



Autumn 1st 2026

Dear Parent/Carers of DUCKLINGS,

I hope that you all had a wonderful summer holiday with your children and are looking forward to starting at Downham.

I am fortunate to be supported by a number of wonderful LSAs this year – Mrs Sanchez, Mrs Cronin and Mrs Waterman. Mrs Dearman, our HLTA, will cover the class when I am out on leadership or PPA (planning, preparation and assessment) which will generally be on a Wednesday. I am also very pleased that Mrs Gristwood will be continuing to support the class on a voluntary basis. We are all really looking forward to getting to know the children.

General Information:

- ❖ Gate opens at 8.40am – please walk your child to the back playground and say goodbye at the blue gate where an adult will be waiting. The children will be dismissed from here at 3.15pm. Please stand back from the gate and give us a big wave so that we can see you.
- ❖ Please note that registration is at 8.50am. If you arrive after 8.50am and the brown gate (by the office is closed) then please go into the office, sign your child in and a member of staff will escort them down to the classroom.
- ❖ If there are changes to collection arrangements, then please either call or email the school office on: 01268 710387 office@dowbham-ceap.essex.sch.uk.
- ❖ If your child is absent from school then you will need to report this on STUDYBUGS. Please download this free app.
- ❖ If you have a message for myself or one of the EYFS team, then you can catch us on the gate in the morning or the afternoon. Generally, I will be in the classroom in the morning however you can give a message to one of the adults on the gate who will pass it on. I will be on the gate in the afternoon should you want a quick chat.

Alternatively, email the office and they will pass the message on. A reminder that we do not use the 'chat function' on Dojo.

- ❖ EVERYTHING brought into school should be clearly named.
- ❖ Children will need a filled water bottle (no larger than 500ml) every day.
- ❖ Children will be provided with a snack each day. This will be a piece of fruit or vegetable.
- ❖ In the afternoons, the 'Snack Bar' will be open. Children will be encouraged to make their own snack. This will help develop their fine motor and social skills. We ask for parents to make a voluntary donation of £10 per term to cover the cost of the food. Any surplus money will be put towards buying resources for the classroom to enrich their learning. More information to follow separately.
- ❖ Children will need a book bag (that will go in their tray). Please do not send children in with a rucksack.
- ❖ Children may wear black school shoes or plain black trainers (no laces).
- ❖ Hair should be tied up with a school-coloured hair band/accessory.
- ❖ No jewellery or make up is to be worn (bracelets or nail varnish)
- ❖ PE kit – plain black shorts (loose fit – not cycling shorts), plain black jogging bottoms, white socks, 'house' coloured t-shirt, plain black sweatshirt/zippered hoody.
- ❖ Our PE day is on a Monday – they will get changed in school. Please ensure PE kits are in school every day as there can be changes to the timetable.
- ❖ Please ensure that earrings are removed – children will not be allowed to participate in PE lessons if they are wearing earrings. They cannot be taped and school staff are unable to help remove earrings, in line with guidance from Essex.
- ❖ FOREST SCHOOL will take place on a Wednesday. Children should bring a bag of old clothes to get changed into. The children will be outside in all weathers so please ensure that their clothes, including footwear, are appropriate. More details to follow.

- ❖ If you have done so already, please sign up for CLASS DOJO as this is where you'll find most of our school and class information.
- ❖ Please ensure that the school office have your completed PERSONAL INFORMATION form.
- ❖ School dinners need to be pre-ordered via PARENTPAY. Please let your child know what they are having each morning. Please ensure that dinners have been ordered in good time.
- ❖ Children have come home with a READING DIARY for you to record any reading (or phonics practise) that you do with your child. Diaries will be checked weekly. Please record how many times your child has read and write it in the box. The aim is to read at least 50 times in a term. Before Christmas, any children who have read 50 or more times will be presented with a special reading certificate.
- ❖ You are welcome to write non-urgent messages in your diary. Please note that once the children begin the 'READ, WRITE, INC phonics programme in the coming weeks, they will be doing this on a daily basis but this will not be recorded in their diaries. More details about phonics and reading books will follow shortly.
- ❖ Once we start our phonic sessions, your child will bring home sheets and books to share with you at home. The children will also bring home a "Have A Go" book (not linked to RWI) to share at home. Please use the week to re-read the book, asking questions about what happens in the story, favourite pictures and why etc.
- ❖ The children are also free to choose a book from the class library to read at home. These books can be changed whenever your child is ready.
- ❖ This term, Ducklings will be expected to read, ideally daily, with or to an adult. They will be given a READING GRID for activities that they may like to do at home in addition to their phonics. Once the grid is completed, send it in and we can celebrate in class.
- ❖ In Ducklings, children will be rewarded with stickers and house points. There will also be a 'Star of the Day'. On a Friday, one child will be given the Class Teacher's 5Cs AWARD in recognition for showing one of the school values: creativity, collaboration, critical thinking, courage and challenge.

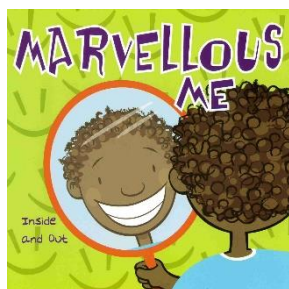
- ❖ Every week, one child will come home with a STORY SACK. In the sack are a number of books for you to share as a family over the week. The story sack will go home on a Friday and needs to be returned by the following Thursday.



- ❖ Our class mascot is “DYLAN THE DUCK”. Dylan will go home with a child each weekend. The child will have the opportunity to talk about their week with Dylan on a Friday. Please email a few photos to the school office so that we can share them with the class. Perhaps Dylan snuggled on the sofa to share a book, or helped with the shopping, or played in the garden or the park? Maybe Dylan did some drawing or helped cook dinner? We will look forward to seeing what Dylan gets up to each week.



This Half-Term's Learning



Our topic this half term is called “Marvellous Me!” This topic will allow us to make new friends, learn about the school routines as well as finding out about how we grow and develop. It teaches children about being helpful, kind and thoughtful at home and at school. This topic also teaches children how they are unique and special, the importance of friendship and how people in their family, school and local community are important and can help them.

Read, Write, Inc Phonics	Set 1 Sounds, Reading and Writing Blending simple CVC words				
White Rose Maths	Getting to know you	Match, sort and compare	Measure and patterns	It's me 1,2, 3	Consolidation

Lastly, please be aware that the children are likely to be very tired after their first few days, weeks and months at school. Don't be surprised if you see a change in their behaviour at home – it is a big transition for them. The best advice I was given as a parent was to put my phone down and look for my child coming out of the door as they will be looking for you in the line. Then greet your child with a big smile, a cuddle... and a snack! But also, to not 'grill' them about their day. Some children may have lots to talk about when they come out of school. Others may want time to be quiet, process and decompress. They'll talk to you when they're ready.

Well done for getting to the end of the newsletter! I look forward to seeing you all very soon. Here's to a great first half-term at school!

Kind regards,

Miss Proctor & the EYFS Team