



DOWNLANDS SCHOOL

GENERAL INFORMATION

“An impressive school with high expectations”

Popular and Oversubscribed

Downlands Community School is an 11-16 co-educational school, which serves a semi-rural, village catchment area in Mid Sussex. Four main junior schools feed into Downlands and in recent years many parents residing outside the designated catchment area have elected to send their children to Downlands, increasing our number on roll to 1019. Two school coaches serve the outlying villages and a number of pupils come from Burgess Hill to the north and Brighton from the south via the main London to Brighton train line.

The intake, in terms of ability, is slightly above the national average. The percentage of pupils on free school meals is 4.5% and percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups 6.2%. The school enjoys an excellent reputation and remains popular within the area and as a consequence is oversubscribed. As a result, there are plans to increase the intake from 7 to 8 Forms of entry with associated improvements to our buildings and facilities for 2016.

Academic Success and Excellence due to High Expectations

We are an ambitious school and seek excellence in all we do. We have placed teaching and learning at the heart of our work and our focus has seen a strong trend of improvement over the past years from 60+% including English and Mathematics to maintaining 70+% for the past 3 years. We set our whole school and pupil targets on FFTD and aim in the next two years to obtain outcomes that will put the school securely in the top 10% and even 5% of similar schools nationally, which will mean moving to 80+%.

The most recent government statistics published on “Raiseonline” suggest that OFSTED would judge our pupil outcomes as outstanding. (Our most recent Ofsted Inspection took place some time ago in January 2012 when the Inspectors found the school to be “good with outstanding features”. Considerable further improvement has been achieved since then.

A copy of the Report can be viewed on the School’s website www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk.)

We provide strong, structured support for pupils with additional needs. Teaching assistants help these pupils meet their targets through in class support and withdrawal. We have devised our own, successful programme for gifted and talented pupils called iGifted.

The curriculum is reasonably traditional being broad and balanced. However, we teach a two year Key Stage Three curriculum allowing pupils in Year 8 to make some choices for Year 9. The Key Stage 4 options for GCSE ensure that pupils are provided with a curriculum to meet the English Baccalaureate.

Outstanding Pastoral Care

We are extremely proud of our strong pastoral team and system which supports all pupils and their parents. The school encourages all pupils not only to succeed academically, but to broaden their interests beyond the formal curriculum, and the very stable and highly committed staff team provide excellent support and care for all pupils.

Heads of Year and their teams of tutors are supported by Pastoral Support Officers who work with individual pupils and liaise with parents and carers. Learning Mentors provide assistance to pupils who need extra, individual support to help them achieve their targets.

Good relationships between staff and pupils are a feature of the School. Recently, there has been an initiative to build on this through a new behaviour policy which has strengthened recognition of achievement and rewards whilst providing more consistent expectations which has reduced minor disruption from its already low level and provided more effective responses to occasional unacceptable behaviour.

Wide Ranging Extra-curricular Provision

We provide a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The high participation rate of children in as aspects of School life is a testament to the appreciation of the time given by staff to go the extra mile for pupils.

Pupils enjoy competitive sports fixtures and Downlands frequently does well in District competitions. A wide range of clubs are held at during the hour long lunchtime. Some are subject based whilst others help children develop new interests. Educational visits are a feature of the curriculum as are trips abroad, including ski trips, French revision trips and visits to a school in India with which we have developed links through our International School Status

Staff Development for All

The school has an excellent track record for professional development. The large amount of expertise available to us in School is often the starting point. Many outstanding teachers assist whole school CPD by running training sessions known as “Learning Communities”.

Appraisal targets are targeted for teachers of different levels of experience and allow them to develop in ways that will assist with their career development.

In addition to “in house” development, effective professional development opportunities are provided by other organisation such a PIXL and the local e-PD consortium.

Recently, a number of teachers near the beginning of their career have been given responsibilities within the School and teachers often gain promoted posts in other schools based on the experience and professional development they have benefited from here.

NQTs have a full programme of support and are mentored by the Assistant Headteacher in Charge of Teaching and Learning.

We are part of the Millais Alliance of local secondary schools offering training places through the Schools Direct teacher training programme in partnership with the University of Brighton.

A Strong Community at the Heart of our Local Community

The school is always highly praised and complimented for its very warm and friendly welcome. The pupils are our best ambassadors and are proud of their school. Pupil responses to all surveys and leavers’ questionnaires are always very positive with the vast majority saying they have been very happy and have always felt well supported.

Visitors frequently comment as they go round the School on the calm but active atmosphere and comment on the respect that the pupils show for the buildings and facilities.

Parents are very involved and supportive of the school and participation and attendance at Parents evenings and whole school events is always very high. We have a very active PTA which meets regularly to raise money for the school whilst organising and running excellent community events such as our Christmas market and Summer Fair. We have excellent community links with local business, Parish Council and other local committees.

The Headteacher is supported by a Senior Leadership team comprising two Deputy Headteachers and three Assistant Headteachers. Current staffing comprises 66 teaching staff and 52 non-teaching staff. All teachers are encouraged to take an active part in the management of the school and the following meetings are held: Academic Board, Pastoral Care, Teaching & Learning, Staff Forum and ad hoc groups as the situation dictates.

The success of the School is also due to the excellent support provided to the teachers and leadership team by the non-teaching staff whose contribution is highly regarded. The happy atmosphere that visitors notice is due to the good working relationships fostered and enjoyed by all the staff.

The Staff Committee ensure that there are many opportunities throughout the year for the staff to enjoy each other's company and these events are well attended and enjoyed. For example, there is badminton on Friday nights, parties are held at the end of the winter and summer terms and groups who meet informally to socialise. Staff enjoy reduced rates to use the Community Leisure Centre facilities and some find time to meet each other in the Costa Coffee social area in the Centre.

We have a very active and supportive Governing Body and all members of Leadership sit on the appropriate committee and present Whole School Development priorities to the Governors who actively monitor progress.

Continuously Improving Accommodation and Facilities

Downlands opened in 1960 as a Secondary Modern becoming fully comprehensive in 1975. The School is housed in a mixture of old and modern buildings on one site. In 2002 we took possession of a brand new, purpose built Mathematics suite and our Music accommodation doubled in size with the addition of a new teaching room and three practice rooms. The Art Department benefited from enlarged accommodation and modernisation in 2004.

In addition, the school has the following accommodation: Hall, Dining Room, Gym, 7 laboratories, 2 workshops, Graphics room, Drama Studio, 2 Food Technology and 1 Art/Textiles studio, classrooms for English, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Humanities, Careers, 4 Information Technology Rooms and Year 11 Common Room.

Our remodelled front entrance along with the enlarged shared community facility and additional office accommodation provides a warm welcome to the School.

A £2 million Sports Complex was completed in 2006 and is a very desirable asset including a fully equipped community gym. Downlands also has a third generation floodlit all weather pitch.

In January 2010 the school opened a large extension to the school canteen and now provides the best canteen facilities in County.

In 2014 of an old building was rebuilt to create three dedicated IT rooms known as “The Hub”. In addition to the 3 rooms with class sets of computers, there are number of portable sets of laptops, palmtops and i-pads. All rooms have interactive white boards.

Plans for further expansion and improvement to the facilities are being drawn up in readiness for Downlands expanding to 8 Forms of entry.

Further information can be found on the Downlands Website www.downlands.w-sussex.sch.uk

Visits prior to application are welcomed and encouraged.

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