This term has flown by and it is incredible to believe that it is nearly Christmas!

The school has been a hive of activity this term, with highlights including our Rotary Youth Speaks team reaching the regional finals, successful French and Spanish trips, a five-day residential to Berlin, House matches week with competitive rugby and hockey matches being played across the school, our Christmas Fair, and our Sixth Form raising a significant amount for Prostate Cancer with a pink and blue day.

Our careers team have been busy helping our students acquire the skills and knowledge to make the best choices for them as they prepare for employment or further study. We held an apprenticeship event involving local employers working with our students and a study skills and careers day, with students undergoing mock interviews and listening to guest speakers from local companies. I was also extremely proud that The Downs School was the only school in West Berkshire and one of just 132 schools in the country to have participated in research into Generation STEM, a work experience programme, designed to prepare our students for the future and give them an insight into the world of work.

We have opened our doors during open evenings for both the main school and the Sixth Form, and our Year 11 students have just completed their mock exams. I would like to praise the way in which they have applied themselves both in the exams and their study sessions. Keep the momentum going! ‘Show my homework’ has also been very successful this term, and I wanted to remind students and parents that all subjects will be using this online application to set homework after Christmas.

We relaunched our new school website earlier this term, a one-stop shop for all things related to The Downs School. Please do visit www.thedownsschool.org and take a look around, the news section in particular gives a great overview of our exciting news and events.

In this issue of the newsletter, we have introduced a competition. To enter you need to answer our maths question, which has been designed so that students and their parents can work together to figure out the solution. Good luck!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from all of us at The Downs School.

Chris Prosser, Headteacher
Mr Hogan – Head of Sixth Form

It has been another great start to the academic year by the whole Sixth Form community, and I know you will enjoy reading the article by our Head Girl (see page 19).

For Year 12 students the first term in the Sixth Form can be a difficult time, getting used to the academic rigour of A Levels and Level 3 BTECs, learning to deal with a greater workload of more complex and challenging content whilst developing an ability to work more independently in a new environment. This is a much larger cohort than last year and I feel very proud of how they have adapted to this new academic lifestyle, and their recent Progress Reports demonstrate how focused and committed they have all been since the beginning of term. It is so lovely to see all our new students integrating so well with the Downs students, creating a warm, welcoming environment throughout the Sixth Form.

We are very proud of our new Sixth Form facilities, with the new Café 6 being a dedicated area just for sixth formers during lessons, serving hot food and drinks all day. This has allowed us to redesign the common room into a purposeful, productive study area with computers available as well as a dedicated University and Apprenticeship reference materials reading area. Together with study areas in the library, diner and study rooms, we firmly believe we are offering the best possible learning environment for our students without compromising on our commitment to offer social spaces as well.

So far this term, all our Sixth Formers have received a Progress Report, have attended a parents’ evening with their subject teachers as well as a mentoring session with their tutor. They have also had the opportunity to complete a Learning Attributes Checklist at the start of the year, and Individual Action Plans in each subject after reflecting on their Progress Reports. All of these activities are completed to help our students fully understand how they are progressing in all of their subjects and allow teaching staff an opportunity to offer as much appropriate support as possible to individual students.

Year 13 students are busy looking to the future and by the time this newsletter reaches you the vast majority of students who are intending to go to university will have completed their UCAS applications and many will have already received offers from universities. Historically our students have a great track record of receiving offers from many prestigious Russell Group universities and I know that this year will be no different. These offers provide a great incentive to students as they start to revise for their mocks which start on 21st January. Many students are now considering alternatives to university in the form of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships and I know we will be building on the successes of previous years, with students obtaining Apprenticeships at some top UK companies. We wish all our Year 13 students the best of luck with all their applications.

Merry Christmas to you all from the Sixth Form Team!
Loads in the Library – Mrs Berger

Lots of new books have been added to the library this term, with a focus on fiction for older teenage readers. But that’s not all...

Cracking the Library Code...
All of you in Year 7 were given two induction sessions on how to use the library. It’s a simple code to break, but once you’ve cracked it you’ll find most libraries around the world easy to use. I like seeing you using Eclipse to find books in the library – have a go at using the advanced search features where you can use AND, OR & NOT to refine your search. AND, OR & NOT are called Boolean operators and are also particularly useful in developing computer software.

“...but I don’t know what to read...”
The school’s new website was launched in September – with enhanced features on the library page. You can now download lists of recommended books. There are lists for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10+ (older reader). These lists are compiled from several sources, including staff recommendation, School Library Association book reviews, BookTrust books, and Carnegie Medal shortlists.

You might feel that your workload is heavy, but I always encourage you to give time to reading stories. Fiction is a superb place to discover situations that you might meet in real life and to consider how you would cope. Stories are an excellent place to escape to, but also to get ideas for your own creative writing. The more you read, the wider your vocabulary will become. You can never know too many words...

Don’t Judge a Book by its Film
Mrs Allan’s excellent artistic skills have resulted in a beautiful “Don’t Judge a Book by Its Film” display. The theme is continued inside the library, where our DVD collection is displayed alongside the original texts – my favourites are the TV editions of Jane Eyre and Pride and Prejudice.

Lonely golden tickets...
During summer 2017 twenty golden tickets were quietly hidden in library books, just like Willy Wonka hid golden tickets in chocolate bars in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. My tickets offer a prize too. A year and a half later, eleven of those original twenty golden tickets are still waiting to be found. The prizes are still waiting to be given out...

Events
Advance warning! On the evening of 22 January there will be a Pyjama Party in the library. Aimed at Years 7 and 8, as well as your parents and younger siblings, look out for posters when term starts. Places will be limited and booking essential.

Also, World Book Day will be on 7 March. Look out for activities and free book tokens.

Happy Christmas, and I hope you have some cosy moments with a good book.
Year 7 – Miss Francis

Congratulations on finishing your first term at The Downs. It has been wonderful seeing all the progress you've made since you started here.

You have all impressed me with your settling in reports and I am so impressed with your high levels of organisation, attitude and how well you engage in lessons. On sponsored walk day, year 7 raised the most money of any year group, which was a truly phenomenal achievement. Rory Carnegie and Aurora Walcott Amos were the top two fundraisers in year 7, raising over £400 between them. Isley, our new house have gone from strength and have done Mr Dunne, Ms Pearce and Mrs Rolls proud in their raising of money for the sponsored walk and their housepoint totals through the year.

On PDP day year 7 engaged in some discussion on mental health and on emotional literacy. All tutors praised how well students discussed these topics and paid close attention to them. Having had tutor breakfasts with most tutor groups now, I look forward to the new year and being able to talk with you all some more and get to know more of you. You have all told me how much you are enjoying all of your new subjects; such as food tech, swimming, resistant materials and lots of exciting science experiments.

House matches went well, with IIsley again putting up a good fight and Seren Duggan being the first person to ever score a try for the new house. It was historic also, as Seren is also the first girl to score a try in a boys’ tournament! All teams put on a good show and the PE staff congratulated year 7 on some good sportsmanship across the day.

I’ve enjoyed getting to know some of you and look forward to getting to know more of you next term. Enjoy your Christmas break and see you in the new year!

Yr 10 students were runners up in a local Tech Festival. The event was aimed at inspiring those with a creative leaning that tech careers are awesome.

Yr 8 students attended DigiGirlz at Microsoft. The Microsoft CEO gave a motivational talk, and students were tasked with creating a piece of tech to overcome a particular need or difficulty.

The Downs School was shortlisted for the Berkshire Apprenticeship Awards.

We officially opened our new Sixth Form study centre and café.

The sponsored walk raised more than £20,000. Some money has already been spent creating new seating and planting areas in the central courtyard.

We raised over £1,000 through a non-uniform day to support local charity Daisy’s Dream who provide assistance to children and families affect by bereavement or life threatening illness.

For more news stories, visit http://www.thedownsschool.org.uk/406/news
Year 8 – Mrs Wilding

So it’s only been a few short months since I became your Head of Year and I already feel like we’ve been working together for years! You are clearly a lovely year group made up of some very special people and I’m enjoying getting to know you all as individuals – although some of you I’m seeing on a more regular basis that I’d be liking at the moment! However, I have particularly enjoyed our tutor breakfasts in the new Café 6 where myself, the tutors and members of the Senior Leadership Team are finding out your thoughts and opinions, whilst enjoying some pain au chocolat! It is very interesting to hear how you are finding Year 8 and many of you are saying you are loving the new feeling of responsibility from moving up the school.

It has already been a jam-packed term and I’m not sure if the new two-week timetable is making it go faster or slower! You all seem to be taking it in your stride though. The sponsored walk seems an age ago, but it was lovely to see you all out making the most of the beautiful countryside we live in and raising money that goes back to projects that benefit you.

The Boulogne Trip was one of the first amazing opportunities this year for you to visit a new place/country and those that went had a brilliant time and did the school proud! I’m looking forward to those who will be accompanying me and other staff on the ski trip in April – the information Evening was well-attended and information filled.

Since then you have thrown yourself at every opportunity including House Matches (wet as the Rugby and Hockey ones always are!), House Dance, Year 7 Fresher’s Fayre, Open Evening (with some ‘reporters’ running round interviewing parents all evening) and a wonderfully brilliant group has helped at Parents’ Evenings too. A group of girls attended a trip to Microsoft Campus for Digigirlz and had a great time. PDP was amazing – seeing the political parties you put together and the manifestos you presented – I was blown away by the standard of what you produced and I’m glad it wasn’t down to just my vote to decide the winners, but the public vote too, or I would never have been able to pick.

Behind the scenes we also have had many students quietly but confidently volunteering for roles of responsibility e.g. House Reps, School Council Reps, Sports Reps and Ambassadors…. The list goes on and on and it makes me proud to see how engaged and involved you are already.

Well done again to Aldworth who won last half term’s house point competition and had a non-uniform day plus some treats from me for their hard work. Will they retain their title this half term or will another form sneak in? Only time will tell so get collecting those house points!

Finally, I’m really looking forward to the rest of this year and seeing you continue the excellent start you’ve made! Keep up the hard work and make me proud!
Year 9 – Miss Bermingham

Year 9’s first Academic Term at the school has offered a host of challenges that many students in the cohort have risen to. From House Matches to House Dance, I have been approached by staff members wanting to commend the resilience and efforts of all Year 9 students involved in these school events.

Additionally, as Head of Year 9, I was proud to see members of the Year 9 community support the Remembrance Assembly that Mrs Seath (Tutor of 9 Perborough) ran over a week in November. Another event that stood out, over the first Academic Term at the school, was the Year 9 Personal Development Day (PDP Day) task – where Year 9 Tutor Groups competed in an inter-form competition that served to raise awareness of the pitfalls of social media and online gaming. Mr Prosser, Headteacher, commended the cohort and was impressed by the mature approach the groups took when putting presentations together. Huge congratulations to Mrs Ridgeway and her Tutor Group, 9 Lowbury, for winning the event.

In addition to this, the ‘Last Orders’ performance was another successful event where the Solomon Theatre praised Year 9 students for their engagement with the performance. The theatre company pointed out that students were, ‘a credit to the school’.

Finally, in my role as an English Teacher, I run a ‘Reporting’ task during the Open Evening (at the start of the school year). Students involved in this task report on visitors’ first impressions of the school – along with all of the incredible opportunities that The Downs has to offer. This year, I had a unique opportunity to work with students from Year 7 to Year 9: in light of this, the Year 9 segment of the Newsletter welcomes Year 7 student Molly Daley and I would like to share her excellent report from the evening. Enjoy!

Art:
First, I explored Art: the Department was showing off all of the artwork that had been completed by previous students at the school. The atmosphere was nice and the building was very busy. Prospective students explained to me that the exhibits were ‘good and enjoyable’!

Science:
Next, I went over to Science. The Department was looking through microscopes and dissecting things. For example, hearts and lungs. Also, they were changing the colour of fire.

Please see some of the amazing photos that I took from the Science Department:
**Year 9 continued**

**Maths:**
In Maths, the teachers and students were playing a selection of brainteaser games. Although maths can be challenging, the department did a great job of welcoming students, parents, and carers.

Overall, the event was nice and the visitors to the school gave me good feedback.”

Molly Daley, reporting for The Downs.

**Year 10 - Mr Dunne**

Well it’s been an exciting and tiring start to the year and to the new GCSE, CNAT and BTEC courses all students have chosen to do over the next two years. Many opportunities have been provided, and students have excelled in stepping up to the mark in what has been a hugely successful first term in year 10.

Peer mentors have been interviewed and selected for the duties put upon them such as mentoring lower school students and helping out at sixth form open evenings etc. Les Miserables rehearsals have started involving many of the fantastic and talented Year 10 students, we are all looking forward to seeing the performance. House Performing Arts has also been this term and was massively successful with Perborough winning the accolade of best House. House matches have been another huge success in raising the bar of both effort and talent across the year group. All of the above having a majority of Year 10 students in shows the depth of talent and knowledge in the year group this term.

Academically the year group has started off progressing nicely and it was great to see so many parents come in and see the students in many subjects in the KS4 open morning, much to the embarrassment of many students having their parents watching them in Maths.

A huge well done goes to all of the students too who have represented the school in rugby and hockey this term and also for the behaviour of ALL students who have taken part in the many trips/educational visits that have been this year from COEN to the Vodafone trip in November.

Lastly a special mention to the year group who behaved impeccably in the PDP day careers event where we looked at many things to help decide what students want to do in later life.

I hope you all have a fantastic Christmas and look forward to seeing you all in January where another challenging but rewarding term awaits. Merry Christmas to you all.
Year 11 – Mrs Meijboom

Dear Year 11,

What a term it has been. It was fantastic to welcome you all back in September by having our year group photograph on the field. It was great to see you lined up looking smart in height order, but worrying that most of you tower above me! I have the photograph on the wall in the HOY office and regularly look at it, on tough days I look at it more frequently to remind myself that you are all wonderful beings! There have been many trips this term where you have behaved impeccably and staff have commented upon what brilliant company you have been, the trip to Dyson Farm, the silver DofE expedition and the Berlin trip just to name a few.

Your enthusiasm in the recent House matches was commendable and, as always, I was full of admiration for those who got stuck into the competition despite the poor weather. It was super to see you pull together in your teams and have such a fantastic time in the process. It is memories like these that will stay with us all forever.

It is fair to say that we all let out a big sigh of relief when the mock examinations were over. I hope that all of your hard work in preparing for these examinations is rewarded in good grades on the results day on 14 January. Remember that you can only do your best and those aspirational targets are absolutely that – ones to aspire to. If you are making progress towards those targets then you are doing well and should be proud of yourself. If you are worried at all then please talk to your tutor or pop along to see either Mrs Gayler or me in SSC.

It is important to thank our wonderful team of tutors who do a fabulous job every day making sure you are well looked after, engage in those difficult conversations about skirt length and white socks and generally jolly you along to ensure that you get to the right place at the right time! You are all very lucky to have such dedicated and kind tutors who want the very best for you all. I could not do my job without them and I am sending out a big Christmas thank you to them all!

I would also like to thank our wonderful prefect team who, led by Alice Knight and William Bailkoski, do a brilliant job at organising tours around the school and supporting school events. They are also busy making preparations for the year book, hoodies and Y11 Prom; they need to recruit more helpers so if you are the party planner of the century or have some good ideas then pop along to the meeting in January to have your voice heard.
This term has been a real rollercoaster of emotions – the joy of seeing you all return in September quickly changed into apprehension as I realise, with each passing week, saying goodbye to all you in the summer is getting unbearably close. We have been building up to the challenge of GCSEs since Year 9 and I can see that you are all working hard and to quote a Year 11 student “getting our heads down in lessons”. I know that the thought of the summer examinations weighs heavily upon all of your shoulders so it is important that you take the opportunity to relax over the Christmas holiday and enjoy being with your family and loved ones. Take time to for yourself, not just to hide away from your relatives and play on your console or message your friends, but to do something that you enjoy to help you relax – you deserve it. Make sure that you say thank you to your parents who are, undoubtedly, exhausted from preparing the perfect Christmas for you all and remember that you are never too old to give your family a cuddle.

Whatever we face in the new year I know that we will do it together as a team. As always, I remain so proud of you all. I have laughed often this term and delight in hearing about your successes and funny stories; less so about what goes on at those ‘gatherings’! If you are planning a gathering or two this holiday make sure that you are safe and look out for each other. We all need to return in January in perfect condition because there’s one thing for sure, it’s going to be a tough term, but I know it will be a rewarding one.

As before, I sign off with a riddle to solve. The first ten students who arrive at the HOY office in January with the correct answer will receive a Kitkat chunky.

Q. What starts with an e but only has a single letter in it?

Merry Christmas.
Design and Art – Mrs Palmer

A Level trip to Tate Britain

As part of the A-Level course in Fine Art, all students are expected to undertake artist research. In order to enhance their knowledge of art and provide an opportunity for Year 12 and 13 Art students to develop their coursework, an educational visit to Tate Britain in London took place on Tuesday, 18 September.

Students used the visit to gather artist research to support the development of ideas. Sketches, photographs and notes were made. Highlights of the trip were seeing work produced by Hockney, Moore and Tamara de Lempika to name just a few. A fantastic day was had by all involved!

Year 9 City Arts competition winning mural design in The Kennet Centre, Newbury

Year 9 (2017-18) Art students were set a compulsory homework to produce an A3 graffiti mural design to be entered into The Kennet Centre Newbury community competition. The entries were sent onto City Arts, Newbury with the competition closing in July.

The winner Bethan Porter, now in Year 10, worked with professional artists during the summer holidays to draw her design onto the wall in the Kennet Centre ready for painting.

Members of the public and a professional artist then painted Bethan’s design which is pictured on page 11. Bethan’s design was chosen based on its originality, imagination, potential, suitability for location and compositional elements.
Design and Art continued

(From left to right) Bethan’s design is painted onto the wall of the Kennet Centre. Bethan with her original artwork.

A round-up of girls sport – Mrs Miller-Cook

Netball

Year 7 have had a very competitive netball season, considering they had not played together before, and some had not even played netball before. There were large numbers of girls out to practices over the term, so they had to be rotated to ensure the majority have had a game. The girls were keen to improve, and even though there were matches at times in the rain and in the cold winter temperatures they showed great determination to not give up until the game had finished.

They have so far played 8 matches, with one still left to play against John O ‘Gaunt. We have won against Park House, Theale Green, Willink, Trinity and Little Heath, narrowly losing against St. Gabriel’s, Kennet and St. Bart’s.

Year 8. Despite their unfortunate run this season the year 8s have always given each game 100%! The effort they have put it has been excellent and they always come off the court smiling regardless of the score. The best result was against Theale winning 12-3, unfortunately they lost the other 8 games.

Year 9. The year 9s have used this season to consolidate their squad and develop each player in their preferred position. They have approached every game with a clear plan which, on most occasions was executed successfully! Year 9 won 4 games, drew 2 and lost 3 (in two of which there was only one goal in it).
Hockey Yrs. 10, 11 and Sixth Form

The season has been good in terms of progression in skills and performance. We started with a game against Downe House ‘A’ and were playing well until they had a clear run at goal with the ball and scored with no defenders in the circle. Unfortunately we lost 0-3. We struggled to get the ball wide and suffered from not taking the chances we created. However, this result did not get the girls down as we went on to score 2 goals against Kennet before Kennet came back and beat us 3-2.

We drew with Downe House B (a fair result) even though we had the majority of possession. Camilla played excellently in goal and kept us in the game with lots of excellent saves from short range.

Football

Year 8. The Y8 girls entered the ESFA National cup for the first time and in round one beat Kennet 3-1, with Izzy Storrar (7A), on her debut and Daisy Craik (8L) scoring the goals. In round 2 we played Maiden Erlegh, in a very entertaining and high quality match. Izzy and Daisy again scored our goals but we lost 4-2, a result which the girls didn’t deserve, as they were the better side.

Despite horrendous weather conditions and last minutes changes to the squad the girls finished runners-up in a 6-a-side tournament. They beat Theale, Willink, Park House, Trinity and lost narrowly to St.Bart’s and Kennet. Well done to Daisy, Poppy, Harriet Renaud (8A), Grace Ridgway (8A), Holly Hewstone (8C), Amelie Block (8L), Ruby Hawkins (8L) and Annie Martin (8P).

Year 10. There have been 6-a-side tournaments at Park House. The year 10s won the tournament without conceding a goal. Ella Cromack (9P) captained the side and managed an excellent job, rotating the squad around, so everyone played. Poppy Airey (8R), Judith Morgan (10P), Kelsey Abellana (10P), Lucy Murray (9A) and Daisy made up the squad.

Year 9. The Y9s also won their tournament, again they did not concede, despite a number of different girls playing in goal. Ruby Hawkins (8L), Ruby Martin (9L), Ella, Poppy, Daisy, Lucy and Annie Morgan (8P) made up the squad.

The girls will be playing more matches in the New Year and are entered into the County Cup at Y9.

Sports round up – Mr Dunne

Year 9 Boys 6-a-side football

After no training this season and 2 teams put into a 6-a-side competition, it was anyone’s guess in how we would get on in this first tournament.

Straight from the first whistle both teams went out flying and battling hard in order to get as many goals in the short 7 min games on a wet and windy Park House astroturf.

There was some excellent play from both teams, and exceptional leadership shown too in a string of close games. The end result gave the year 9 football A team joint 1st place on points but 2nd on count back. A
great start to the season. The B team finished 3rd in a tough close competition. I look forward to the football season after Christmas.

**Year 7 Rugby Tournament Report – November**

This year’s Berkshire tournament held at Reading Blue Coat School was one which we were all looking forward to. From previous years this has been a huge success and this year was no different.

From seeing that we were facing Park House B, Furz Platt and Reading B teams, we did not know how well we would perform. After all the games we ended winning them all convincingly scoring 25 points against them all.

From this winning position we were put into face the top 3 other teams who won all their games (out of 36 teams in total). Here we played Park house A (PH), Piggott (P) and Holyport, after some tough battles and some head injuries we lost by 1 try to both PH and P while a win saw us beat Holyport in a fierce contest.

Overall looking at the final standing (if there were medals and positions) we would have finished 3rd overall out of the 36 teams who entered. Well done to all the boys who took part and a special mention to Sean for captaining the team fantastically.

**First 15 Rugby**

It has been a great start and steady run, and we have one of the strongest First 15 teams in recent years. We first played a mini warm-up tournament where we beat both Park House and St Barts and drew with Kennet (after lending them two of our players.)

In the League and County Cup we beat Kennet on both occasions, showing great resilience and team work coming off our strong win against RBCS in the first round of the County Cup.

Forrest Semi Final:
It was a very energetic and fierce game against a big strong side. The boys had all played Forrest before and knew this would not be the easiest games to go through. On a wet and muddy afternoon we scored first and led at the half. There were some huge tackles and the end result saw a win of 12-0.

Pangbourne College Final:
A fierce and thrilling final where both teams were up for the game. With a full strength team back in play we knew this was going to be a challenge. After conceding an early penalty, we then scored the first try and converted. Pangbourne then added pressure by scoring and converting after the half. With a penalty then kicked we were all tied up at 10 – 10. Leading into the last 5 minutes Pangbourne rallied and after several battering phases in play then managed to score with 2 minutes to go, winning them the game. A huge well done though to all the boys! I look forward to their last game of the season v Park House. Well done to all in the team this year and for Joe F, Byron and Marcus captaining the team throughout the season.

A huge well done to all the players both starters/ injured team mates (there have been a few) and subs alike for always being at training and putting in the utmost effort in order to be so successful this season.

Player of the season goes to Tom Wedgebury.
Sports round up – Mr Colling

Year 8 Rugby

The year 8 rugby team were reigning champions in the Floodlit League when in Year 7, so they had a significant task to maintain their status as the number one team in the area. Five teams entered the league, with two evenings reserved to play the matches.

Results were as follows:
- Downs vs Kennet  Lost 5-20
- Downs vs St Barts  Won 10-0 (tries by Tom Leonard, Charlie Hamlin)
- Downs vs Park House Won 20-10 (C Hamlin, Noah Deacon, Robert Ruggiero, Theo Mulholland)
- Downs vs Trinity  Won 20-10 (Andrew Owen (2), N Deacon, Christian Hale)

Those in the team have fully committed themselves to making progress since last year. We have been affected by the fact that some of the opponents have had growth spurts, leaving our boys behind physically, although there is no fault attached to the tenacious way our boys have defended as if their lives depended on it at times.

The team spirit has been great and there is a definite sense of wanting to ‘cover the backs’ of team mates. The tactical awareness and technique of players such as Noah D, Robbie Ruggiero, Charlie H, Christian Hale, Tom Leonard and Alex Ragoussis has been reinforced by the never-say-die attitude of others like Charlie Willetts, Fraser Howe, Adam Ryan, Flynn Conington, Theo Mulholland, Hugo Hagen and Nakabale Lule.

New players have come into the squad this year: Charlie Willetts, Luke Brandon, Jadon Mitchell, Carl Braxton and Andrew Owen. Whilst the final result is still be confirmed, the likely result is that The Downs is going to finish 2\textsuperscript{nd} or 3\textsuperscript{rd} this year in a very tight league.

We put out a team in each of two ‘Development squad’ tournaments at each end of the season, with no wins in the first one but a win and two close defeats in the second, showing progress during the term. Let’s see what we can do next season.

Start eating the raw meat to build yourselves up a bit!

Year 10 Rugby

A disappointing turn out at the start seemed to suggest that there wouldn’t be a Y10 rugby team this year. Some previous players opted out this year so we were left with a shoestring squad. However, the heart shown by those who did play was refreshing. Those who committed themselves to training made some progress and certain players ‘stepped up’ to take prominent roles within the team.

The first pair of games saw us pitted against Kennet and Park House. The endeavour we showed against Kennet wasn’t enough to trouble the score board as they ran out comfortable winners. However, there were no complaints from our boys as they moved straight into the second game with enthusiasm and hope to turn things around.

In a game we probably should have won, we dominated possession throughout, had more power, athleticism and a willingness to deny the opposition as far as possible. Oli Gregory decided to take possession of the ball in his own half, ran in a pretty zig zag pattern round and round the Park House half
before scoring in the far left hand corner (he then had to have a lie down to recover before re-joining to score a second try and contribute to Alex McLaughlin’s effort, which Alex converted himself).

Final result: 17-17

Our second pair of games saw a similar theme, with a game against a much stronger, more efficient team from St Bart’s followed by a more even game with Trinity to finish off. The St Bart’s match was a case of damage limitation, but this proved difficult as they had representative level players all over their team and deservedly ran out winners, despite the efforts of all of our players who still managed to record some crunching tackles and sniping runs, albeit on a more occasional basis.

Against Trinity, we showed more idea, more drive and more determination to secure our first win of the season. Not only did we run with power at the opponents, we showed better passing and rucking skills, keeping possession more effectively. We also tackled with real purpose, trying to overturn the ball throughout the game. Again, the power of Oli was key, although his sense of direction deserted him when he tried to run round the Trinity team instead of through them when scoring his try. A nice offload and jinking run by Jake Gill gave him his first try for the team, before Jack Furnell ended the scoring with a try of his own which was converted for a 17-5 win. It was good to have Sam Jenkins and Ben Lawrence involved on the night, although Ben did take the edge off things by asking during the match if he could contact his mother so she knew what time we would be arriving back at school!

Thank you to those who attended training and showed the right spirit in the games we played. Particular mention goes to Elliott Nowell whose selfless attitude in the matches and training gave a good model for others to copy. The mature approach and competitive drive of Will Newing and Alex McLaughlin, set a great example for their team mates, as did the perseverance of Jack Furnell, James Houghton, Reece Brandon, Matt Puttock and Matthew Stamper. This, combined with the speed of Toby and the emergence of Aron Stafford and Nathaniel Taylor, gives some hope that we will be able to field a team next year too.

Player of the Season: Will Newing (for having fun but taking the sessions and matches seriously; for supporting his team mates (especially those who needed guidance) and for his willingness to contribute whenever and wherever necessary.

For House Match results, please turn to page 23 and 24 of the newsletter.

**Competition!**

New to the newsletter, we are introducing a competition. The question we pose is for our students to work out together with their parents. The prize is a pair of cinema tickets and all entries must be received by Monday 14 January. Please email your answer to contact@thedownsschool.org Good luck!

Q. A party of 30 villagers decided to hire a bus to take them to a show in the city. The tickets for the show cost 50p for children, £2.50 for pensioners and £5 for adults who are not children or pensioners. The number of ‘people who are not children or pensioners’ attending was more than the number of children but less than twice the number of children. There were more children than pensioners on the bus.

The total cost of the tickets was £100.

How many children and how many pensioners attended the show?

Thank you to Mr Whatley, Maths teacher for the question.
Careers update – Mrs Allum

It has been an extremely busy time for the Careers Department this term. October marked the culmination of Generation STEM, a work experience programme involving Year 10 students. We were the only school in West Berkshire and one of just 132 schools in the country to have participated in the research involving Work Training Sessions in school and interviews with employers, designed to prepare our students for the future and give them an insight into the world of work.

The scheme culminated with six students being selected to undertake work experience placements over last summer’s break, with employers including Barclays Bank and The Living Rainforest. In November we hosted one of two annual Personal Development Programme (PDP) days, with a particular focus on careers for our Year 10 and Year 13 Sixth Form students. As part of the event, students were visited by local employers, university and apprenticeship representatives. The Year 10 students’ focus was on their future careers and employability skills. Over 25 volunteers from local industry took part in a ‘speedy careers’ event, where the students spent a short time with a number of the volunteers, questioning them about their skills, qualifications and how they have progressed their careers. They then had a session with Apprenticeship Support and Knowledge for Schools and Colleges (ASK) to learn about the wide variety of apprenticeships now available for school leavers, including solicitor and nursing careers. A representative from Oxford Brookes University talked about the opportunities available for students wishing to progress onto further education. Newbury based Education Business Partnership (EBP) put on an interview workshop, helping students to not only prepare well but perform well in interviews.

Any Year 13 students looking for apprenticeships after they take their A Level and BTEC exams next summer, were building on previous in-school careers workshops focussed on writing CVs and interview skills. Newbury based company Amberjack, experts in future talent and volume recruitment outsourcing, devised a mock assessment centre where students worked together in teams, undertaking face-to-face interviews and then critiquing each other’s performance.

Abingdon based PMC Retail got students involved in the increasingly popular recruitment method of video interviewing. Students were asked how best to prepare themselves from being dressed correctly to responding to interview questions within a set time frame. They each then completed a video interview and were given feedback.

It was a fantastic day and our students really gained an insight into the opportunities available to them after they leave The Downs School. It is important for us to make sure they are fully prepared, no matter whether they wish to go to university, start an apprenticeship or enter the world of work.

For the twelfth year, we have participated in Take a Chance, a unique initiative programme run across seven West Berkshire Schools. Its aims are to:
- Inspire and motivate students to fulfil their potential;
- Equip students with skills for use in school and beyond;
- Provide insights into how businesses work.

After a selection process, eight Year 9 students have been chosen to attend five workshops at Vodafone HQ. The first event happened last month, and there are four additional events next year. The workshops
cover individuals and teamwork, learning style in action, presentation and communications skills, time and task management and positive thinking and achieving success.

A group of Year 9 and 10 students took part in a developing skills workshop in November, facilitated by staff from The Watermill Theatre and Education Business Partnership. The workshop aimed to increase work/life skills and help students to recognise their own strengths and abilities, preparing them for the workplace in the future. The session covered teamwork, voice impact, positive thinking and presenting.

Ahead of the GCSE Option process next term, Year 9 students took part in a careers event earlier this month designed to help them start to think about the link between subjects and careers. Students participated in a Q&A session, with a panel made up of business professionals from different industry sectors, including journalism, engineering and performing arts. They then had the opportunity to talk to one of the volunteers in a smaller group. They also updated their action plans on Grofar and started GCSE option research using eClips, the two on-line careers packages used by the school.

Local employers Rutherford Appleton Laboratory, XTrac Limited and Baxter have been speaking to Year 12 students about their work experience schemes. Our Year 11 Work Skills students have recently completed a week’s work experience. Year 12 Level 2 BTEC students completed two weeks of work experience, and our Year 13 BTEC Business Studies and Media Studies students have also completed a placement this term.

**Year 10 students during their speedy careers event**

**Christmas card competition**

Congratulations to Year 8 student Sophie Sparrow who was the winner of this year’s Christmas card design competition. Sophie’s star design has been used as the school’s official Christmas card. The runner-up was Xenobe Brown with her design featuring a robin.
The Downland Teaching School Alliance – Mandy Alexander

The Downland Teaching School Alliance started the academic year this term in September with a very successful joint training day on “Raising Achievement in Writing” with over 77 teaching staff from primary schools from across West Berkshire taking part.

In addition, the new cohort of school direct trainee teachers joined us to start their one year teaching training programme. There are secondary trainees at The Downs School, St Bartholomew’s School and Kennet School and this year has also seen the development of our primary training programme with 4 trainees training to teach. The programme has gone from strength to strength with this year being its third year. Last term all trainees who qualified were successful in gaining employment in the local area and we wish them every success with their newly qualified teacher (NQT) year.

The Teaching School Alliance specialises in training the secondary and primary teachers of the future and has vacancies across a wide range of subjects for anyone interested in training to teach from September 2019.

The one-year post graduate course leads to QTS and PGCE - both professional qualifications are awarded by Oxford Brookes University so trainees get the best of both worlds – high quality school led training linked to a renowned higher education institution. The wide spectrum of high achieving schools ensures a range of opportunities including a primary / secondary placement and sixth form experience for secondary trainees.

In addition, we have continued to deploy successfully some of our Specialist Leaders in Education (SLEs) either in development work supporting schools (schools to school support) within the Alliance or running professional development sessions for other staff. This term we have delivered NQT training sessions working with West Berkshire and Oxford Brookes University, in “Professional Skills and Time Management”, “Child Protection”, “Attachment Training” and a Maths training session on “Developing Fluency in Calculation”. We have a number of other sessions planned throughout the year including the launch of a new leadership training programme.

If you would like to find out more about training to teach with the Downland Alliance, you could come along to one of the other evenings we are holding. You can register here.

St Bartholomew’s School – Wednesday 16th January 2019

Kennet School – Friday 15th March 2019

“Every Lesson Shapes a Life”

Search: “Get into Teaching” and The Downland Alliance.

Email: Mandy Alexander at itt@downlandalliance.org.uk
Head Girl Report – Freya Watson

The welcoming of Year 12, and the new spaces in sixth form along with the big decisions about future plans being made by Year 13s has made for a very busy and exciting start to the academic year. Walking into the common room on 6 September was a surprise to most, the absence of the kitchen as well as the ‘wall’ replaced by tables and chairs and shiny new computers lining the far corner and the brand new and improved Café 6. Now, with the café open all day, you can never fail to spot a coffee cup in the common room... indeed, apparently we are classy coffee drinkers! In November the café was officially opened with a bang *cue the confetti cannon* and attended by the Newbury Weekly News. I hope you saw the article in the paper.

The official opening of Café 6

Year 12 are settling into Sixth Form and have been up to lots, from multicultural PDP day to the Vodafone Insight Careers Day to the annual ‘Safe Drive’ trip. A group of 3 students- Anushka Swanell, Elizabeth Ruddell and Zoe Ray led by Alannah Burdess won the local round of the Rotary Club’s Youth Speaks event and are now in the regional final in January! Their chosen subject is ‘Have we lost sight of the true meaning of feminism?’ I’m wishing them the best of luck!

UCAS has been one of the focuses for Year 13, with most of the year group having sent their applications off, the hard part is over... or is it? Now it is a waiting game in receiving offers or invitations to interview. As offers have been coming in there have been waves of excitement followed by the realisation of now having to achieve these grades the Universities are asking for. With interviews coming up for many of us, I can already feel stress rising amongst us, albeit with a new level of focus and determination to achieve our goals. Granted, the library is getting busier!

The Sixth Form student leadership team teamed up with the events coordinators Alice and Annabel to run the annual Pink and Blue Day in support of breast and prostate cancer research. We all dressed up in pink and blue outfits, decorated the common room, sold cakes and put on a staff vs students netball match ... which in our defence the teachers took FAR too seriously... winning 11-0 in one of the matches. The efforts and involvement of the whole Sixth Form raised a notable £350 for these worthy charities. A week later saw James Brown in Year 13 shave his head in the middle of the common room on a Friday lunchtime, captivating a huge crowd. He has donated his long locks to the Princess Trust and has raised over an incredible £1,500 so far in aid of Sue Ryder and Pancreatic Cancer UK. What an inspiration to all of us!

James pre and post his head shave
Head Girl Report continued

The most recent work of the leadership team has been the recently implemented ‘families’ system, bringing together the whole Sixth Form. Groups of Year 13s and Year 12s meet every Monday week A in registration. The aim of the scheme is to increase integration of the two year groups within Sixth Form as well as the sharing of experiences and advice to do with A-levels and BTECs, revision and applying to universities or apprenticeship schemes. Although it is still early days, we hope it will become a year on year tradition in the sixth form.

The Sixth Form rugby team have smashed it this season and are “yet to be defeated”. They won the Newbury District Tournament and the floodlit league, which includes five local school teams. They have triumphed in every game.

They also put in an amazing performance in very tough conditions to win the Semi Final of the Berkshire County Cup 12–0 against the Forest school. By the time you read this we will have played in the final, so let’s hope we brought home the cup!!

Merry Christmas to everyone from the whole of the Sixth Form Student Leadership Team!

Duke of Edinburgh – Miss Humphries

With the start of a new academic year we have seen the enrolment of a new Bronze Level cohort. We had a fantastic turnout at our welcome evening back in September and an equally fantastic number of applicants apply for a place. This year we have made some changes to ensure all Year 9 students who wanted to get involved with the award will have the opportunity to participate. The silver award continues to have a strong uptake with 33 students choosing to participate.

Participants of both awards have now received their eDoE login and welcome pack; all that is left to do is for participants to get started on each of their sections. I would strongly advise all students to record their activities on eDoE and send them to myself for approval (just to ensure the chosen activity meets the requirements of each section). Do not forget that one of the requirements is that you have at least one (and ideally two) sections completed before the expedition season begins at the end of April.

A quick reminder for all our Year 10, 11 and Sixth Form DoE participants; just because your expedition is completed, do not forget the other sections. Many of you only have one section to complete so please do log on to eDofE to find out what you have left and upload any assessor reports you have lying around. To be invited to our Bronze award presentation evening in March it is vital that students have completed their award and had all sections signed off by the end of February.

If any participants have any problems or questions do find me during the DoE helpdesk sessions run on Tuesday Lunchtime 1.30pm in H13.

Have a very Merry Christmas.
Mr Wilson - Deputy Headteacher Junior

Anti-Bullying Message: Beat Bullying

A school that believes it has no incidents of bullying is a school that is unrealistic. In The Downs, we know that bullying can take place in any community of young people. As a school, we are committed to following up incidents of bullying quickly and effectively. We want to beat bullying, and to do this need the help of all members of the school community, including students, parents and staff.

Our anti-bullying posters can be seen around the school and are designed to raise awareness of how to respond if students witness or become victims of bullying. The slogan of the posters, ‘Beat Bullying. Speak Out,’ summarises the key elements of our main anti-bullying message:

- Bullying of any kind, whether physical, verbal, emotional or cyber-bullying is not tolerated in The Downs School;
- Anyone who becomes aware that bullying is taking place, whether they are victims or witnesses, has a duty to do something about it;
- The school’s pastoral system will deal with bullying effectively but can only do this if Heads of Year and Student Support Managers are told if bullying is taking place.

If as a parent you become aware that your child has been the victim of bullying, or that other children have been victims of bullying, we ask that you contact the school as soon as possible, asking to speak to your child’s Head of Year or Student Support Manager.

Please also support us by reinforcing our anti-bullying message to our students. If any student witnesses bullying or becomes a victim of bullying, the student should inform his or her Head of Year or Student Support Manager as soon as possible.

Attendance

- The Downs School has extremely good student attendance, which is a result of the hard work and dedication of our staff, students and parents. Our students have an average attendance of 96.3%, which compares extremely favourably to the national average of 95.0%.
- We believe that high attendance is essential in order for students to make good academic progress and also for students to feel that they are active members of the school community, involved not only in lessons but also in the extra-curricular activities that are so important to their wellbeing.
- We become very concerned when a student’s attendance falls below 90%, which is when the students become classed by the Government as a persistent absentee:
  - 90% attendance equates to half a day missed every week
  - 90% attendance in one school year equates to 4 whole weeks of lessons missed in that year
  - Students with 90% attendance have really significant gaps in their learning
  - 90% attendance over 5 years of secondary school equates to half a year of school missed.

- Our analysis of the GCSE results from previous years shows that students who are persistent absentees achieve results that are 30% worse, when measured at 5 grades at 4 or above including English and Mathematics, than the students who have attendance that is average for students in The Downs School.
• For this reason the school will work very closely with the parents of students who have low attendance to get to the root of the problem and provide support to help the attendance improve.
• We ask you as parents and carers to continue to support us in ensuring that our students have high levels of attendance, and request that you make contact with your child’s Head of Year or Student Manager if you are concerned about his or her attendance.

**Safeguarding Children and Young People**

Safeguarding children and young people is the most important responsibility of any school. All members of staff have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people, but the following members of staff have the responsibility for leading on safeguarding across the school:

**Designated Safeguarding Lead:**

• Mr Wilson (Deputy Headteacher- Junior)

**Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads:**

• Mrs Jones (KS3 Student Manager)
• Mrs Gayler (KS4 Student Manager)
• Mrs Peppiatt (KS5 Student Manager)

If you have any concerns about the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person, please contact one of these members of staff to share your concerns.
## HOUSE SPORT RESULTS 2018-19

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# HOUSE SPORT RESULTS 2018-19

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