Downs Infant School Newsletter

Summer Term 1 2026

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

Head Teacher's Welcome



Dear Parents and Carers,

The final half-term of the year has been filled with some wonderful celebrations of the children's learning. Whilst navigating the heatwaves, the children have managed to practise the carousel of sporting activities that culminated in our fun-filled Sports' Days for each year group.



Year 2's performance of 'Project Planet' delivered crucial messages about the importance of biodiversity, whilst allowing the children to experience and develop a plethora of different skills: performing, promotions, prop making, back stage logistics, tech, and important front of house interactions with our audience. Well done, Year 2!

We were delighted to welcome back The Book Nook to Downs Infants this term for another fabulous book fair. Their knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff spent time with every class, sharing a wonderful selection of books and inspiring a love of reading in our children. It was a real treat for the children to enjoy dedicated book sessions with experts who brought stories to life and introduced them to exciting new titles. Before and after school, families also had the opportunity to browse and purchase books from an incredible range of high-quality children's literature. Thank you to everyone who supported the book fair and helped us celebrate the joy of reading together.



There has been a lot of work going on to prepare the children for transitions to their new year groups and schools, including our new Reception children joining us in September. It's been lovely to see the return of the current Year 3 children from Downs Junior School, supporting our Year 2 children in their transition 'across the road'. Although we are technically saying farewell to Year 2, we know there'll be regular opportunities for them to return, which is always lovely for us and them! Please note that transition booklets for children going into Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 can be found oon our website https://downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk/about-us/virtual-tour

Sadly, we're saying farewell to a small number of staff members, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their individual contributions to our school:



After 23 years as School Business Manager at Downs Infants, Mrs Ann Mitchell is retiring. Ann has been a tremendous support to me as Headteacher, and I know many of you have got to know Ann as a friendly and supportive face in the office over the years.



Dr Vicki Frodsham joined us as Puffin Class Teacher at Christmas. This was on a fixed-term basis due to our planned reduction in Published Admission Numbers (PAN), but Vicki was quick to settle and become a truly valued member of the team.



One of our Teaching Assistants, Ms Caroline Nunneley, has retired due to ill-health after 16 years of commitment to Downs Infants.



Ms Daniella Noble, known best to our families who collect their children from The Hive each afternoon, will be leaving us as her fixed-term contract draws to a close.



Mr Graham Weller, a member of our team of cleaners, retired at the beginning of July and is already enjoying spending most days out on the golf course!



In other news, I am delighted to share with you the arrival of Miss Emily London's baby girl, Lonnie on 3rd June. Miss London paid us a visit this week and introduced Lonnie to Starfish Class who were so quiet and gentle that baby Lonnie managed to sleep through the whole visit!



In this week's whole school assembly, the children were all introduced to the Summer Reading Challenge 2026 and I promised them I'd share the link in the newsletter! This annual challenge has been designed to promote a love of reading and to prevent the common decline in children's reading attainment that is often seen over the summer break. Families are invited to sign up online (https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/), at your local library, or even at The Book Nook independent book shop in Hove. All you need to do is sign up, read books, and collect rewards, culminating in a special Summer Reading Challenge certificate!

IMPORTANT: Tighter timings from September 2026
Please note that when we return in September, we will be tightening up timings for morning drop off. The current timings of a 10-minute window for drop off are a legacy of Covid times, and create an unnecessarily long period of transition into school at the beginning of each day. In order to maximise learning and minimise disruption to classes, from 3rd September we will be opening and closing school gates and classroom doors as follows:

8.40am – Gates and classroom doors open
8.45am - Gates close for entry and classroom doors close

For the benefit of ALL children, please could I urge you to plan your morning routines ahead of the new school year so you can support us in this important shift to increase efficiency and effectiveness. **Please note that late arrivals not only cause disruption to classes, but also delay the office team in the important safeguarding task of following up on absences.**

Timings for the end of the day will remain the same (school gates open at 2.55pm and the school day ends at 3.00pm).

I would like to say a massive THANK YOU to you all for another incredibly successful year at Downs Infant School. The passion that we share as a community for our wonderful school never ceases to amaze me. The many ways in which you all contribute, from time and/or fundraising, to the positive words and greetings at the school gate, make the world of difference. Thank you!

Wishing you all a fabulous summer break. We look forward to welcoming the children back on **Thursday 3rd September** (Tuesday 1st and Wednesday 2nd September are INSET days).

Best wishes,

L. Walker

Lisa Walker

Learning in Reception

It has been another busy and exciting few weeks of learning, creativity and fun across the school.

In Talk for Writing, the children have been developing their information-writing skills by creating their own Fab Facts all about Spants. Did you know that Spants can often be found down the drain, sliding and crawling up and down! The children loved sharing their imaginative ideas and interesting facts.

As part of Healthy Week, the children became budding chefs, helping to prepare delicious fruit smoothies and fruit kebabs. They carefully practised their cutting and slicing skills before enjoying the very best part, tasting their healthy creations. There were lots of smiles and enthusiastic thumbs up all round!

We are also incredibly proud of the progress the children are making with their reading. They have been showing great determination as they tackle longer words and increasingly challenging books, and it is wonderful to see their confidence growing every day.





For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account

Learning in Year 1

Year 1 have continued their work on A Tangled Tale, learning the story structure, planning and writing their own innovated versions with super exciting openings. It has been wonderful to see their creativity and growing confidence as young writers.

The children have also enjoyed an "art-tastic" half term inspired by the work of artist Georgia O'Keeffe. Using watercolours and pastels, they carefully added colour, texture and detail to create beautiful pieces of artwork, and the results are truly stunning. The children have also been busy making sculptures inspired by Joan Miro.

In Healthy Week, all children made a healthy wrap and we were thrilled to see so many children trying new flavours and textures. Everyone enjoyed sampling them in pockets of shade around the school!







For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account

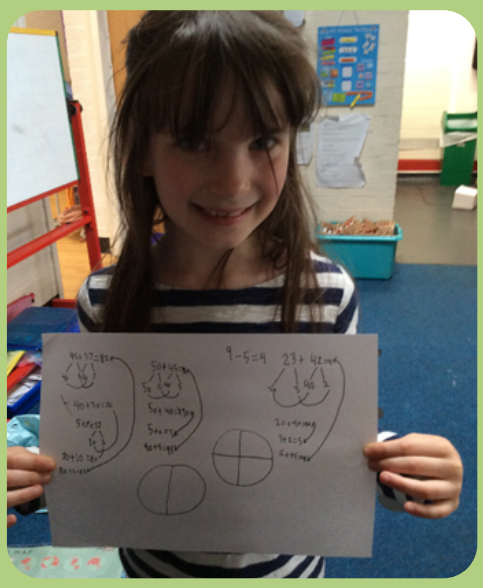
Learning in Year 2

Year 2 began the term with an exciting journey aboard Downs Infants' Airways, travelling all the way to Australia! After touching down, the children immersed themselves in learning about this fascinating country, exploring its climate, famous landmarks and unique features as part of their geography learning.
A real highlight of the term was the fantastic Year 2 production. The show was a wonderful celebration of teamwork, creativity and determination, with every child playing an important role in bringing it to life. Our talented actors and singers wowed the audience with their performances, while the promotions team worked hard behind the scenes to design posters, flyers and programmes. The art team used their creativity to build props and scenery, transforming the stage into a spectacular setting.

The backstage and technical team expertly coordinated props and scene changes throughout rehearsals and performances, while our front of house team warmly welcomed guests and confidently introduced the show. Every role was equally important, and it was wonderful to see the children take such pride and responsibility in their contributions.

We were incredibly proud of all the children for the enthusiasm, resilience and teamwork they showed throughout the process. Thank you to all the families who came along to support the performances and helped make the show such a memorable success. It is certainly a term that Year 2 will remember for a long time to come.





For more detail and photos, please check your Tapestry account

The best of C.O.O.L Time (Choose Our Own Learning)

As always, there has been plenty of wonderful learning taking place during C.O.O.L. Time (Choose Our Own Learning). From imaginative role play and creative art activities, to sharing books with friends; the children have continued to demonstrate curiosity, independence and a real love of learning.



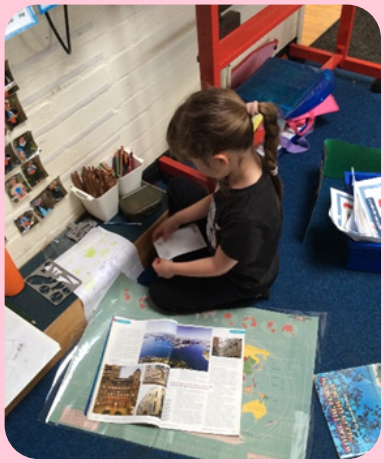














All things musical!

Rocksteady brings the excitement of being in a real band to children, helping them develop confidence, teamwork, resilience and a love of music. Through weekly lessons, children have the opportunity to learn instruments, perform together and experience the joy of making music as part of a group. Some of us enjoyed watching our friends at our first-ever gig! We were so proud and impressed by all performers, of which there were 87!

We were also treated to some incredible violin and recorder playing earlier in the term. What a lot of talented musicians we have!









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?!

Before



hand towards you

After



hand away from you

Who



New



Difficult



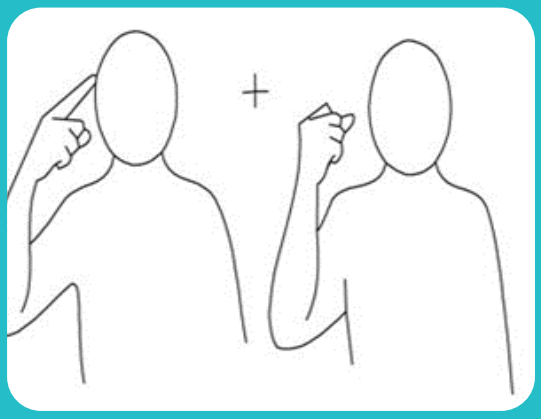
Rotate fist with thumb on the same spot

Easy



Two taps on the cheek

Remember



Safeguarding

If you would like to speak to our Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Lisa Walker, or 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

As we come to the end of the summer term, I would like to thank all staff, school leaders and everyone in the wider school community for their hard work in giving our children the best possible experience. This has been especially appreciated during the recent period of unusually hot weather.

The Resources Committee met again to discuss financial planning and priorities for the year ahead. Budgets continue to be challenging, and governors are scrutinising spending carefully so that we can balance our financial responsibilities with securing the best outcomes for pupils.

Together with school leaders, we also held a Quality of Education meeting to review educational data and track pupil progress. This gives us a valuable opportunity to step back, study trends, ensure we are supporting all pupils to meet their potential, and celebrate our successes.

The school fair on 4 July was a huge success. Our thanks go to FODIS, without whom these events could not take place.

After 4 years, Emma Smith, one of our parent governors, is retiring from the board. We are very grateful for the time, care and thoughtful insight Emma has given to the role, and she will be greatly missed.

This means we now have the following vacancies on the governing board:

- One parent governor to replace Emma and join Catherine MacKenzie as your voice on the board.
- Two co-opted governors from the school or wider community.

We already have a wide range of skills among our current governors, but we would particularly welcome applications from people who are comfortable working with numbers and who may be able to sit on our Resources (finance) Committee. The role does require a time commitment, but it is hugely rewarding.

If you are interested, or if you know someone in the wider community who may be interested, please contact me at susancampbell@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a wonderful summer break and send very best wishes to the Year 2 pupils, who will be leaving us at the end of term.

Best wishes

Susan Campbell, Chair of Governors

Resources Shout Out



Are you having a summer clear out?
Mrs Flitton would like the following if possible:

- Plants (real or artificial)
- Plant pots (plastic) and baskets
- Cushions, beanbags, floor cushions, rugs
- Wicker baskets and wooden crates
- Natural items such as pinecones, pebbles, shells and driftwood
- Neutral-coloured blankets, throws or fabric
- Fairy lights and lamps
- Sensory and fidget resources
- Pieces of comfortable furniture (sofas, loveseats, futons, armchairs)
- Bookshelves and storage units / wall mounted shelves
- Fridge/freezer - either mini or full size / ice machine
- Thomas The Tank Engine themed toys and books



Please send photos of any items that you can donate to amyflitton@downsinf.brighton-hove.sch.uk

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. If you could bring in your recycling on a Monday morning that would be great! Thank you.



School Council



Our School Council representatives have all been busy at their weekly meetings with Mrs Walker. In addition to learning the Makaton sign of the week to teach to the whole school, they have completed 'The Big Future' survey for the Children's Commissioner for England, Dame Rachel de Souza. If you would like to complete this with your own child/children, please visit https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/the-big-future/.

Our reps have also given important feedback on assemblies and led a project to name the new shared learning space that we'll gain for Year 2 when we lose Robin classroom over the summer. This space will become known as 'The Nest'.

Thank you, School Council, for all your valuable contributions!



Our City, Our World

Here is a little summary of how Our City Our World (OCOW) has been incorporated into our learning throughout the school. For all year groups, this has included lots of opportunities to build on whole class learning so that the children can be independent, explore their ideas, adapt and improve their skills during Continuous Provision and at home.

Reception have been given lots of opportunities to observe the natural world and changes over time in their garden and in 'the Ocean' (shared learning area). They have learnt about the changing seasons, observed the weather and used a range of recycled materials to create models. They also went on a trip to Washbrooks Farm, and observed wonders in their curiosity cube, embedding their understanding of the world learning.





Year 1 have been using reclaimed resources throughout the year in our new Burrow (shared learning area) to get creative. We have reduced our plastic modelling materials and procurement of resources, changing printing techniques in art to reduce waste and expenditure. They also introduced potato planting alongside the Superhero topic, taking the importance of looking after our environment to new heights.

Year 2 children grew a variety of vegetables in their planter. This year, the beetroots thrived and the children made muffins! They enjoyed a brilliant trip to Lewes Railway Land Nature Reserve where they focused on plant identification and animal habitats. Year 2 also used their design skills to create eco friendly vehicles, powered without fossil fuels for helping to clean the environment of waste.





Throughout the school we are encouraging children to be curious about the natural world and to care about our environment in a variety of ways. The children took part in our hedge project, planting hedges to increase biodiversity; they have termly assemblies on our key themes for this year: Energy, Transport and Water, and the home engagement from families has been huge, with wonderful activities carried out at home and shared with us in school.

Friends Of Downs Infant School

FODIS

FAREWELL ★ Y2

We're very sad to say goodbye to **our incredible Year 2 children and their families.** We wish you all the very best as you head off to the juniors, and hope you'll come back and visit us at future fayres! **A big thank you to Jen & Amy for organising the leavers' T-shirts,** which all our Year 2s will receive on the last day of term.

OUR ★ HELPERS

As we come to the end of another school year, a **huge thank you to every single one of you who has supported FODIS.** A special shout-out to our amazing **Frozen Friday Crew, Quiz Night** helpers and revellers, **Spring and Summer Fayre volunteers and attendees,** everyone who donated, hustled or bought a raffle ticket, to our **26 in 26 sponsorship superheroes,** our wonderful **gardeners Sue & Gabriella,** and everyone who rolled up their sleeves to help throughout the year.

STAFF & REPS

We couldn't do any of our events without the help of the school - so a **MASSIVE thank you to Mrs Walker, Miss Cargill, Mr Standing, the unsung office heroes Ann, Cath, Ruth & Karen and to the teachers for all their help.** And not forgetting our **A1 class reps,** keeping those plates spinning and ensuring the communication flows more smoothly - you really are a lovely bunch!

HELLO RECEPTION

While we're not wishing the summer away, we can't wait to **welcome our new Reception families in September.** If you're **looking for pre-loved school uniform for any year child,** email sizes and items needed to **fodisfreeshop@gmail.com** and we'll do our very best to help.

GET INVOLVED ★

If you'd like to **get involved with FODIS** next year—whether it's helping occasionally or joining the committee—we'd absolutely love to have you @ **fodisgeneral@gmail.com**.

HAVE A WONDERFUL SUMMER AND THANKS FOR EVERYTHING!

Love, The FODIS Team - Tracy, Lindsay, Camille & Anna-Maria xx

Friends Of Downs Infant School

FODIS

2025-26 FUNDRAISING

XMAS MERCH **£349**	TEA TOWELS **£673**	SUMMER FAYRE **£3,057**	SPRING FAYRE **£1,764**
XMAS TREE COLLECTION **£795**	PARENT DONATIONS **£614**	26 IN 26 **£876**	XMAS FAYRE **£2,354**
EASY FUND -RAISING **£302**	CO-OP GRANT **£1,645**	FROZEN FRIDAYS **£1,161**	WBD WONKA BARS **£544**
CAF GRANT **£200**	TRIV QUIZ **£467**	00'S QUIZ **£917**	

MONEY RAISED £15,718

SCHOOL SUPPORT £12,460

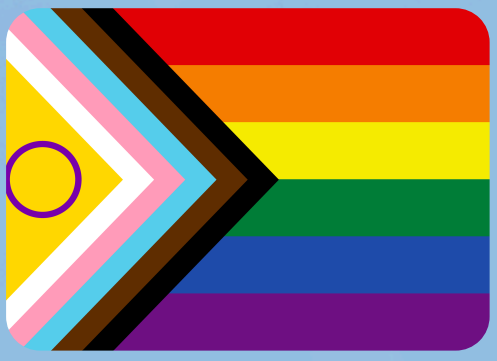
PHONICS RESOURCE **£3,214**	HALL AUDIO EQUIPMENT **£371**	SCOOTER ASSEMBLY **£400**	GREAT FIRE OF LONDON THEATRE **£720**
TWINKL SUB-SCRIPTION **£683**	REKENREKS (MATHS) **£365**	JUMP START JONNY **£1,127**	Y2 LEAVERS T-SHIRTS **£758**
CLASS AMAZON VOUCHERS **£1,100**	BOOK WEEK RESOURCES **£173**	SEN CLASS TENTS **£104**	CHILDRENS' PARADE T-SHIRTS **£230**
SCHOOL RECEPTION GLOW UP **£1,379**	SCHOOL HEDGE **£1,026**	SCHOOL GARDENING **£750**	CLASS 'SUN' CUSHIONS **£50**

WE COULDN'T HAVE DONE IT WITHOUT YOU! X

Key Dates (red = dates added since last newsletter)

Tuesday 1st Sept	INSET DAY 1
Wednesday 2nd Sept	INSET DAY 2
Thursday 3rd Sept	First day back to school for Year 1 and Year 2
Wednesday 9th Sept	First day of school for half of Reception - see individual settling letter
Thursday 10th Sept	First day of school for half of Reception - see individual settling letter
Thursday 15th Sept	First full day for Reception
Wednesday 14th Oct	Youth the Gap parent/carer session (details to follow in the autumn) 9-10am
Friday 23rd Oct	INSET DAY 3
Monday 4th Jan	INSET DAY 4
Monday 7th June	INSET DAY 5

Downs Infants Rainbow Families Group



A new group is forming for all LGBTQ+ parents of Downs Infants students. Whilst we are an integrated part of the wider school community, this group is solely to foster connections between rainbow families at Downs Infants. Please feel free to email downsinfants.rainbowfamilies@gmail.com if you are interested in participating and **we will have a first informal play date at Blakers Playground on Wednesday 2 September at 3:30 pm** (it is an INSET day for Downs Infants). Have a great summer!