

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

Head Teacher's Welcome

Dear Parents and Carers,

As always, it's been a busy second half to the autumn term, with lots of different learning activities going on. I hope you're all feeling as proud as I am of the children for their fabulous performances this week. It's such a joyful time of year with even more singing than usual, and it's always delightful to see the children learning how to overcome pre-performance butterflies in their tummies and gaining that sense of 'I did it!'



PC Tom Mills (dad of Olivia in Robin class) joined us for a KS1 assembly to tell us what it's like to be a police officer.



Our very own Mr Phil Jones (Fox Class Teacher) is a parkrun enthusiast and run director at Queen's Park Juniors' Park Run. As part of a new Park Run initiative, Mr Jones has registered Downs Infant School as a Park Run Primary.

The aim of this is to create a healthier and happier planet for everyone, and becoming a Park Run Primary is a great way to encourage pupils to be physically active, support wellbeing and embed our school further into the local community! The first of these Park Runs took place on Sunday 30th November and was well attended by families of Downs Infants.



As Miss Nina Pelling (Puffin Class Teacher) leaves us for the sunny climes of Western Australia, we are delighted to welcome Dr Vicki Frodsham to the team. Dr Frodsham has spent lots of time getting to know the children and routines, and is already becoming a familiar face around the school.

We are also saying goodbye to our Chair of Governors, Mr Tony Fallowfield, who has been a part of Downs Infants since 2014. Tony has given a phenomenal amount of time and support to our school over the years and will be sorely missed. Thank you, Tony! Since September this year, Tony has been Co-Chairing with Mrs Susan Campbell in order to ensure a smooth transition to Susan as our new Chair from January 2026.



Change is afoot among the office team, as we say farewell to our Admin Assistants, Mrs Kelly Sands and Mrs Julie Wishman. Kelly has increased her hours in her other role at Create Music, and Julie will be joining the admissions team at BHASVIC. Many thanks are owed to both Kelly and Julie for their contributions to the smooth running of the school. I'm not sure that staff parties will ever be the same again without Julie around to organise them! We look forward to welcoming Ruth Pope and Karen Tucker as our new Admin Assistants from January, although you will still see Julie for a little bit longer while she kindly supports the handover.

As part of our efforts to keep everyone safe, please can I politely request that you do not allow your child/children to climb on the little sheds, Podley cage, or the wall with our lovely mural on Treetops at pickup.

Wishing you all a happy winter break.
Best wishes,

Mrs Lisa Walker



Learning in Reception

In Maths, Reception have been exploring part and whole. The children have been learning that a whole can be made up of different parts, for example identifying two children with jumpers and one without as parts that make a whole of three. They also explored this concept through singing Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes and creating arrangements of four.

Reception were also fortunate to welcome a Rabbi, Gabriel Kantar-Webber, who delivered a wonderful talk about Hanukkah. The children learned about light, hope and miracles, and were introduced to new vocabulary such as menorah (lamp) and kippah (cloth skullcap). It was fascinating to reflect on the importance of oil in the past, and we are very grateful to Gabriel for giving up his time.

The nursery rhyme tea party was great fun, with home made jam tarts and LOTS of rhymes and games!

For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account



Learning in Year 1

In geography, Year One have been learning about the continent of Africa, reinforcing that Africa is a continent, not a country. They discovered that many African countries have two seasons rather than four, and linked this learning to science by exploring how herbivores, carnivores and omnivores move in search of food.

In English, the children have been writing an information text about a newly created animal called a 'zebaffe', which lives in the African savannah. This fictional non-fiction unit has sparked creativity, supported by the book 'Safari Flip Flap' by Axel Scheffler.

Year One also enjoyed much creativity using transient art to represent Bonfire Night.

For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account

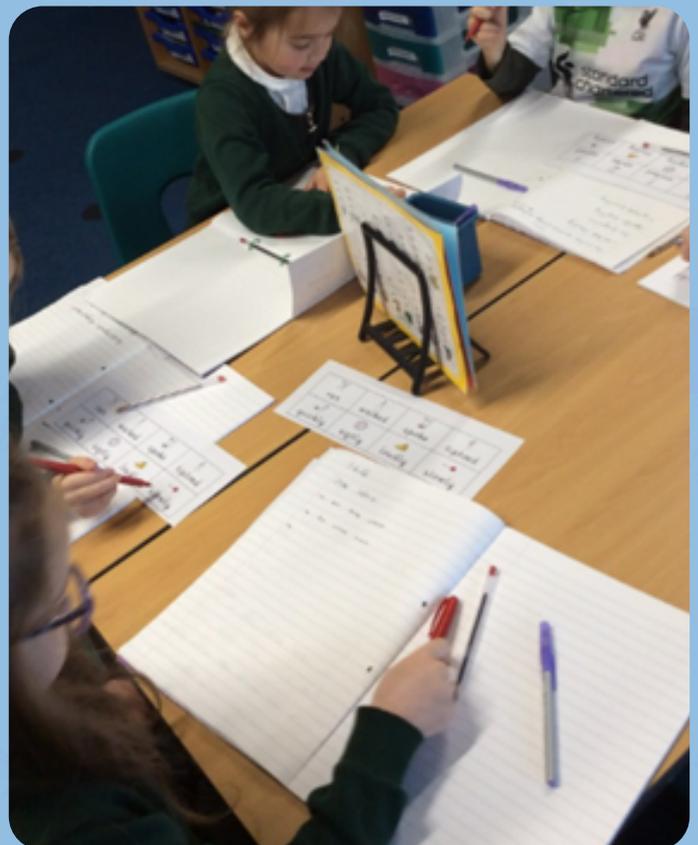


Learning in Year 2

Year Two began their English learning by exploring the portal story 'Lucy and the Ice Queen'. They practised writing descriptive sentences using nouns, adjectives and similes, before creating their own portal stories. The children focused on story structure, including the opening, build-up, problem, resolution and ending, and should be very proud of their work.

In maths, Year Two have been learning to add two two-digit numbers. They used a range of strategies, including partitioning into tens and ones, and demonstrated a strong understanding of place value. The children have also successfully learned how to cross ten.

For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account

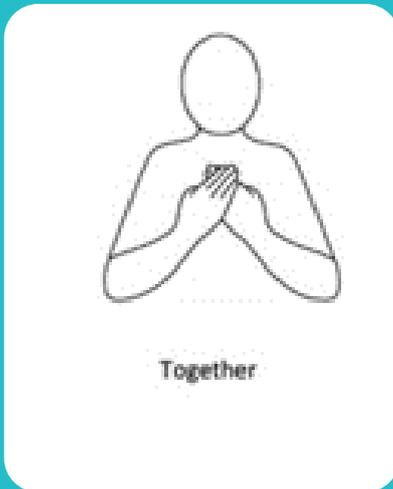


This half term's Makaton signs were:



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?!

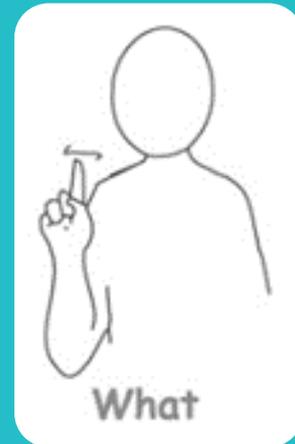
Together



Off/Finished



What



Anti Bullying



To give



Safeguarding

If you would like to speak to a member of our safeguarding team in confidence, please email: 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

Governors' News

It is fitting that for this final newsletter of the year that we thank all the FODIS organisers of the Christmas Fayre, the many helpers and also all parents and carers who came along to support the school. Thanks to you we raised over £2,000 for the school, more than was expected! Please see Tracy's FODIS round-up of the year, absolutely brilliant!

It has been a long and challenging term for Mrs. Walker and all her staff but they have once again "gone the extra mile" for our pupils and we thank them for that. The children are pretty tired as well but still found the energy to sing at maximum volume when practising for their end of term performances which, I am sure, you have enjoyed. Hopefully, there will still be a little bit of energy left for the "Santa Dash" organised by Ms. London.

Recently, our Quality of Education group met with leadership staff to discuss innovations being introduced in various curriculum areas such as phonics and maths, to help support your children's learning.

We also invited the lead of the Department of Education's Schools Resource Management Advisory team to visit the school to report on the school's use of finances and resources and benchmark us against similar schools nationally. We await the final report which could indicate areas where we can save money and help us improve our efficiency.

There will be some new faces in the office at the beginning of next term and also a new Chair of Governors, Mrs. Susan Campbell, who I'm sure will do a fantastic job leading our dedicated team of volunteers and ensuring the school goes from strength to strength.

Finally, Governors wish you and your children a joyful and peaceful holiday break and a Happy New Year when it comes.

Rainbow Club News

Thanks for all of your support so far this academic year. The Rainbow Club team wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



For the next term please ensure your child has warm clothing available including hats, coats and gloves for outside play and please put your child's name in everything!

Resources Shout Out



Message to ALL from Year 1: As part of our topic for the new year, 'Winter Wonder!' we would love to make a giant igloo. To do this we need lots of egg boxes! Over the holidays, please can you save your egg boxes and bring them to the office or the Year 1 classes in the new year. Thank you so much for your help, we can't wait to get building our magical winter wonderland!

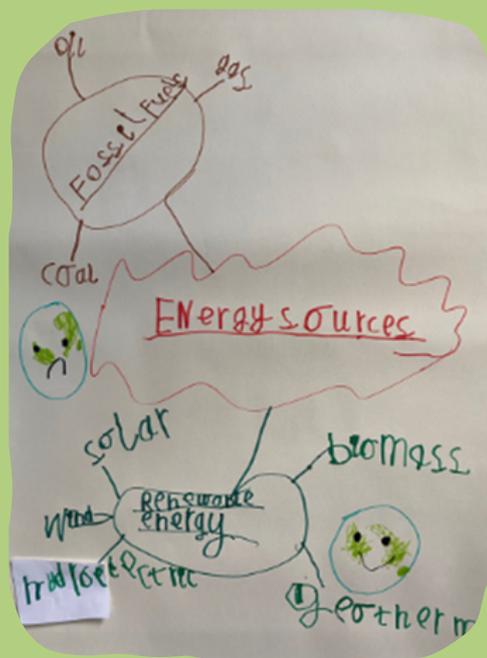
As always, all year groups need lots of packaging for junk modelling. Please note that we're unable to accept packaging from products containing nuts or seeds. We also can't accept packaging from medicines or toilet roll tubes.



Our City, Our World

Dear lovely families,

This term, your engagement with the Energy theme challenges has been amazing! Thank you so much for taking part and sharing all your learning from home with us. It has been a joy to see how you engaged with the learning at home. I have particularly loved seeing how you learnt about where energy comes from, what we use it for, and how we can try to use less of it. It's also been great to see so many of you exploring how reusable energy is made and even having a go at making your own windfarms!



As a school, we also took part in the 'Big Switch Off', to support our efforts to reduce energy usage. We are tracking how much energy we use through 'Energy Sparks' and are on a mission to significantly reduce the school's energy consumption by July 2026.

Please do check Tapestry for some lovely Christmas eco challenges and I look forward to working with you next term on our next theme - Transport.

Best wishes,

Ms Yvie Mason
OCOW Lead

School Council



The School Council has been busy with lots of important business this half term. Among other activities, our representatives have conducted a health & safety walk around the school grounds with Mrs Walker and have met with Parent Governor, Emma Smith, to share pupil voice on what it is like being a child in their class. Here are their thoughts...

Downs Infant School

School Council Pupil Voice

Nov 2025

What's it like being a child in your class?

My friends make me feel happy.

I like to do Art in COOL time or Science with metal and magnets.

When I don't know how to do my Maths sometimes I ask the teacher.

I don't like the noise at COOL time.

I feel safe in my classroom

I feel safe when I sit on the carpet in my space.

It's fun because people treat me kind and I treat people kind and we look after each other.

Mostly all the time it's noisy in the lunch hall.

When my maths is hard sometimes I try a different way or I ask a friend.

My teacher is REALLY nice and REALLY kind.

Sometimes the Maths is hard. sometimes I tell the teacher.

One thing I like and I don't ever want to change is that we have a toilet in our classroom. I like it.

I have a best friend in my class and that makes me happy.

I feel happy when I play with my friends.

I like to play in COOL time. I do adding in Cool time.

I think it's loud at lunch time.

My teacher is kind to me and my friends

My classroom has lego and it's really fun.

FODIS News



Well, this term seems to have raced by. It's been lovely to meet so many of the new reception parents at our FODIS (Friends of Downs Infant School) PTA events. We hope you and your little ones are settling in well and that the transition into Year 1 and Year 2 has gone well.

We wanted to start by extending a very big thank you to our wonderful class reps. You've been amazing at navigating the many messages and general admin that can feel quite overwhelming. Sincerest thanks for putting yourselves forward - you really are doing a brilliant job!

Here's a little update on our FODIS events, which kicked off with our monthly Winter Warmers (Frozen Friday) hot chocolate & cookies sale. Over the last three months we have made almost £600, all thanks to those who came along and to our incredible team of volunteers: Claire, Isla's Nanny Zoe, Worth, Sam, Catherine and baby Miranda.

And we absolutely LOVED hanging out with you at the 00s Quiz in November. Such a fun night and we were blown away by how many people came. Special thanks to Gabriella for the online sales set up, to Claire & Jade for totting up the scores, to Lindsay and Jay for running the bar and to Jen and all our helpers for tidying up at the end of the night. We hope Flight of the Kingfishers and The Losing Team are still sporting their medals and wooden spoons! The event raised a mammoth £800 for the school - all thanks to you!



And it doesn't end there, for every person that bought a tea towel (thanks Maz and helpers for putting all the artwork together, packaging the orders and again to Gabriella for the online sales set up) or Christmas merch with your little one's artwork on, you have contributed to the school receiving a commission of over £1400 - which is incredible. So thank you for each and every one of your orders.

And as the school term closes the biggest event for us was the Christmas Fayre on the 5th December. Again, the volunteer support (too many of you to mention - but you know who you are), all the donations received, raffle prizes and Dominic from Dolphins stepping into Santa's big boots made the event magical. We can't believe we made over £2000! Just mind-blowing and we are very very grateful to you all.

We'll let you know where the money will be going to fund the school in due course. And if you'd like to be part of the discussion, please come to our AGM at The Open House which will be at the end of January - date TBC. We can brainstorm more ideas and discuss how the money can be spent on our lovely school.

All of FODIS events couldn't happen without the kindness of the school always supporting and helping us - so biggest shout outs go to Cath and Julie in the office, Luke adapting Rainbow Club to accommodate us, Mrs Walker, Mr Standing and Miss Cargill. And of course, our Treasurer Camille who works hard behind the scenes on all our events - so again a huge thanks for all that you do.

We'll be concluding the year with Christmas tree collections - so again, a very big thank you for your support and all those giving their time and strength.

So all that's left to say is, have a wonderful, restful Christmas break and here's to doing it all again next year!

Tracy Murray-Bate
FODIS Chair

Key Dates (red = dates added since last newsletter)

Tuesday 6th Jan	FIRST DAY OF SPRING TERM 1
Wednesday 21st Jan	Year 1 & Year 2 Mathematics Workshops in school hall. Sessions at 9.15-10.15am & 6.15-7.15pm
Wednesday 28th Jan	Scooter Assembly and Year 2 Scooter Workshop
Thursday 29th Jan	Scooter Assembly and Year 2 Scooter Workshop
16th -20th Feb	HALF TERM

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