



WELCOME TO DOWNEND SCHOOL

Downend School

PARENT NEWSLETTER:

September 18th, 2026

Head's Messages

Following the brief communication yesterday evening I wanted to give you more detail around the cancellation of the strike action on Monday 21st September. **To confirm, the school will be fully open and all year groups are expected to attend.**

Firstly, thank you for your ongoing support during the uncertainty of school closures linked to the recent strike action. I appreciate that it is really difficult to plan when uncertainty is present and the time line is short. We do not underestimate the impact that this has.

Last Friday we were informed of the proposed dates for strike action. The Trust and secondary school headteachers met the local NEU Industrial Organiser and the secondary school NEU reps on Wednesday afternoon and had a very positive meeting. Our CEO drafted an offer which was delivered to the reps on Thursday, they have agreed to take it to their members, cancelling the strike on Monday to allow time for the meetings to occur.

Whether further strike days will take place is still uncertain but I remain very hopeful that the five remaining dates can be avoided and will keep you updated as soon as we have further information. We will know more when the NEU members have had a chance to consider the offer early next week. As soon as more information is available this will be communicated to you.

School Photos for Years 7,9 and 12

All students in years 7, 9 and 12 will have their school photographs taken by Tempest Photography on Monday 21st September. Your child will come home with a QR code which you will be able to scan to view the proofs to allow you place any orders directly with Tempest Photography.

Yondr Pouches

Yondr pouches are part of the basic school equipment that students need to bring every day. From our daily checks this week we have still seen and collected phones on the gates from students who have forgotten their pouch. It is the students responsibility to bring their pouch and we would appreciate your continued support in reminding them to bring their pouch.

If a student loses or damages their Yondr pouch they are expected to purchase a replacement. This can be done on Scopay and we ask parents to inform us by email to dow-admin@cset.co.uk to inform us of this payment. A replacement Yondr pouch costs £16.

Changes to Free School Meals Funding

From September 2026, the Government has expanded eligibility for Free School Meals so that all children in households receiving Universal Credit can now apply. There are now two categories:

- Targeted FSM, for households on Universal Credit with annual earnings of £7,400 or less (which also brings extra support such as Pupil Premium funding and access to the Holiday Activities and Food programme), and
- Expanded FSM, for households on Universal Credit with earnings above £7,400.

If your family's circumstances have changed, or you think you may now be eligible under the new rules, please don't assume you're automatically covered — you will still need to apply. Applications for South Gloucestershire families are made online via the South Gloucestershire Portal, where eligibility is checked instantly and the school notified directly. If you need help with the online application, the Council's Contact Centre can assist on 01454 868008. We'd encourage all eligible families to apply promptly, as this also brings valuable additional funding into the school.

This Term's Key Dates

17th Sept	Year 12 Information Evening
21st Sept	School photos for Year 7, 9, 11 and 12
22nd Sept	Community Council meeting (1)
24th Sept	Year 7 and 13 Tutor Evening

28th Sept	Year 13 PPE assessments (in class) 28th - 1st Oct
1st Oct	Year 11 parent meeting for GCSE music
2nd Oct	INSET day (2)
15th Oct	Post 16 University and Apprenticeship event
22nd Oct	Post 16 Open Evening
23rd Oct	Last day of term 1

Term time dates for 2026/2027 and Inset dates

Term 1: 3/9/26 - 23/10/26	Term 2: 2/11/26 - 18/12/26	Term 3: 4/1/27 - 12/2/27
Term 4: 22/2/27 - 25/3/27	Term 5: 12/4/27 - 28/5/27	Term 6: 7/6/27 - 23/7/27

The INSET Days for 2026-27 are as follows:

Thursday 3rd September	Friday 2nd October 2026	Monday 2nd November 2026
Monday 4th January 2027	Monday 12th and Tuesday 13th April 2027	
Monday 5th July 2027	All INSET days are full days and there are no half INSET days	