



This half term's value has been: **Aspiration** Next half term's value will be: **Belonging**

## Head Teacher's Welcome

Dear Parents and Carers,

We've had a lovely start to our new academic year, welcoming our new Reception families and settling into the next stage of our reduction in Published Admission Numbers (PAN), which has taken us to 10 classes across the school. As always, we are incredibly grateful to all of our Reception parents and carers who have supported the staggered transition for the children. We know it's not always easy and/or convenient, but this child-centred approach really does work well!



Over the summer, we're thrilled to have had a new shared learning area created in Year 1, which fully supports our play-based approach to learning. This area, that previously comprised of Badger Classroom and a corridor, is now called 'The Burrow' and offers a light and spacious open learning environment similar to 'The Ocean' in Reception.



As a team of staff and governors, we are constantly striving to raise standards and make our school even better. One aspect of the curriculum strand of our School Development Plan this year is the introduction of a new phonics and early reading scheme. Starting with this year's Reception children, we have started to roll out the Little Wandle Systematic Synthetic Phonics programme.

Our Year 1 and 2 children will continue to learn phonics through our very successful, bespoke 'Sunshine Phonics' package. Please be assured that both schemes bring a high level of success in learning to read. The shift to a new published package is taking place for the convenience of having access to high quality training resources and materials that are regularly updated. With the demands of life in school, it is very difficult to maintain this level of provision in the long-term when working with an in-house, bespoke package.



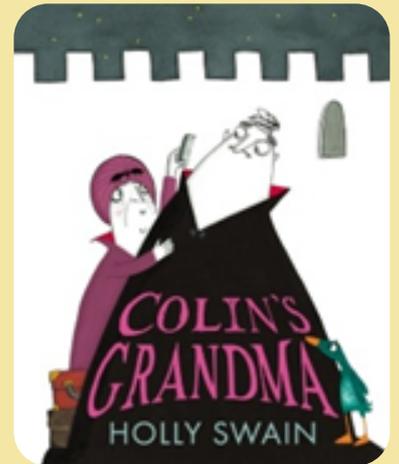
# NCETM

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE  
IN THE TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS

Another aspect of our curriculum development is the enhancement of our approach to the teaching of maths. Last year, we expanded the teaching of Maths Fluency from Reception to Year 1 and 2. As part of this journey, we are now further developing our delivery of maths through the mastery approach using the National Centre for Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics (NCETM) materials.

## THE BOOK NOOK

Thanks to our working partnership with The Book Nook, we were delighted to welcome award winning illustrator/author, Holly Swain, to our school. Holly enjoyed sharing her latest hilarious picture books 'Colin's Castle' and 'Colin's Grandma', and creating amazing illustrations with the children.



Miss Nina Pelling (Puffin Class Teacher) will be leaving us at the end of the autumn term, having successfully secured a teaching post in Western Australia. Puffin Class (children and adults) have all been involved in the recruitment of Miss Pelling's successor and I will be able to update you once all the necessary recruitment checks have been undertaken. Over the next half term we will work on a smooth transition for the children in Puffin Class.

I'd also like to say thank you and congratulations to Miss Zoe Spearman who is leaving us to become a Travel Buddy with Grace Eyre, supporting autistic adults. Zoe has worked with us for a number of years as a SEND Teaching Assistant, and more recently as a Midday Support Assistant (MDSA).

We look forward to welcoming the children back on Monday 3rd November. Wishing you all a happy half term break.

Best wishes,



## Learning in Reception

We can tell by your responses on Tapestry how impressed you are with your children and rightly so! Our Reception children have made fantastic progress already this term:

- They're reading digraphs and beginning to blend words
- They're enjoying exploring books independently
- They're almost ready to bring their own reading books home

Beyond literacy, they've also:

- Enjoyed their first PE lesson in the hall
- Learnt a repertoire of songs
- Discovered that 'Workout Wednesday' is a firm favourite!

We're incredibly proud of how well they've settled in and the enthusiasm they're showing for learning.

For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account



## Learning in Year 1

Year 1 have made a wonderful start to the year and have settled brilliantly into their new routines and expectations.

In their learning, they have:

- Adopted a tree that they will observe throughout the year
- Learnt about omnivores, carnivores and herbivores in science
- Danced to both tango and funk in their music sessions

The Burrow is our newly converted classroom where Year 1 children can mix, meet and learn together. The children are thoroughly enjoying their COOL time (Choose Our Own Learning) and all the rich learning opportunities offered in The Burrow and the Woodland areas, and we're delighted with how well they've adapted to Year 1.

For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account



## Learning in Year 2

Year 2 have had a fantastic term and have impressed us with their enthusiasm across the curriculum. They have:

- Completed their Design and Technology project, designing eco-friendly vehicles and learning to use hacksaws to cut wooden axles for their prototypes
- Finished innovating letters from disgruntled classroom objects in English, and will soon be inventing letters from items that might quit from home
- Been adding two numbers that bridge 10 in Maths, using ten frames to make 10 first
- Celebrated Black History Month by learning about Ignatius Sancho (the first Black person to vote in Britain) and the Bristol Bus Boycott
- Explored the abstract artwork of Rachel Jones in Art, experimenting with oil pastels
- Discussed good bedtime routines in PSHE

For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account



## This half term's Makaton signs were:

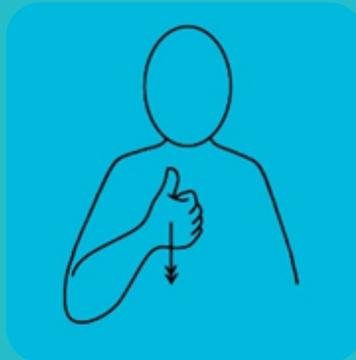


Did you know that over 100,000 children and adults use Makaton symbols and signs, either as their main method of communication or as a way to support speech?!

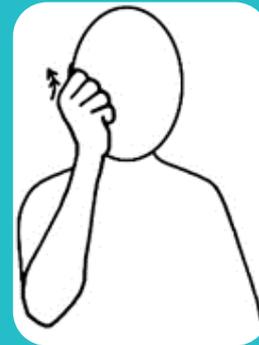
Power (energy)



Healthy



Black



To try



To write



Autumn



## Safeguarding

If you would like to speak to a member of our safeguarding team in confidence, please email: [DSL@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk](mailto:DSL@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk)

If you have any compliments, comments, concerns or complaints to feedback to school please email: [CCCC@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk](mailto:CCCC@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk)

## Governors' News

Governors would like to extend a warm welcome to Reception pupils, parents and carers and hope that this is the start of a happy and successful time at Downs Infant School.

Our main focus is, as ever, on finding ways to increase funding for the school and there are a number of avenues we are exploring. We also have a working group exploring possible models of collaboration between schools.

You may have seen Mrs. Walker's letter mentioning Ms. Nina Pelling who is leaving at the end of term to start a new life teaching in Australia. Governors would like to acknowledge the invaluable contribution she has made to the school and wish her the very best for the future.

We are in a busy term of school activities, especially after half term, and doubtless your children will be busy preparing for performances and the like, so please look out for upcoming key dates including events involving the excellent FODIS team.

## Resources Shout Out



Do you have a rotavator and would you be willing to help us prepare for an exciting hedgerow planting project in the school grounds early in 2026? If so, please contact Lisa Walker via the school office!

Reception are shouting out for a number of different resources:

- Wooden trains
- Jigsaws (up to 20 pieces)
- Orchard Toys games (suitable for ages 4-5)
- Sylvanian Families
- Small rolling pins for playdough
- Car mats

If you have any of these items that are not being used at home, and would be willing to donate them, they would be very gratefully received!

As always, all year groups need lots of packaging for junk modelling. Please note that we're unable to accept packaging from products containing nuts or seeds. We also can't accept packaging from medicines or toilet roll tubes.

## Rainbow Club News



It's been a fantastic first term at our newly expanded Rainbow Club, with everyone settling in brilliantly!

We're currently looking for donations to help refresh our play equipment. If you have any of the following that you no longer need, we'd love to give them a new home:

- Baby dolls and clothes
- Dolls' houses
- K'nex
- LEGO
- Hot Wheels cars or tracks

As the colder months approach, please remember to send children with coats, hats, and gloves so they can continue to enjoy outdoor play.

Thank you for your continued support!  
The Rainbow Club Team

## School Council



Our newly elected School Council has been meeting with Mrs Walker every Friday. At this time of year, we operate with representatives from Year 1 and 2, with Reception children joining from January.

This half term, the School Council has been busy feeding back their thoughts on our new approach to using the outside space at lunchtimes: opening up Woodland playground, Treetops playground, and the area in between (known as Mrs Gurr's Patch) to all children. They have also been risk assessing the use of the pirate ship and climbing frame.

# FODIS News



Hello lovely parents and carers,

Hope you've had a great start of the new school year.

We wanted to start by saying a huge thank you to everyone who has joined our FODIS Helpers WhatsApp group so far (if you missed it, you can find the link in the community announcements).

Frozen Friday aka Winter Warmers – second Friday of every month

Special thanks to Claire, her mum, Sam, Catherine and baby Miranda for all their help at our first Frozen Friday Winter Warmers hot chocolate & cookies event. We made an incredible £242 profit for the school. Thank you to everyone who came along and supported us. Frozen Friday Winter Warmers will run on the second Friday of every month – so we hope to see you in November!

2000s Quiz – Friday 7 November

We're really looking forward to our 2000s Quiz Night on Friday 7 November. Thanks to everyone who's already bought tickets and we'll have posters outside each classroom with a QR code if you'd like to join in the fun. There will be prizes for both the winning and the losing teams – so it's all to play for! Thanks again to our lovely volunteers for helping.

Christmas Fayre – Friday 5 December

Our next big event will be the Christmas Fayre, straight after school on Friday 5 December. There will be an earlier start time of 2:30pm for SEND families. More information to follow – and we would love as many volunteers as possible to help make it a magical afternoon for the children. Please also start collecting jam jars, as we'll once again be asking you to fill them with fun things to sell at the fayre.

Tea Towels & Christmas Cards

A final thank you to Maz, Emma, Caitlin, Camille and Lucy for helping the reception children with their portraits for the school tea towel. Ordering details to follow soon, along with codes for the Christmas cards the children have created – they've all done brilliantly. Have a wonderful half-term – we can't wait to see you soon at one of our events.

Love, FODIS x

Tracy Murray-Bate  
FODIS Chair

## Key Dates (red = dates added since last newsletter)

<b>Friday 7<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	FODIS Quiz Night
<b>Monday 10<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	Autumn Parent' Eve 3.30-6.30pm
<b>Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	Individual Photos
<b>Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	Autumn Parent' Eve 3.30-6.00pm
<b>Friday 14<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	FODIS Winter Warmers Hot Chocolate & Cookies (3-3.20pm)
<b>Friday 14<sup>th</sup> Nov</b>	Children In Need 2025

<b>Friday 5<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	FODIS Christmas Fair 3-5pm
<b>Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Christmas Lunch
<b>Friday 12<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	FODIS Winter Warmers Hot Chocolate & Cookies (3-3.20pm)
<b>Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Reception Show 9.20am
<b>Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Year 1 Show 10.30am
<b>Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Year 2 Show 4.45pm (to be held outside weather permitting)
<b>Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Year 1 Show 9.20am
<b>Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	Reception Show 10.30am
<b>Friday 19<sup>th</sup> Dec</b>	LAST DAY OF AUTUMN TERM 2

<b>Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> Jan</b>	FIRST DAY OF SPRING TERM 1
<b>16<sup>th</sup> -20<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>	HALF TERM
<b>Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb</b>	FIRST DAY OF SPRING TERM 2
<b>Monday 9<sup>th</sup> Mar</b>	Spring Parent' Eve 3.30-6.30pm
<b>Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> Mar</b>	Spring Parent' Eve 3.30-6.00pm
<b>Friday 27<sup>th</sup> Mar</b>	LAST DAY OF SPRING TERM 2
<b>30<sup>th</sup> Mar - 10<sup>th</sup> Apr</b>	EASTER HOLIDAYS
<b>Monday 13<sup>th</sup> Apr</b>	FIRST DAY OF SUMMER TERM 1
<b>Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> Apr</b>	Class Photographs
<b>Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> May</b>	Children's Parade
<b>Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May</b>	LAST DAY OF SUMMER TERM 1
<b>25<sup>th</sup> -29<sup>th</sup> May</b>	HALF TERM
<b>Monday 1<sup>st</sup> Jun</b>	INSET DAY
<b>Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> Jun</b>	FIRST DAY OF SUMMER TERM 2
<b>Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Year 2 Leaver's Show 9.20am
<b>Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Year 2 Leaver's Show 9.20am
<b>Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Reports to Parents/Carers
<b>Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July</b>	LAST DAY OF SUMMER TERM 2