, and we want to extend a heartfelt thank you to all parents and carers for your continued support and commitment.

Your efforts in ensuring your children arrive at their classroom doors by 8:40am each morning make a real difference to their day — setting them up for success from the very start.

As we continue to focus on improving attendance across the school, we look forward to working in partnership with you. Every minute of learning counts, and your dedication is truly appreciated.

A few reminders to help keep mornings running smoothly:

- Classroom doors open at 8:40am – please ensure your child is ready to enter at this time.
- Doors and gates close promptly at 8:50am. After this time, you will need to take your child to the school office, where they will be marked with a late code.
- Arrivals after 9:20am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.



Applying for Secondary School – Applications for September 2026

For parents of Year 6 children, it's time to apply for secondary school places! Open days and evenings for secondary schools have been shared on Dojo and via email through Arbor. If you need assistance with your application, please visit the school office, where a member of our team will be happy to help. You can apply for a secondary school (year 7) place between **12 September 2025 and 31 October 2025**. To apply, please follow this link: [Secondary School Application](#).

Applying for Reception 2026.

For parents of children due to start Reception in 2026, applications for a primary school place in Essex can be made between **10 November 2025 and 15 January 2026**. If you need assistance with your application, please visit the school office, where a member of our team will be happy to help. Please note that if you live in a neighbouring county, such as Hertfordshire, you will need to apply through your local council's website, not via Essex County Council. To apply for a Reception place, please use the following link: [Primary School Applications](#).



Free School Meals – Are You Eligible?

All children in Reception, Year 1, and Year 2 automatically receive universal free school meals. From Year 3 onwards, meals are only free if your child qualifies under the Free School Meals criteria. If your child has recently joined our school, you will need to re-apply to ensure that their funding is received by the correct school.

Parents of children currently in Year 2 and Year 6 will also need to apply for Free School Meals for when their child moves into Year 3 or Year 7. Please note, this application cannot be made until 1 August 2026. Mrs Randall will send out a reminder to parents nearer the time.

We regularly check Free School Meal eligibility and may contact you to confirm your National Insurance number and date of birth. This helps us ensure that all students are receiving the support they are entitled to.

To check if you're eligible and to apply, visit: [Free School Meals - Essex County Council](#).

Year 6 Residential – Danbury 2026

We are excited to be returning to Danbury for our annual Year 6 residential trip next year! This is always a fantastic opportunity for pupils to build confidence, develop independence, and create lifelong memories with their classmates. Mrs Randall has recently sent out an email of interest, along with details about the deposit, which must be paid by Wednesday 1st October to secure your child's place. Following the deposit, payments will be split into manageable instalments to help ease the overall cost. If you choose to send your child, please ensure that all instalments are paid on time. We can't wait for another memorable adventure!



Parking and Road Safety Reminder

We kindly ask all parents and carers to drive at a sensible speed in the school car park to ensure the safety of our children, families, and staff. Please also make sure you are parking responsibly around the school, avoiding driveways, garage entrances, and any areas that may block access for residents. We have been made aware that some parents have recently received parking tickets near the school entrance. Unfortunately, the school is unable to assist in these situations, so we encourage everyone to follow local parking regulations to avoid any issues. Thank you for helping us keep our school community safe and respectful.

Getting in Touch – The Best Way to Reach Us

To help us respond to your queries as efficiently as possible, we kindly ask that all communication is directed through the appropriate channels. For general enquiries, please email the school office at admin@downsschool.com. If you need to contact your child's teacher, please use the Class Dojo app.

We kindly ask that you do not email staff directly via their work email, as these accounts are not monitored regularly for parent communication. Thank you for your understanding and support!

We're Now on Instagram! 🎉


We're so excited to announce that The Downs Primary School and Nursery is now on Instagram! Come and join us on our journey where we celebrate the amazing work, smiles, creativity, and achievements of our brilliant children! From fun classroom activities to exciting events and proud moments, we'll be sharing snapshots that showcase just how fabulous our school community truly is. ❤️

 Scan our QR code below to follow us on Instagram:

 @thedownsprimaryandnursery



We'd absolutely love for all our parents and carers to follow, like, and share our page with friends and family. Let's spread the word and show off what makes our school so special! 🌈 ✨

 A reminder: we've sent a consent form via the Arbor App - please make sure to give your consent if you're happy for your child or their wonderful work to appear on our Instagram.

Let's make our Instagram shine with everything that makes The Downs Primary and Nursery such a fantastic place to learn and grow! 🙌

BBC Casting.

We've been asked to share the below flyer for a new series of 'Clean it, Fix it'. If you are interested in applying with the BBC, please contact them directly. All information can be found below.



**BBC 1's
'CLEAN IT, FIX IT'
IS CASTING FOR A
5TH SERIES!**


Is your home in need of some cleaning and fixing?
Would a guiding hand help you take on the projects you don't have the confidence to attempt yourself?
Do you need help and creative ideas to make big changes on a limited budget?
Whether you rent or own your property, we'd love to help!
We're looking for households who want to fix up, de-clutter and clean their homes.

Please contact us at:
CIFICasting@curvemedia.com
or scan our QR code

Clean It, Fix It application 53

curvemedia

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Stars of the week

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



Acorn – Alessia, Ella
Holly – Lucia
Elm – Harper, Evie, Bella
Larch – Gabriel, Hollie, Adwaith
Maple – Edwin, Hunter, Sumayah
Sycamore – Roman, Gabriels, Siyana
Aspen – Sienna, Kaff, Kiera
Cedar – Chenay, Aina, Tofunmi
Chestnut – Abel, Isaac, Milo
Rowan – Darasimi, Erin, Poppy
Birch – Ruben, Syed, Aiden
Willow – Luca, Amelie, Nyrah
Hazel – Ethan, Lucy, Laiba
Oak – Joshua, Piotr, Stanley



Positive Behaviour Badge

Children are able to earn a positive behaviour badge by having exceptional behaviour. Children who have been awarded for behaviour are as follows.

Dragon	Griffin	Lion	Unicorn
Tahama - Larch	Emaan - Sycamore	Nina - Elm	Elisha - Cedar
Ava - Birch	Humaira - Apsen	Hannah - Maple	Gabriela - Rowan
Gwen - Elm	Charlie - Chestnut	Leonidas - Cedar	Callie - Willow
Olivia - Chestnut	Leigh-Anna - Hazel	Jamari - Chestnut	Farhad - Oak
Eva - Larch	Noah - Maple	Stefan - Willow	Mihan - Sycamore
Sofia - Maple	Amal - Aspen		Hayden - Oak
Dixie - Sycamore	Kamil - Rowan		
Tyler - Aspen	Amelia - Willow		
Ann Maria - Rowan	Mai-Mai - Hazel		
Jude - Hazel	Ryan-Nathan - Holly		
	Thomas - Elm		
	Millie - Birch		

Diary Dates for the Autumn Term



All events are subject to change

Thursday 2 nd October	Census Day
Tuesday 7 th October	Individual/Sibling Photos
Thursday 9 th October	World Mental Health Day
Monday 20 th October	Parents Evening
Monday 20 th October	Reception 2026 Open Morning 9:30am
Tuesday 21 st October	Reception 2026 Open Morning 9:30am
Tuesday 21 st October	Parents Evening
Wednesday 5 th November	Reception 2026 Open Morning 9:30am
Thursday 6 th November	Reception 2026 Open Evening 5pm
Friday 7 th November	Reception 2026 Open Afternoon 2pm
Tuesday 11 th November	Year 3 & 4 Cinema Trip
Wednesday 12 th November	Year 5 & 6 Cinema Trip
Wednesday 12 th November	World Kindness Day
Tuesday 18 th November	Year 1 & 2 Cinema Trip
Thursday 23 rd October	INSET Day
Thursday 23 rd October – Friday 31 st October	Half Term
Monday 3 rd November	Children return to school
Friday 14 th November	Children in Need
Thursday 27 th November	Reception 2026 Open Afternoon 2pm
Monday 1 st December	Reception 2026 Open Afternoon 2pm
Wednesday 10 th December	Rocksteady Christmas Concert
Tuesday 16 th December	Reception Nativity
Tuesday 16 th December	KS2 Christmas Carols in the playground
Wednesday 17 th December	Nursery last day
Wednesday 17 th December	Christmas Dinner Day
Wednesday 17 th December	KS2 Christmas Carols in the playground
Wednesday 17 th December	Christmas Jumper Day
Thursday 18 th December	Christmas Parties
Friday 19 th December	Non School Uniform Day
Friday 19 th December	School finishes at 13:30pm
Friday 19 th December – Monday 5 th January	Half Term
Monday 5 th January 2026	INSET Day
Tuesday 6 th January 2026	Children return to school