



THE DOWNS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL
BRISTOL

Quick Start Guide

2023-2024

Welcome

A very warm welcome to you and your family as you join us here at The Downs. Our aim is to ensure that your child's time with us is an exciting, fun-filled step in their educational journey.

The Downs is a close community of pupils, staff and parents and we pride ourselves on our family feel. We look forward to getting to know you and your family so that we can work together in the best interest of your child. A strong partnership ensures your child can take maximum advantage of the many opportunities on offer and enable them to fulfil their true potential.

We have an 'Open Door' policy at The Downs and encourage parents and teachers to communicate in person, or through email, to ensure all questions are addressed promptly.

Your child's wellbeing is at the heart of everything we do, and our priority is to ensure all our pupils feel safe and happy in their learning environment, able to take risks without fear of failure and to embrace all that the school has to offer. We encourage our children to aim high and to be adventurous and we hope to instil in them a passion for life-long learning, to be Explorers, to Express themselves and to Excel to the best of their ability.

This Guide is designed to provide our parents with all the relevant information needed about our school, in order to guarantee a smooth journey throughout your time at The Downs.

I look forward to sharing our wonderful school with you.

Debbie Isaachsen

Mrs Debbie Isaachsen
Headteacher

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Getting you started

We want your child to settle in to our school as quickly and seamlessly as possible, we know that means helping you feel settled too. This section has the most important information so you can all hit the ground running...

1. Timings of the School Day

Term Dates:

The dates for all three terms for the academic year are published in advance, these are available in the SOCS online calendar (details on how to access this are in Section 2 on page 7) and on the school website. These dates are similar to those of most prep and public schools.

Key Dates:

All events are listed in our SOCS online calendar. In addition, at the start of each term, all parents are given a printed A5 calendar card that features all the key dates in the upcoming term for your diary so you can plan in advance.

The school day:

	PRE-PREP (Reception-Y3)	PREP (Y4-Y8)
Drop Off	8.00am - 8.20am	8.00am - 8.20am
Pick Up	4.00pm	4.30pm
Sibling Club	4.00pm - 4.30pm	N/A
Prep / Homework	N/A	4.30pm - 5.00pm
Clubs / After Care	4.00pm - 5.00pm	5.00pm - 6.00pm
Tea / Supper	5.00pm - 6.00pm	6.00pm - 6.30pm

Exeat Weekends:

Exeat dates are published in our SOCS online calendar. The Exeat weekends are scheduled approximately every third weekend. An Exeat weekend means there are no school activities. Exeat weekends (and half-term) also require an early collection on a Friday afternoon as there are no clubs or aftercare.

- Pre-Prep collection 4.00pm
- Sibling club runs until 4.30pm
- Prep collection 4.30pm

2. Accessing SOCS: Our Online Calendar

The Downs produces a 'live' online calendar, providing up-to-date information on all of our programme of events. Inevitably some events will be subject to change and having a 'live' version of the calendar ensures the school is able to edit entries accordingly. Any changes will also be mentioned in our weekly email newsletter – The Downs Diary.

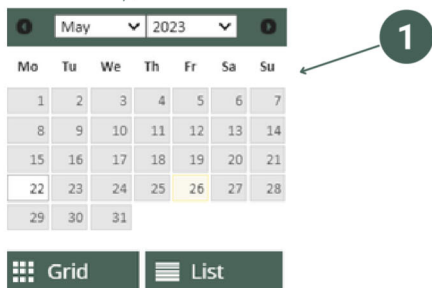
Lots of other useful information included in the calendar will be added to the SIMS Parent Portal. Access Logins to the Portal will be sent to you once your child has started at school.

To view the main school calendar, visit calendar.thedownsschool.co.uk

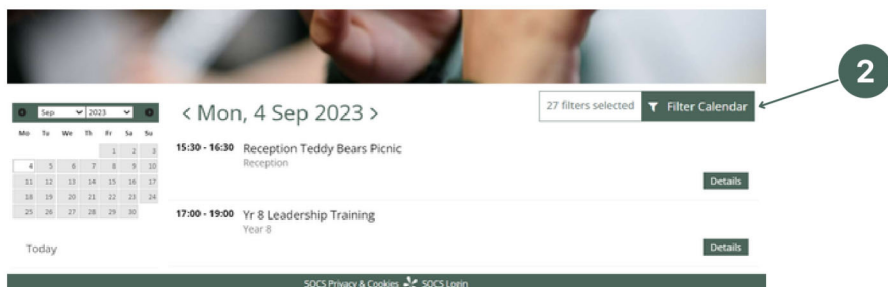
You might want to save the address in your favourites and send it to your family and friends.

To see at a glance what's on, where and when you have a few different options:

- 1 You can view the calendar either as a grid or list by selecting the Grid or List icons (1). Once you have decided how you would like to view the calendar, you can select a day, week or month view.

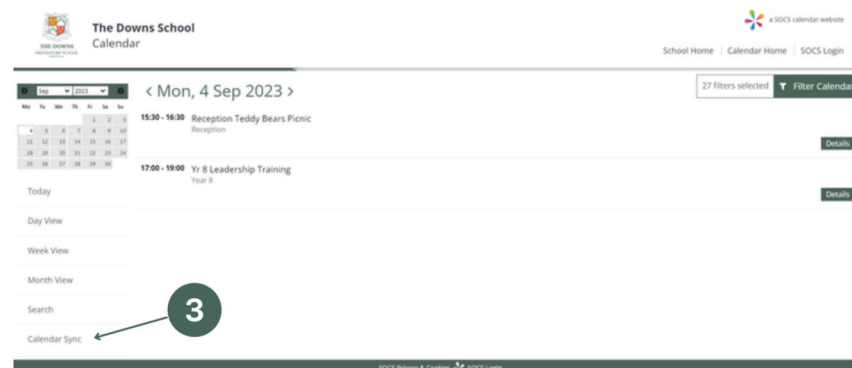


- 2 You can filter the calendar by category using the Filter Calendar section (2). This allows you to focus on parts of the school calendar relevant to you. Events in the calendar have been categorised by year group to make it easy for you to filter the information relating to your child(ren).

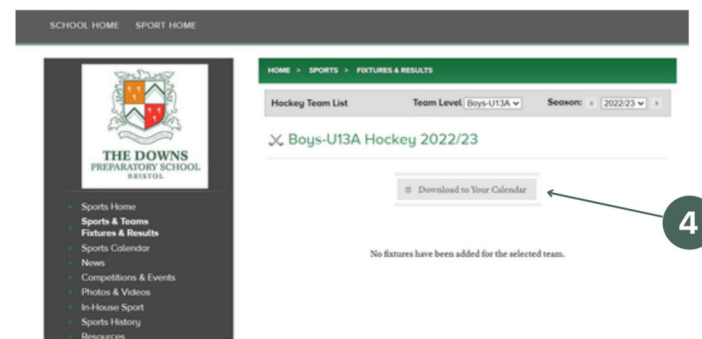


2. Accessing SOCS (continued)

- 3 You can use the Calendar Sync (3) button to synchronize the school calendar with your personal calendar. You can either synchronize the entire school calendar or your chosen calendar filters (you must select these before you sync). Any subsequent changes to the calendar will update in your personal calendar.



- 4 For Year 3 and above, if you would prefer to only have Sport information relating to a specific team sync to your calendar, then it is best to deselect any sport options here and go to the www.thedownsschoolsport.co.uk to choose the team you want to sync and click "Download to your Calendar".



- 5 If you are visiting our online calendar on your mobile phone you will notice it loads up as a Mobile Web App. This is a quick and easy way to access the school calendar on the go, especially if you save the icon to your home screen to access the calendar quickly.

3. School Uniform

As ambassadors of the school, all the children are expected to look smart in their school uniform wherever they may be. It should be worn with pride.

Where to purchase uniform:

We have made some updates to our uniform which are being phased in over the next 24 months. Our new uniform provider is Schoolblazer.

New uniform items can be purchased online from www.schoolblazer.com (available from 26 June 2023). Schoolblazer have a simple online ordering system, with guidance on sizing and a free nametaping service. They also offer free returns.

We also have a very popular second hand uniform shop at The Downs. It's run by the DSA, and you can contact DSAuniform@thedowns.avon.sch.uk to arrange a time to look and try on.

School Uniform:

It is expected that all the children will wear the school uniform.

Summer uniform is worn from the start of the Autumn Term until the half-term break in October and thereafter throughout the Summer Term.

Formal Uniform:

When participating in school concerts and other formal events, all the children are expected to wear formal uniform.

Non-Uniform Days:

There are a selection of non-uniform days throughout the year when the children are permitted to wear home clothes. These events are published in advance.

Presentation:

When the children are in school uniform it is important that they look smart and tidy because they are representing the school. School blazers should be worn to and from school each day.

Please ensure all items of clothing are clearly marked.

If a child appears to be missing an essential item of clothing, or is wearing the wrong style of uniform, you will be informed that this is the case.

3. School Uniform (continued)

Pupils are not allowed to wear hair-gel. Children should have their hair tied back with green bands if it is beyond shoulder length.

Jewellery, such as rings, earrings, necklaces or piercings, are not permitted.

Names on Uniform and Games Kit:

Please ensure all items of clothing are clearly marked. Shoes, trainers, gym shoes and wellingtons should also be clearly marked with your child's name.

New uniform list from September 2023

(Please note a detailed uniform list for all occasions and year groups is available on our website).

		PRE-PREP (Reception-Y3)	PREP (Y4-Y8)
Winter	Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey trousers or shorts, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck or sleeveless jumper, short grey socks, blazer Formal – white shirt and elasticated green tie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey trousers or shorts, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck or sleeveless jumper, short grey socks, blazer Formal – white shirt and green tie Years 7 & 8 – grey trousers
	Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey pinafore dress, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck jumper, sleeveless jumper or cardigan, green tights, blazer Formal – white shirt and elasticated green tie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey culottes or trousers, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck jumper or sleeveless jumper, green tights or socks, blazer Formal – white shirt and green tie
Summer	Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey trousers or shorts, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck or sleeveless jumper, short grey socks, blazer Formal – white shirt and elasticated green tie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey trousers or shorts, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck or sleeveless jumper, short grey socks, blazer Formal – white shirt and green tie Years 7 & 8 – grey trousers
	Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer dress, green v-neck jumper, sleeveless jumper or cardigan, short green socks, blazer Formal – Summer dress 	<p>Years 4 & 5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer dress, green v-neck jumper or sleeveless jumper, short green socks, blazer Formal – Summer dress <p>Years 6 – 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey culottes or trousers, green and white pinstripe shirt, green v-neck jumper or sleeveless jumper, short green socks, blazer Formal – white shirt and green tie

3. School Uniform (continued)

Old uniform list:

Permission to wear old uniform until September 2025 when new uniform will be mandatory

(Please note. detailed uniform lists for all occasions and year groups are available on our website)

		PRE-PREP (Reception-Y3)	PREP (Y4-Y8)
Winter	Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey shorts, grey shirt, green crew neck jumper, long grey socks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long grey trousers, grey shirt, green crew neck jumper, grey socks
	Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pinafore dress, white shirt, green crew neck jumper, green tights 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grey kilt, white shirt, green crew neck jumper, green tights
Summer	Boys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellow polo shirt, green v-neck jumper, grey shorts, short grey socks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yellow polo shirt, green v-neck jumper, long grey trousers, grey socks
	Girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer dress, green v-neck jumper, short green socks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer dress, green v-neck jumper, short green socks



4. Parent Communications

It's incredibly important that you feel up to date on all aspects of your child's school life. We endeavour to keep you updated as much as possible, whilst being conscious of not sending too many communications. Here's a few ways we stay in touch:

The Downs Diary:

This is a weekly whole-school email newsletter sent out on a Friday afternoon to all parents who are on our system. It features any upcoming events, important information or requests for action relevant to the upcoming week. It also features a weekly round up of what's been happening across the school. We strongly encourage you to read this as it's a source of all important information.

School Office:

Our school office is open throughout the year, and our friendly team will be happy to help you with any queries you may have.

Email: office@thedownsschool.co.uk

Tel: 01275 852008

Term time office hours: 8.20am - 5.15pm

Holiday office hours: 9.00am - 4.00pm

Clarion (text message):

We occasionally have the need to get urgent messages to parents via our Clarion Call text service. This sends an immediate text message to parents with the hope you see it right away. This is used in emergencies or if there are last minute changes to events, school opening times, sports matches, such as children are delayed returning home from away sports matches.

Class list:

This is a tool we have introduced in Pre-Prep. It is a parent portal where you can view photos and updates from teaching staff. They will post regular updates of what your child(ren) has been doing in their classes. You are able to comment or post and ask questions. It's best to use this channel for any queries you have that our Pre-Prep team can answer for you.

WhatsApp Groups:

At the start of your Downs journey, we encourage each year group to create a WhatsApp group between parents. This way, you can easily stay in contact with your parent peers.

4. Parent Communications (continued)

Form Reps:

Each year, we ask 2 parents from each year group to volunteer to be Form Representatives. Form Reps attend a termly meeting with all other Form Reps and the Headteacher to discuss key topics. They can also bring feedback to the meetings from parents. It is their responsibility to feed this back to all parents on the WhatsApp group.

Key Email Contacts:

Department	Contact	Email Address
Headteacher	Mrs D Isaachsen	head@thedowns.avon.sch.uk
Deputy Head Academic	Mrs I Payne	ipayne@thedowns.avon.sch.uk
Deputy Head Pastoral	Mr O Elliott	oelliott@thedowns.avon.sch.uk
Head of Bertie's Nursery	Mrs M Wookey	head@bertiesnursery.com
Bursar	Mr J Barclay	jbarclay@thedowns.avon.sch.uk
Head of Pre-Prep (R-Yr3)	Mrs N Triggol	ntriggol@thedowns.avon.sch.uk
Head of Juniors (Yr4-6)	Mr J Russell	jrussell@thedowns.avon.sch.uk
Head of Seniors (Yr7 & 8)	Mr B Bazzard	bbazzard@thedowns.avon.sch.uk

All staff can be contacted by email by using their initial followed by their surname@thedowns.avon.sch.uk e.g., pthompson@thedowns.avon.sch.uk

Appointments:

All teaching staff at the school will contact parents within 24 hours of any issue being raised. Any issue should be raised first with the form tutor or the member of staff involved. Parents might want to contact their Section Head (Head of Pre-Prep, Juniors, Seniors) should they continue to harbour concerns after meeting teaching staff. Appointments with the Deputy Heads or Headteacher are arranged through Mrs Thompson, the Headteacher's PA.

Email:

The School communicates as much as possible by use of email. It is subsequently essential that parents keep the school updated as to changes of address. As much as possible we try to send "groups" of information rather than sending daily correspondence.

5. Expectations and Procedures

There are some expectations and procedures that we feel are useful for parents to be aware of from the start for clarity.

Mobile Phones:

Children are not allowed mobile phones or any internet or 4G enabled devices (including some smart watches).

Late Drop Off / Late Pick Up:

If you are late to drop your child off and you miss the 8.20am cut off, please ensure your child reports to the School Office so that they can be registered.

If you are late to pick up your child please contact the School Office as soon as possible so we can inform your child's tutor who will make arrangements for their care. Your child will be sent to Aftercare Tea / Supper if not collected beforehand and the normal charges for this will apply. Pre-Prep children should be collected no later than 6:00pm. Prep children should be collected no later than 6:30pm.

Request for leave during term time:

In rare circumstances, it is necessary for parents to remove their child from school during term time. All requests must be sent to the Headteacher in writing so that consideration for authorisation can be made. The Class Form Teachers are unable to give permission and no work will be set for pupils who are absent for any reason. Family holidays in term time should be avoided whenever possible.

Illness at School:

If a child becomes unwell at school, they will be referred to Matron who will assess the child and contact the parents as is necessary. In the meantime the child will be supervised by the Matron. If the child is deemed well enough they will remain in school perhaps after appropriate medication.

Absence from school:

If a child is unwell and cannot come into school the School Office must be advised as soon as possible. If a child is not in school and the school has not been informed as to why, a Receptionist will phone the parents. If a child is away as a consequence of vomiting and diarrhoea and they must not return to school within 48 hours of their last symptoms. This is to avoid contagion.

Medication:

All medicine must be given directly to Matron by a parent. Instructions must also be at hand. The Matron will ensure the medicine is kept in a secure place and they will make sure that it is administered correctly. Children must not have medicines in their possession unless exceptional circumstances have been established and agreed upon beforehand.

6. Financial Matters

Fee Payment:

In line with the Terms and Conditions, you need to pay the fees for each term directly to the School. Except where we have reached a separate agreement with you, fees are due before the start of the relevant term. Please be aware that, if an item on the fees invoice is under query, the balance of that invoice must be paid. We do not accept payment in cash, in line with wider regulations on money laundering.

Our Fees List is sent to parents annually and is also available to view on our website.

Instalments:

In some circumstances we may accept payment of fees by instalments, which would be subject to a separate agreement between you and the school. Note that we do not offer Direct Debit arrangements for paying fees.

School trips / educational visits:

We will let you know in advance of any additional costs associated with an educational visit or school trip. In line with the Terms and Conditions, if it is a small cost then this will be added to the bill for the following term. For larger trip costs these costs will be payable in advance and we will let you know the details of this.

Extra-Curricular and Support Lessons:

Costs for extra-curricular and support lessons (such as musical instrument tuition, Learning Support and externally-run clubs) will generally be added to the next term's bill. Bear in mind that you will need to give appropriate notice if you want to stop these lessons – this is usually half a term's notice.

Note that all these financial matters are subject to the Terms and Conditions that you sign-up to when your child joins the school. If you have any additional queries, please contact the Bursar who would be happy to have a chat.

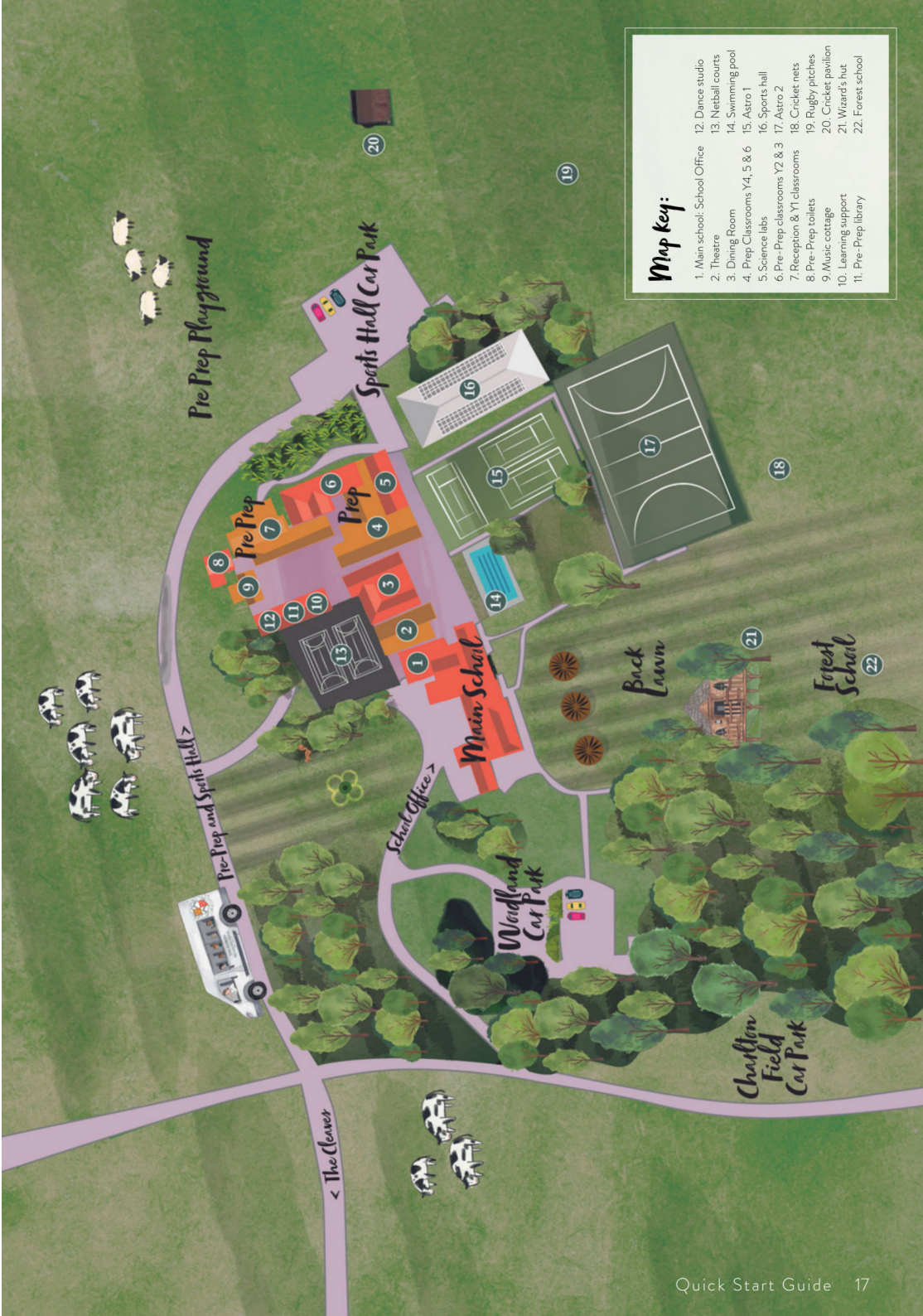
Please be aware that the school will never provide new bank details to you by email. If you do receive such an email purportedly from school, then please assume it is fraudulent and check with the School Office.

7. Annual School Events

Term Dates:

Here's a list of some of our biggest events throughout the school year to give you a sense of what's happening and what you can look forward to!

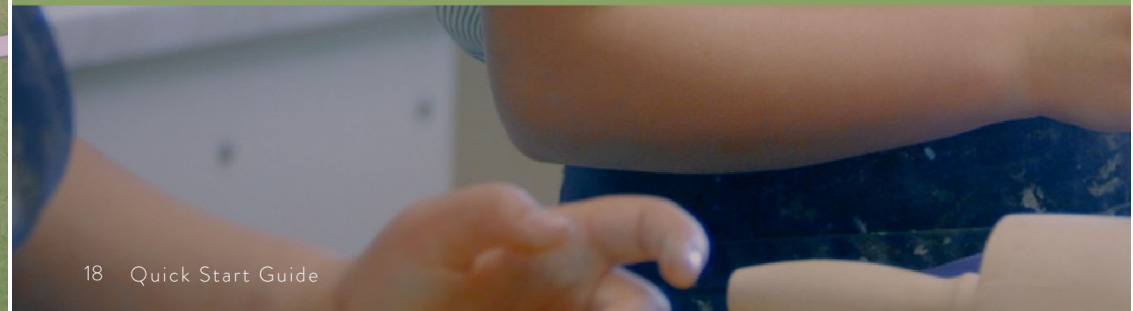
AUTUMN TERM
Curriculum Coffee Mornings Parents are invited to school to find out about the curriculum being covered this year.
Prep School Camps and Field trips
Pre-Prep Harvest Festival Assembly
Remembrance Concert
DSA Fireworks Night
Christmas Productions
Carol Concert at Bristol Cathedral
SPRING TERM
Open Classroom Sessions A chance for parents to see their children's work and speak to their teachers.
The Downs Rugby 7s Competition - Y7-8 All parents and children welcome to spectate.
Head's Suppers A chance for parents to have dinner with our Headteacher and key staff.
Instrumental Concert
Battle of the Bands
Bristol Speech and Drama Festival
Easter Service
SUMMER TERM
ABRSM Music Exams
Grandparent's Afternoon A chance for grandparents to visit the school: afternoon tea and a variety of showcases.
Vanguard Speech and Drama Exams
Staff vs Parents Cricket Match
Prep School Summer Exams
Summer Ball (Every 2 years)
Pre-Prep & Prep Sports Days
DSA Summer Fete
Father's Day Sixes Cricket Tournament
Dance Show
Year 8 Leavers' Camp & Leavers' Service
Celebration Day Our whole school community comes together (parents included) to celebrate the achievements of the past year. This is usually on the last day of term and is a whole day - one to save the date for!



Additional Sessions

(Booking required)

We have a whole host of additional sessions available to help support parents by extending the school day beyond the timetable. These opportunities also provide children with additional opportunities to learn new skills and embrace new experiences. This includes: bus pick ups and drop offs, wrap-around care and clubs.



1. Bus Routes

Having a fleet of minibuses means that we are able to offer a number of minibus routes that collect and return children home after school.

Bus collection points are generally (these differ depending on demand each term):

- Stoke Bishop, Suspension Bridge and Clifton Downs - Mornings only
- Wrington, Langford, Winford Manor, Winford Village and Cambridge Batch - Morning and Evening
- Chew Magna, Winford Village - Morning only

On arrival at school, the children are dropped off and can make their way to registration. In the evening, children assemble in the main hall at 5.00pm and are collected by their driver and accompanied to their bus.

The bus runs at 4.30pm on Exeat weekends and the last day of term. If there is sufficient demand and we don't currently have a bus for a particular route, then we can explore arranging this, please liaise with the School Office.

Each minibus driver carries a mobile phone on the bus so that parents may leave a message or speak to the driver if needed.

Further details are available from the School Office: office@thedownsschool.co.uk



2. Wrap-around care

We understand that parents have busy schedules, so our support extends beyond the school day. There are a number of sessions in place that mean your child can be looked after before or after the school day:

Breakfast Club (charges apply):

7.30am – 8.00am

Breakfast is available for any pupil throughout the week, which will help those parents who have to make an early start. Both hot food and a traditional Continental Breakfast (including cereals) are offered. Breakfast begins at 7.30am. Children should report straight to the Dining Room.

Aftercare Tea (charges apply):

5.00pm - 6.00pm

For Pre-Prep children only, every day of the week (with the exception of exeat Fridays and on the days we break up for holidays). This will be a hot meal on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, and a cold buffet meal on Wednesday and Friday. Children should be collected from the Dining Room by 6pm.

Supper (charges apply):

6.00pm - 6.30pm

For Prep School children only - on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays. A substantial hot, two course meal is provided. Supper is supervised by the duty staff. Children should be collected from the Dining Room by 6.30pm.

Booking Forms:

Booking forms for Breakfast and Tea/Supper are sent to parents at the beginning of each term in the club handbook or you can order via email: mealbookings@thedowns.avon.sch.uk. Please give 48 hours notice to book any of the above so that the school can make necessary arrangements. Any costs will be added to your school bill.

Supervised Prep/homework for Prep School children:

4.30pm – 5.00pm

Supervised prep is available each evening, other than on Exeats and on the days we break up for holidays. We encourage Prep School children to stay for the session as it helps pupils develop independent study skills.

3. Clubs

We want to ensure we provide an exciting and diverse range of School Clubs for your child and we actively encourage all children to take part. Our clubs are a great opportunity for children to explore interests and passions, build relationships and develop new skills. We recognise that parents are not always available to pick up children at the end of the school day, so our extended school day aims to support parents as much as possible.

Please refer to our Clubs handbook and termly timetable to see which clubs are on offer for this term. If you want to book a club you need to do this via SIMS Activities online. (If you don't already have access to SIMS Activities, you will receive an email invitation requesting you to sign up via the SIMS Parent App - further details are on page 28.)

How To:

- Login to SIMS Activities via the Parent App
- Go to your child's dashboard and you will see 'activities' - click on this
- The App will then show you the list of invites you have received - these are all the clubs your child has access to
- By clicking onto the invite you will be able to see details for the specific club you're interested in
- Click 'Join Waiting list' to register your interest in a club
- Please ONLY register interest for clubs that your child is able to attend for the whole term
- Click on 'Not interested' if your child doesn't want to join a particular club
- Continue doing this through the club options available to you

Please note:

- The booking system for each term goes live on a certain date which is communicated to parents in advance
- When the initial spaces are filled, you can be placed on a waiting list if desired
- It is possible to amend if you have previously stated 'not interested' in a club
- On occasion, it may be possible to increase the capacity if interest is high for a club
- In the event that we do not meet necessary minimum number requirements for a club due to low interest, it may be necessary to cancel the club. We apologise if this is the case.

4. Music, Drama & Dance Private Tuition

Music Tuition:

Music is a very important part of school life and our community is enriched by the singing and music that can be heard through the corridors.

All children have regular academic music lessons as part of the curriculum and sing in their year group choir. However, to further enhance their music education, they are also encouraged to play an instrument or take singing lessons. We have a wonderful group of visiting music teachers who provide tuition in numerous instruments. We would generally recommend that children do not begin music tuition until Year 1, by which time they have fully settled into the routine of school life. Presently, approximately 78% of the pupils in the Prep School learn an instrument and we encourage all pupils to consider such a wonderful opportunity.

If you would like your child to learn an instrument, please request an online form to complete from mweaver@thedowns.avon.sch.uk



4. Music, Drama & Dance Private Tuition

Dance Tuition:

Dance is a very popular extra-curricular activity at The Downs. The lessons are taught by professional dancers/teachers, so the level of teaching is comparable to an outside dance school.

Our dance lessons include ballet, tap, jazz, hip-hop and boys' dance. Pupils are taught from the syllabi of The Royal Academy of Dance, The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dance and The British Theatre Dance Association.

Parents are invited to a viewing week in the Autumn Term and pupils are offered the opportunity to be entered for a BTDA dance award in the Spring Term. All classes prepare dances to perform throughout the school year, including a dance show in the Summer Term. Emphasis is placed on encouraging confidence, musicality and a joy of dance as a physical activity.

Additional charges apply - costs confirmed on the booking form. There are typically 10 sessions a term. If you would like your child to participate, please request an online form from smonnox@thedowns.avon.sch.uk

Speech and Drama Tuition:

Speech and Drama lessons aim to develop skills in performance and communication, to broaden children's experience of poetry, drama and literature and to improve the standard of spoken communication. Emphasis is placed on building confidence and imagination, along with producing clear speech by improving clarity, projection and expression. Children are also given the chance to learn mime and improvisation.

Pupils from Year 2 to Year 8 have the opportunity to enter local Speech and Drama Festivals which give them valuable performance experience.

At the end of the academic year, we encourage all participating pupils from Year 2 to Year 8 to take a Vanguard examination in Poetry Speaking or Acting.

Additional charges apply - costs confirmed on the booking form. There are typically 10 sessions a term (scheduled outside of the school day). Duo lessons are also available and these will be timetabled during the school day, as will individual lessons.

If you would like to sign your child up for Speech and Drama lessons, please request an online form to complete from mhobbs@thedowns.avon.sch.uk

"It seems only moments since I was holding my son's hand as he went into Reception class wearing his little cap, and yet he is now in Year 8 and taller than me. Can that little boy dressed as a soldier in the Reception Nativity really be the same one that read the lesson in the pulpit at Bristol Cathedral as Head Pupil?"

There is a unique atmosphere of joyful purposefulness at The Downs. The days are full of opportunities for curious minds. That atmosphere has seeped into my children and has become part of their characters."

Mrs Fenna-Brown





Useful Information

This section includes more in-depth information regarding Curriculum, our approach to Pastoral care, specific information on our Sport/ Games department and our community - most importantly how you can get involved.



1. Curriculum

Structure:

The academic development of the school is overseen by Mrs Imogen Payne, the Deputy Head Academic. The 3 Section Heads - Mrs Naomi Triggol (Pre-Prep), Mr James Russell (Years 4-6) and Mr Ben Bazzard (Years 7 & 8) work alongside Mrs Payne to coordinate the specifics for their sections.

Pre-Prep:

Initially through play, the Pre-Prep children are gradually introduced to formal learning much at their own pace. The emphasis is on collaborative working, attitude and approach. Independent learning is encouraged but later expected. Maths and English are the main focus although the curriculum is very broad from the moment the young children join the school. Teaching is delivered by class teachers although some specialist teaching – PE, ICT, French etc. takes place from the Reception Year.

Prep School :

The first year in the Prep School (Year 4) much mirrors the last year of the Pre Prep (Year 3) to ensure consistency and a little more specialist teaching takes place. In Year 5, subject specialist teaching begins across the curriculum. The children take the Common Entrance 11+ exams (internal) and thereafter they study the 13+ syllabus for two and a half years. Considerable instruction in study skills takes place in the Prep School including revision techniques and independent learning. The pertinent use of IT and reading are also areas of considerable focus.

General Curriculum Content:

In addition to the core subjects (English, Maths and Science) and foundation subjects (History, Geography, Languages, TPR (Theology, Philosophy & Religion), Computing, Art & Music) the following subjects / activities enrich the curriculum:

Pre-Prep:

- Children in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 have weekly dance lessons with specialist staff
- All Pre-Prep children attend swimming lessons
- All Pre-Prep children regularly take part in forest school activities with a specialist
- All Pre-Prep children regularly take part in performing arts sessions with specialists
- All children in Year 1, 2 and 3 are in a choir

1. Curriculum (continued)

Prep School:

- All pupils in the Prep school are in a choir
- All pupils in the Prep school take part in performing arts sessions
- From Year 5 children study Spanish as a second modern language
- From Year 6 Science is taught as three disciplines
- All pupils in the Prep school attend enrichment sessions with activities such as cookery, debating and gardening

Learning Support Lessons:

- One-to-one Learning Support lessons are available to pupils who require additional support in Literacy and Maths.
- These lessons are taught by specialist teachers during the school day
- Lessons aim to raise self-esteem and attainment
- There is a charge for these lessons

Timetables:

These are displayed in form rooms for all children to access. Children in the Prep school are given individual timetables on the first day of term which should be stuck or copied into their homework diaries.

Prep (homework) diaries:

All children in the Prep school are issued with a prep (homework) diary. They should use this to record any prep (homework) that is set. The diary is also where house points and detentions are recorded. Prep diaries should go home each day and there is a section which can be used as a reading record.

Prep (homework):

Children in the Pre-Prep are expected to spend time at home reading with an adult. They will also have spellings to learn and may have some Maths work to complete. Children in Year 3 have a more formal homework slot each week and the teachers will explain at the beginning of the year, when it will be set and when it should be handed in.

All children in the Prep school are expected to read regularly at home. They also have set prep to complete and a prep timetable is issued at the start of the school year. No prep is set on a Wednesday. There is a prep session in school from 4.30pm - 5pm each day. This is a supervised session where children complete their work independently. This is an optional session and some children will choose to go home at 4.30pm and complete their prep at home.

1. Curriculum (continued)

Exams:

Throughout their time in school your child will complete various assessments at different times. Some of these will be paper based whilst others are computer based. The children are supported as appropriate to their age and their stage of education. As the children move into the Prep school, formal exam sessions are introduced. Pupils in Years 4 - 6 will have a set of exams each year, covering the areas they have studied. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 will have more regular exam sessions to ensure they are prepared for their entrance exams to senior schools. Exam timetables are issued to the pupils and sent to parents via email. Pupils are taught exam and revision techniques in their subject lessons and SSP (Senior School Preparation) lessons.

Reports

Academic reports are accessed via the SIMS Parent App.

Details on how to access the Parent App are below:

SIMS Parent App - How To Instructions:

As soon as your child starts at the school, you will receive an email invitation to register for the SIMS Parent App from noreply@sims.co.uk

For ease, you can register for SIMS Parent using a number of options. You can use any of the following existing accounts: Facebook, Twitter, Google, Microsoft, Office 365 or create a SIMS ID. If you do not already have one of these accounts you can easily create one.

Instructions on how to create a SIMS ID account is detailed below for your guidance:

How To create a SIMS ID account:

1. Go to <https://registration.sims.co.uk>
2. Enter a Username - this has to be a valid existing email address and should not be a shared one (i.e. shared with another parent with access to SIMS)
3. Enter the invitation code from the email you received
4. You will then be required to answer a question about your child and set a password
5. This will then send an email to the mail account used
6. You will need to click on the link in the email to validate you have used a valid mail address
7. Once done your account is active you can sign into SIMS Parent App or Parent website in the normal way

1. Curriculum (continued)

Registration for SIMS Parent:

If you chose to create a SIMS ID, then you have already completed this process. Once you have a suitable account simply click on the Accept Invitation link in the registration email from your tablet, PC or smartphone and follow the activation process to create your account. If you have multiple children at the school you can enter any of their dates of birth when prompted during the registration process.

Your login will be the username and password of your chosen account, with no need to manage a separate password for SIMS Parent (unless you chose to use a dedicated SIMS ID).

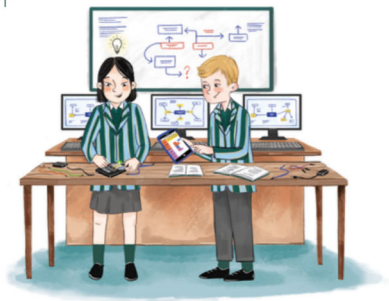
Accessing SIMS Parent

Once you have registered an account with SIMS Parent you have options on how to access the system:

- Via a web browser on a PC, phone, tablet etc. at <https://www.sims-parent.co.uk>
- Via the SIMS Parent App, which is available in both the Apple and Google (Android) app stores:
 - SIMS Parent App in Apple Store: <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/sims-parent/id11064526>
 - SIMS Parent App in Google Play Store: https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.capita.sims.mobile.parentapp&hl=en_GB

You can log into any of those options by selecting the account type that you chose to register with and entering your username and password when prompted.

The functionality of the web browser and the app are similar, however you will only receive push notifications via the app.



2. Our Core Values

Our core values are an intrinsic part of our day to day life at school. They are integrated into all aspects of school life from core subject lessons through to Performing Arts and our Assemblies. Our values define our uniqueness and what makes The Downs special:

We provide an **environment** that gives children

the **freedom** to **Explore**
the **confidence** to **Express**
and the **ambition** to **Excel**

Meet our Values Characters:



Nik-Nak the squirrel

We encourage our children to be explorers in all aspects of school life - learning something new in class, playing outside or pursuing a new hobby. Every school day provides learning opportunities that equip them for their brilliant futures.



Pebble the dog

We understand that every child is unique with different qualities, passions and skills. To stand up on stage, to stand up for what they believe in and to stand-out, we instil inner confidence in our children so they can succeed in all aspects of expression.



Twiglet the owl

We take a tailored approach to all our children's individual progress and development. We celebrate success and learn from failure. We encourage collaboration and application across the curriculum so children can identify and achieve their own personal best.

3. Pastoral Care & Wellbeing

Pastoral Care:

Mr Elliott is our Deputy Head Pastoral and the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Our philosophy is simple - happy children thrive.

To nurture a child's full potential it is necessary to know and understand them as individuals. For this reason each child at The Downs is placed in the midst of a network of exceptional pastoral care to ensure that no child is overlooked or lost in the crowd.

- Safeguarding is at the core of our practice and is everyone's responsibility and in an ever changing world, we strive to ensure we keep up to date with key emerging themes.
- Constant communication between staff, children and parents allows for successful support and nurturing whenever it is required.

Health and Wellbeing:

We ensure health and wellbeing is at the forefront of our day-to-day school life through:

- **School Meals:** Our healthy and hearty, freshly prepared school meals (that are legendary!) are so important to ensure healthy diets for all. You can see each weekly menu via a link which is shared in the Downs Diary every Friday.
- **Matrons:** Our team of Matrons are the providers of medical and inevitably emotional care for our children on a daily basis. The children quickly get to know where the Matron's office is situated - in the main building of the school.
- **Form Tutors:** It is our intention that our Form Tutors are the supportive and nurturing mentors for your child, having the opportunity to see your child every day and identify when there's a need for support.
- **Mindfulness:** Our focus is to equip all teachers at The Downs with the relevant skills to teach mindfulness any time it will benefit the children.
- **Well-Being Coordinator:** There are occasions when our children might benefit from some extra pastoral support and sessions can be arranged.

Food at The Downs:

I'm sure most will agree that the food here at The Downs is a real highlight.

We provide hot, home-cooked lunches every day in our dining room, where children are encouraged to mix across the year groups and the older children are responsible for taking care of the youngest.

We also provide a substantial morning and afternoon (Tiffin) snack to keep the children going until the end of the school day - or until supper is served!

4. Sport at The Downs

Mrs Heidi Bray is the Director of Sport at The Downs. She can be contacted at hbray@thedowns.avon.sch.uk. A comprehensive guide to sport at The Downs can be found in the Games Handbook available within the parent portal or from the School Office (Games applies from Year 3 onwards). The following information is useful to all parents from Reception to Year 8:

PE:

PE is a curriculum subject separate to Games. Each year group receives weekly specialist instruction within the curriculum timetable. PE focuses on six main areas: minor games (e.g: volleyball, basketball, lacrosse, handball, badminton), gymnastics, outdoor adventurous activities, athletics, swimming and dance.

Games:

Our aim is to provide a games programme that is inclusive. Simultaneously, however, we wish for our top teams to compete successfully at a national level. The coaching of games at The Downs is undertaken almost entirely by teachers. We are very fortunate, however, that the standard of coaching throughout the school is exceptional, the staff generally being talented, passionate games players and coaches. Girls play: hockey, netball and cricket. Boys play: rugby, hockey and cricket.

Pre-Prep:

During their time in the Pre-Prep the children are slowly introduced to a variety of sporting activities:

- Reception to Year 2: PE, swimming and dance
- Year 3: PE and swimming, in addition two Games periods each week and a small number of matches and tournaments against other schools are introduced
- Pre-Prep pupils can also access gymnastics, tennis, tag rugby, judo, and hockey amongst other sports during clubs.

Prep:

As the children move into Prep, they continue with a variety of sporting activities including PE and swimming. Sporting fixtures against other schools increase and all children are expected to represent the school.

Matches:

Matches take place on Wednesdays and Saturdays. As far as it is possible we play "block fixtures" all teams against one single school. Wednesday matches generally begin at 2.30pm. They take place most Wednesdays but some Wednesdays are "ring fenced" for coaching and enable all children to leave at 4.30pm.

4. Sport at The Downs (continued)

Saturday matches generally begin at 10.00 am. Saturday matches take place on approximately two in three weekends of each term. Transport to all matches is provided by the school.

Parents, families and friends are encouraged to attend matches, however all spectators are expected to support in a civilised manner. General enthusiastic support is encouraged. Shouting and criticism of players or officials is unacceptable. People behaving in this manner will be asked to leave the field of play.

Team Sheets:

Team sheets and match arrangements are available electronically via SOCS. All relevant details are included: transport, timings and locations.

Off Games:

If a parent deems a child is unable to play sport or partake in PE or swimming, the Matrons must be informed. Parents might write a note that can be given to the Matron via the School Office or the Form Teacher. They might otherwise contact the Matron by email or phone. A child's word alone is not adequate warning as some are more partial to sport than others! Games Coaches are not allowed to pass verbal messages on to Matrons.

Children who are "off games" are supervised by the Matrons or a member of staff. They might be encouraged to "get some fresh air" and then undertake some prep or catch up with work outstanding.

Sports Hall Changing Rooms:

The Matrons monitor the children's behaviour in the Changing Rooms after Games lessons and matches. They ensure the children are hygienic and furthermore they demand that the children look after and organise their clothes appropriately.

The Downs Award Scheme (DAS):

For those children in Years 5-8 who genuinely do not enjoy team sport or indeed do not benefit, there is the option to join the DAS. This group enjoy excellent, specialist coaching in such activities as canoeing, climbing, orienteering, caving and sailing. This would be agreed following a discussion with the parents and Games staff.

5. Our Community

Our community at The Downs is one of the aspects many parents cherish. We're a close-knit community, where relationships are built and nurtured over time. All who come into contact with the school become part of our community from the children to the parents and grandparents and not to mention the staff. We are a family and involvement from parents is actively encouraged.

There are many ways parents can get involved at The Downs:

- There are many events in the calendar where parents have the opportunity to socialise and meet others, the Head's Supper, Summer Ball, Sports Days and Celebration Day to name a few.
- Sports matches are a great opportunity for parents to support their children and the school. Many parents love the 'sideline' community and the match teas are definitely worth sticking around for!
- Dance and drama productions always require support from parents whether it's hair and make-up or costume creation - we're always looking for volunteers.
- Finally, there's the DSA - Downs School Association, the parent association.

The DSA is made up of a group of parents who organise fundraising events such as the Summer Fete and Fireworks Night to raise money for the school. The DSA have funded many initiatives within the school, more recently: Arts Week, Refurbishment of the Pre-Prep Library and the addition of our cricket nets. The initiatives are driven by what projects are deemed to benefit the children the most.

The DSA are always looking for support, whether you want to join the committee, volunteering to help at events or donating prizes for raffles.

If you would like to get involved, you can contact the Chair of the DSA via: DSA@thedowns.avon.sch.uk



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