

# Newsletter | Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> October

## Staffing Update

We would like to let you know that Ms McCabe will be leaving The Downs at the end of this half term. Ms McCabe has been a much-valued member of our staff for the past nine years, making a tremendous contribution to school life.

In addition to her dedication in the classroom, she has given her time generously to organise and lead a wide range of activities. From social events to charity initiatives such as the unforgettable Colour Run, all of which have greatly enriched our school community.

From the start of next half term, Mrs Baugh will be taking over Sycamore Class. Many of you will already know Mrs Baugh, who is familiar with both the children and the routines of the class. Her knowledge and experience will ensure a smooth transition and continued stability for the pupils.

We are sincerely grateful for Ms McCabe's commitment, energy, and care over the years. I'm sure many children and families will join us in wishing her every success and happiness for the future.

## Fire Safety Visit

We were delighted to welcome the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, who visited pupils in Years 1-4 to talk about fire safety.

They spoke to the children about how to stay safe at home and in the community, with a special focus on upcoming events such as Bonfire Night and Halloween. The sessions were engaging and informative, helping the children to understand the importance of being careful around fire and fireworks.



## Fireworks Code

- Only buy fireworks marked CE
- Don't drink alcohol if you're responsible for setting off fireworks
- Keep fireworks in a closed non-flammable box
- Follow the instructions on each firework
- Light them at arm's length, using a taper
- Stand well back
- Never go near a firework that has been lit. Even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode
- Never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them
- Always supervise children around fireworks
- Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves
- Never give sparklers to a child under five
- Keep pets indoors
- Don't set off noisy fireworks late at night and never after 11pm

To support these important messages at home, please see the safety information, provided by the Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

## Exploring Autumn in Reception

In Reception, we've been learning all about the changes in the weather and discovering the wonderful season of Autumn. The children have been spotting the signs of autumn and using natural materials to create some fantastic artwork - including hedgehogs, autumn collages, and cozy hedgehog nests.

We also had fun exploring colour mixing to paint our very own beautiful autumn trees. It's been a creative and exciting way to celebrate this colourful time of year!



## The Downs Choir is back!

We're excited to announce that our school choir will be restarting after half term! Rehearsals will take place on Wednesdays after school until 4:15pm.

Choir is free and open to all children in Years 3–6. This year, we're aiming for our biggest and best choir yet!

In previous years, our choir has performed at Young Voices at the O2, the Harlow Music Festival at the Town Park, the Playhouse, and for our local community. This year, we'll be performing alongside other primary school choirs from our trust at Passmores Academy in February. The theme will be "Voices Through Time", featuring songs from The Beatles, Queen, Bruno Mars, and KPop Demon Hunters, among others.

Looking ahead to the summer, we'll also be taking part once again in the Harlow Schools' Music Festival. The theme is yet to be revealed, but you can expect a fantastic mix of well-loved classics that the children will really enjoy singing.

We can't wait to see lots of enthusiastic singers joining us after half term!

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Mrs Baugh and Mrs Stoyanova



## 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](#).



## **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! 🙌

## **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](#).

### **Healthy Snacks and Hydration Reminder**

To help our students stay focused and energized throughout the day, we encourage healthy snacks and plenty of water at school.

Please send your child to school with a filled water bottle each day. Staying hydrated supports concentration, learning, and overall wellbeing.

A reminder that we are a nut-free school, so please ensure that all snacks and lunch items are free from nuts and nut products. Sweets and chocolate bars are not allowed. Thank you for supporting us in making our school a healthy, safe environment for everyone!

### **Essex SENDIASS – Support for Children and Young People with SEND**

Miss Finch (SENCo) and Miss Baker (Assistant SENCo) would like to share the following information with families. Essex SENDIASS (Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service) offers free, confidential and impartial advice to children and young people (0–25) with SEND, as well as their parents and carers. The service helps families understand their rights and the support available in education, health and social care — including EHCP assessments, school support and resolving disagreements. You can contact Essex SENDIASS directly for information, advice or to book a consultation by calling 01245 204338 or visiting [www.essexsendiass.co.uk](http://www.essexsendiass.co.uk).

### **School Meals and Breakfast Club Payments**

We'd like to remind all parents and carers of the importance of keeping your child's meal and Breakfast Club accounts topped up on Arbor. Wherever possible, accounts should remain in credit or with no outstanding balance.

Keeping accounts up to date helps us ensure that all children can continue to enjoy their meals and Breakfast Club places without disruption.

If a balance becomes over £10 in arrears for Breakfast Club, your child's place will unfortunately be suspended until payment is made. For school lunches, if the balance reaches over £10, you will be contacted by email and asked to provide a packed lunch until the debt has been cleared.

Mrs Randall will be in touch with families where payments are outstanding.




If you need any help using Arbor or making a payment, please don't hesitate to visit the school office, where a member of staff will be happy to assist you.

Thank you for your cooperation and support in keeping accounts up to date.

## Children in Need – Friday 14th November!

Get ready for a fun-filled Friday! We're joining in with Children in Need on Friday 14th November, and it's going to be a non-school uniform day! Come dressed in your favourite outfit, bright colours, or even something spotty to show your support. If you'd like to make a donation to this amazing cause, you can do so through our JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/page/thedownsprimary-childreninneed?newPage=true>. Let's make a difference together while having lots of fun! 🎉🐻





**Hello there!**

My name is Shereen Devaux, I am an Educational Mental Health Practitioner.  
I work for the Mental Health Support Team in Schools

**Mind in West Essex**

I work with parents in primary schools whose children may be experiencing anxiety or displaying challenging behaviour at home. I also work within school delivering support for small groups interventions and whole class sessions.

**Parent Led 1:1 Support**

- Helping your child with fears and worries; Learn ways to support your child when they're feeling scared or worried, like helping them face their fears bit by bit and teaching them how to relax and think positively.
- Challenging behaviour at home; Discover practical tips to handle difficult behaviour from your child, including using praise effectively, setting clear rules, and finding better ways to talk and listen to each other.


**Whole Class Support**

- Brain Buddies - focusing on understanding and looking after ourselves within the zones of regulation. This intervention takes place over 6 weeks, with a follow up session and is aimed at years 4-6
- Emotions Explorers - focusing on the recognising the zones of regulation within ourselves and how to manage the big emotions. This intervention takes place over 6 weeks is aimed at years 1-3
- Transition & Exam Workshops - One-off sessions supporting Reception parents, Year 1 transitions, Year 6 transition to secondary, and Year 6 exam stress.

**Small Group Support**

- Looking after my wellbeing - helping children build confidence and feel good through small daily actions that boost well-being
- Mind Masters (KS2) - 4-week group developing positive thinking, confidence, and understanding of unhelpful thought patterns.
- Building Positive Relationships (KS2) - 4-week group exploring healthy relationships, conflict resolution and emotional regulation.
- Friendships (KS1) - 4-week group helping children understand what makes a good friend, manage conflict and build confidence.

If you'd like support for your child, you can speak to a member of school staff (SENCO, Pastoral or Safeguarding Lead).



## Stars of the week

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



<b>Acorn</b> – Albert, Aadav
<b>Holly</b> – Mahira, Benett
<b>Elm</b> – Harrison, ViennaRose
<b>Larch</b> – Eshaal, Viktor
<b>Maple</b> – Jayonlee, Mahmood
<b>Sycamore</b> – Zackary, Momid
<b>Aspen</b> – Sienna, Esther
<b>Cedar</b> – Grayson, Amos
<b>Chestnut</b> – Sahej, Ayan
<b>Rowan</b> – Elsie, Ava-Jane
<b>Birch</b> – Nikita, Ruben
<b>Willow</b> – Callie, Mila
<b>Hazel</b> – Hajra, Jacob
<b>Oak</b> – Jessica, Piotr

## 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
Junior - Maple	Mila - Willow	Aarav - Cedar	Momid - Sycamore
Maeve - Aspen	Leigh-Anna - Hazel	Suzi-Ley - Holly	Sophie - Unicorn
Dolcie-Mae - Larch	Emilia - Oak	Erin - Rowan	Safe - Willow
Aaron - Chestnut	Manha - Elm	Aminah - Birch	Hayden - Oak
Ann-Maria - Rowan	Rahael - Larch	Lucy - Hazel	
Ava - Birch	Grayson - Cedar	Chris - Holly	
		Sumayah - Maple	
		Gabriels - Sycamore	
		Kaff - Aspen	

## Diary Dates for the Autumn Term



All events are subject to change

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