

Newsletter

Dear parents,

Welcome back! I hope everyone had lovely summer holidays. The children have all come back to school looking really smart and ready to start the new year!

For new parents, newsletters are written every fortnight. Paper copies of newsletters are rarely sent out, as they are put on the website (downside-primary.co.uk) and/or parents can download the 'Ourschools' app – which will send a notification to your phone every time there is school news (details of this are attached to this letter). Should parents prefer a paper copy, please ask for one at the School Office.

Last year, we were really pleased with our Year 6 SATs results, the children all worked so hard and achieved some fantastic results! Our maths remained well above the National average at 88% and our writing was just above the National average at 79%. After two years of extremely hard work, we were really pleased to have a 13% increase in Reading to 74% and are now just 1% below the National Average (75%). Thank you to all those parents who have supported us in our quest to get all children reading at home!

This year, we continue to focus on Reading and will be working hard as a school to improve school attendance – as this sits well below National data and needs improvement: further details later in this letter.

Meet the teacher

We have organised open classrooms for parents to meet their child's teacher and have a look around the classroom. These dates are below:

- Reception – Monday 17th September 3pm onwards
- Years 1 and 2 – Tuesday 18th September 2018 3pm onwards
- Years 3,4,5 and 6 – Wednesday 19th September 2018 3pm onwards

Meet the Year Leader

At the beginning of each year, we give parents the opportunity to meet the Year Leader and these opportunities are noted below:

- Year R – Miss Dinham - 7th September @ 3pm
- Year 1 – Mrs Manning - 11th September @ 3pm
- Year 2 – Mrs Ball - 11th September @ 9am
- Year 3 – Mr Dilkes (temporary)- 19th September @ 3pm
- Year 4 – Mr Dilkes 12th September @ 3pm
- Year 5 – Miss Khan – 6th September @ 9am
- Year 6 – Miss Bell – 13th September @ 9am

Concerns regarding children:

Should you have any concerns regarding your child, please speak to the class teacher in the first instance. Should your issue not be resolved then please contact your child's Year leader, their details are below.

Any further concerns should be directed to:

- Years R, 1 and 2 - Mrs James and Mrs Lacey (Deputy Headteachers)
- Year 3 and 4 – Mr Dilkes (Assistant Headteacher KS2)
- Years 5 and 6 – Miss Bell (Assistant Headteacher KS2)

Mrs Leaves continues to be the main contact for parents of children with Special Needs. Please do not hesitate to contact her if you have any concerns about your child's Special needs or if you are concerned about your child having Special Needs.

At the end of term, Mrs Clark was promoted to Assistant Head for Pastoral needs – this role will include attendance, wellbeing and behaviour. Please do not hesitate to contact her if you have any concerns regarding your child's wellbeing.

Parents' evenings:

- Tuesday 16th October - 3.45pm – 6pm
- Wednesday 17th October - 5.30pm – 8pm

Taking children out of school for appointments.

Please can I ask parents to try their best to organize routine appointments for before / after school and in the holidays. If you need to take your child to a hospital appointment or urgent doctor/dentist appointments and this appointment falls during the lunch hour, please collect your child prior to the lunch hour starting – the Office staff will not be able to get a child if it is during the lunch hour.

Lunch hours are as follows:

- Reception – 12.00pm – 1.00pm (11.45 at the moment)
- Year 1 – 12.15pm – 1.15pm
- Year 2 – 12.30pm – 1.30pm
- Year 3 - 12.00pm – 1.00pm
- Year 4 – 12.15pm – 1.15pm
- Year 5 – 12.30pm – 1.30pm
- Year 6 – 12.45pm – 1.45pm

School trips

As always, I have tried to note down the planned trips for next year and have attached this to the back of the letter. Please note this is provisional and may be subject to change – but it is a guide!

Attendance

Please see the next page regarding the school's attempts to improve our attendance figures.

Yours sincerely,

K. Hooker

Attendance

Punctuality

We have redesigned the school timetable to enable as much learning as possible to take place in the mornings. As a result, most lessons will start at 9am. As a reminder:

8.45 – Classroom doors open

8.50 – 8.55 – Registration

8.55 – Gates close and children need to access the school through the main entrance – child is registered as **LATE**

9.10 – Registers close and children are registered as an **UNAUTHORISED LATE**

Family workers will contact you if we notice your child has regular unauthorised lates and the Educational Welfare Officer will take action, in line with the Local Authority policy.

Term Time Leave / holidays (Leave of absence)

This academic year, we need to reduce the amount of absence in our school. Currently the levels of absence at Downside, are far higher than National figures and the number of children who are defined as being 'persistent' absentees is also far higher.

Leave of Absence policy

Please find attached a copy of the Local Authority's new Leave of Absence Policy, which the Governors have adopted. There is also a new form to complete for any leave requests.

Key points from the policy:

- There is no longer a 95% expectation for attendance. The expectation for every child is 100% attendance.
- Leave of absence requests **must be made in advance or the leave cannot be authorised** – the policy states at least two weeks and this has been agreed by Governors.
- As has always been the case, Leave of Absence of absence is only granted in **exceptional circumstances**.
- Children will be taken off roll if they have 20 days or more unauthorised absence
- Where five unauthorised leave days or more are taken, each parent will continue to receive a penalty fine, per child.

In addition, it has been agreed that at Downside, all parents considering Leave of Absence should meet with Mrs Khan, Family and Community Manager or one of the Family Workers prior to booking flights / the leave. Therefore, if you are considering booking leave, please arrange a meeting with Mrs Khan. If parents chose to apply for the leave, after their meeting with Mrs Khan then they should complete the form and hand it in to the school office.

Parents should be aware that some parts of the National Curriculum are only taught once in a child's lifetime at the school and if these sessions are missed then this can impact the child's attainment at the end of Year 6. For example, if a child is absent for two weeks they could miss the whole of a science unit (e.g. teeth). At the end of Year 6, that child will not have an assessment for 'teeth' and could therefore not achieve 'expected' in their Science assessment.

Attendance (continued)

Parents should be aware of children's Statutory assessments:

- In **Year 2**, children take their tests at any time in May. At Downside, these tests are part of the daily timetable and we do not make them formal; however they do happen! In addition, teachers base their assessments on the children's books/ learning – if a child has missed a week / two weeks for a holiday – they will have lost precious learning and there could be insufficient evidence in their books.
- In **Year 6**, children are tested formally one week in May, on the whole of the Key Stage 2 curriculum. The teachers continually revise Maths and Literacy learning throughout the whole year.
- In addition, writing teacher assessment is taking place all year, up until the end of June – some of the children's best writing happens between the end of the May tests and the end of June.

Persistent absentees

Children who miss 10% or more sessions (2 sessions per day), at any given time, are categorised as Persistent absentees. At the end of the year (380 sessions), children who miss more than 19 days (38 sessions) are persistent absentees.

As a school, we will continue to track children carefully and let you know if your child is at risk of becoming categorised as a persistent absentee.

For example, in the Autumn term – a child would be classed as a persistent absentee if they have missed 7.5 days.

We recognise that some children may be very ill / have an operation etc and will miss this number of days; we will, obviously, understand this. However, there are some children who have sporadic days off and Family workers will work specifically with these parents.

Unauthorised absences – Penalty warning letters

The school's educational Welfare Officer completes regular register checks. If a child has missed a number of days of school then the EWO will be in contact to issue a Penalty Warning letter – this is standard practice. Should a child continue to have poor attendance at school, after the Penalty warning, then a Penalty Notice will be issued with a fine.



Leave of Absence

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 have been amended and come into force from 1st September 2013. **Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.**

Requests for leave of absence should not normally be granted for the purposes of a holiday. The law does not give any entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Head Teachers have the discretion to authorise leave of absence in **exceptional** circumstances and it is only for the Head Teacher to determine what is truly exceptional. School days are precious; children only attend school 190 out of 365 days. There are 175 days a year which parents can use for any activities other than school.

Applications for Leave of absence

Requests must be made in advance or the leave cannot be authorised. All requests should normally be made at least two weeks in advance to the Head Teacher by completing the school application form. A parent/adult with whom the child resides with must make the application even though the pupil may not be taking the proposed leave with them. The form must be fully completed and you will receive a written response confirming if the request will be authorised or not. **If you are travelling abroad you will need to supply us with confirmation of your booking including date booked and return flight tickets, such as bringing a copy of the flight tickets into the school reception for us to copy.**

Unauthorised Absence

If you take your child out of school without the school's prior authorisation the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (which is illegal) and noted in your child's school records. Leave of absence can only be authorised by the Head Teacher.

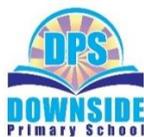
Where a parent/carer has taken their child on leave of absence during term time for 5 consecutive school days or more, without the Head Teacher's authorisation, you could receive a Penalty Notice. In these circumstances a warning will not be given. Penalty Notices are per parent, per child as appropriate, so if there are 2 parents both will need to pay the fine for each child. Penalty Notices will need to be paid within 21 days at £60 or £120 within 28 days, part payments are not accepted. There is no appeal process for a penalty notice. Unpaid Penalty Notices, result in prosecution for the absence in the magistrate's court. Please note all adults with care of the child are usually liable. Penalty Notices are an alternative to prosecution for failing to ensure a child's regular attendance and will only be used once per pupil in an academic year before prosecution takes place.

Failure to return to school on the date expected

If there is a reason which delays the pupil in returning to school the parent/guardian must inform the school immediately. The school will require evidence of this issue and will then decide whether the absence will be authorised. For any travel arrangements outside of the UK we require proof of return flights, prior to the leave being taken - this may protect you from receiving unauthorised absence for your child and a fine if they are unable to return on the date expected.

Each case will be assessed individually and medical evidence from abroad is not routinely accepted. Please note prolonged unauthorised absence from school can also result in your child's name being removed from the school roll and on return you would need to re-apply for another school place.

Revised 09/05/18



2018 – 19 proposed school trips

Please find a list of proposed trips for each year group this year. Internal visitors and workshops have not been noted, as these tend to be financed by the school and have no cost implications for parents.

The prices are purely a guide – admission fees and coach costs are variable and it is only when we make our final bookings that we have firm costings.

Year group	Autumn	Spring	Summer
R	Local library (no charge)		Wendover woods £5 Minibeasts workshop £3
1		Royal banquet approx. £2	Woburn Safari Park £15
2		TBC £15 - £20	London Zoo £20
3	Tudor day (£9.50) in school	Stockwood Park approx £10	Chiltern open air museum (£15)
4	Ancient Greek day (£10) Tower of London £15	Verulamium Park £10	Minibeasts workshop £3
5	Sea life centre £20	British Museum £20	Shortenhills Residential trip (approx. £100-£125) Food and Farming -approx. £15
6		World War trip / visitor approx. £10	Cadburys World approx. £20 Treat: Legoland approx. £20 Residential one night school camp approx. £25



Download this app to ensure you receive school newsletters and school notifications to your phone!

Instructions for download:

1. Using your device (iPad, iPhone, smart pad, tablet or android phone), visit the relevant marketplace for your product (Apple Store or Google Play).
2. Search for '**OurSchoolsApp**' and download the app.
3. Once downloaded, use the search bar within the app and enter the postcode (LU4 8EZ) or Downside Primary School.
4. Hit the search button.
5. Once you see Downside Primary School displayed, just touch the screen on the school name.
6. Confirm your choice by pressing 'OK'.