



**DOWNSEND**  
SCHOOL



Proud to be nominated in the  
**Independent Schools of  
the Year 2019 Awards**

# DOWNSEND TIMES

**20 March 2020**

## A Message from the Headmaster

Dear Parent

We have reached the next point in this most remarkable chapter of our generation. Whilst the doors may be closing formally this afternoon, our determination to offer you, and your children, the support and continuity that you require will continue unabated. As well as trying to provide as much care and normality as possible this week, our staff have been preparing for our move to remote learning next week, as well as the onward journey to online learning in readiness for our doors opening formally once more later this year.

There will be some challenges ahead as we adjust to this new normality. As we have done this week, we will do so together in the knowledge that we have the very best intentions for your children and their continuing education and wellbeing. A Downsend education is founded on the principles of developing the skills that young people will require in adulthood: Creativity, Collaboration, Communication and Critical Thinking. Never have these attributes been more tested, more required and more in evidence than in the past seven days. The response of the Downsend community has been astonishing and I could not be more proud to be a part of it. I am therefore going to add Compassion and Courage to that list, both qualities that everyone has demonstrated in abundance. Your appreciation for the work we have undertaken means more than you will know and I am not sure that our staff have ever felt more appreciated. On behalf of us all, thank you!

Over the past 48 hours, I have committed to Downsend being used as a Key Worker Care Facility for the foreseeable future. We will be an Area Hub for Cognita schools for this purpose and will welcome pupils from Milbourne Lodge and Glenesk as their parents undertake key roles within our community. Thank you to all of you who have already contacted me for details; we will send information to all those who require our support in the coming weeks.

With the school site being almost empty from today, we are taking the opportunity to accelerate our work on the Arts Centre and will be looking to make as much progress as we can in this area. We hope that you will see a real difference when you return to Downsend!

Over the coming weeks, we will continue to engage with you, as we know that maintaining a sense of community is a key strategy for success against this particular virus. I am not sure that this sense of community has ever been stronger, so will close by wishing you all continuing good health in the weeks and months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

*Ian Thorpe, Headmaster*

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## Lower School Update

It has been inspiring to see the school community pull together this week during this very unusual period. Spirits have remained high and we have seen the very best in our children as they have continued to be enthusiastic about their learning and friendships, despite understandably high levels of absence and some changes to the normal structure of school life. With their well-being our top priority, the teaching team have worked hard to ensure that things have remained calm and that school has been the safe haven that everyone needed. My team of Lower School teachers and teaching assistants have been outstanding and I would like to thank them for all their preparations as we move to a world of virtual learning. I would also like to thank parents for their positive feedback and remind you all that we are still here to help and support you and your children – we are only an e-mail away.

Please all stay well and safe and I look forward to welcoming you all back to school as soon as possible.

*Mrs. Kirkham, Head of Lower School*

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## Upper School Update

I write this week's Downsend Times article with hugely mixed feelings. Having come down with a cold/cough last Saturday (on my birthday in fact) I have been forced to endure an early experience of working remotely, and have relied on the stories of school life to be relayed to me via Mrs Kirkham, Mr Silva and Mr Albert, all of whom have been hugely positive regarding both the attitude and resilience shown by our pupils and staff. Naturally, this has been hugely frustrating for me and I am deeply saddened by the need to close the school prematurely for the Easter holidays, particularly as the break will now not be enriched by trips to the French Alps and Barbados by our pupils and parents. However, please rest assured that wherever events can be rescheduled for the summer term, such as the Year 7 play, we will try and organise these once the timeline

of school opening becomes clearer. However, this week has provided an opportunity to review our online platforms and I feel confident that we can facilitate great learning opportunities for all our Upper School families as we all move through the uncertain period ahead.

With specific regard to our provision, I wanted to reiterate a key point that I made in my separate communication this week to Upper School parents regarding the remote/online learning phase that we are moving into. Good schools always work in partnership with it's families and we completely understand the huge challenges that families will be facing at home, in terms of time limitations, numbers of computers available, the fact that parents are working themselves at a difficult time and also that our staff are guiding this process remotely with families of their own to chaperone etc. Therefore, our proposed timetable for the weeks ahead is/will be flexible and can be completed as you and your circumstances allow. However, my sense is that both you and your families will value a sense of structure and routine, certainly in terms of your child's study periods, and so we have provided a Timetable that we feel allows time for a healthy breakfast, a good deal of focused study as well as some exercise and some flexible slots when you/your child might like to engage in some independent work, reading or an activity/interest of your own choice e.g. playing a musical instrument.

As this now transpires to be the 'end of term' newsletter, I must take this opportunity to say well done to all our pupils for their achievements and effort over the Lent term. Our pupils continue to perform at the highest levels in every regard, and we were delighted to hear recently that all our Scholarship pupils have successfully completed their academic course, and have been excused Common Entrance based on the strength of their papers. In addition, congratulations go to the following pupils for their Scholarship achievements:- Marcus H for his John Propert Academic Exhibition, Jack M for his John Propert Sports Scholarship and also to Natasha C for her Sports Scholarship, all to Epsom College as well as to Chloe M and Gracie N for their Sports Scholarships to St John's School. These are outstanding performances during an unprecedented time of interest in entry to these Senior Schools.

Finally, as we move forwards into a challenging and uncertain time ahead for all of us, please rest assured that we will continue to do all we can to provide both continuity of care as well as a sense of community, fun and camaraderie, key tenets upon which successful schools are built, for all our pupils and families. It is natural to be worried about the period ahead, but whether your concerns are about school transition, well-being or an academic issue, we will be here to support you, despite the lack of face to face contact we are all so used to! Please do not feel isolated and use all the usual channels of communication whenever you feel you need to.

I hope all our Upper School families remain happy and healthy in the weeks ahead!

*Karl Newland*

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## Year 6 Evacuee Morning

On Wednesday morning, Year 6 arrived dressed as Evacuees ready to find out what it was like to be evacuated during World War 2. Mrs Dinnage set up the morning with a wonderful assembly which included a fun quiz and some powerful contemporary experiences from children who were evacuated. Then came the task for the morning. Year 6 had to research and create a film for a BBC website. They had to work in groups and collaborate using an envelope of sources. It was brilliant to see their critical thinking abilities in action, as they shared, analysed, discussed and delegated. Mr Mitchell is going to put all the films together and add them to the VLE. Can't wait to see this. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Y6 teachers and especially Mrs Dinnage and Mr Mitchell for all their time and support.

*Miss Helen Black*  
*Head of History*



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## The Boys Done Good!

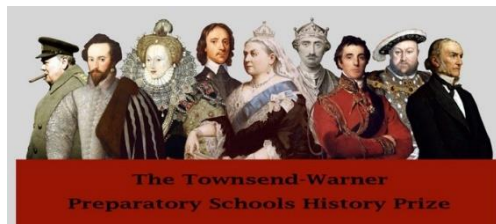
Both Mr Thorpe and I were very proud of the way that Arya, Aiden and Joseph conducted themselves at the Rotary District Final of the 'Youth Debates'. The feat of advancing so far in this competition was thoroughly deserved and they should be extremely proud of their achievements. The final saw some very talented young speakers, mostly Year 9 pupils, many speaking so eloquently and confidently with the absence of cue cards too. It was a tough task and the boys equipped themselves extremely well. The future for these boys is certainly very bright! There was an interesting array of topics from the 'Power of Protest' to 'Personal Space' and the boys' own debate on whether 'Violent Video Games make People more Violent in Reality'. Congratulations boys!

*Mrs. Vanstone*



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## Townsend Warner History Prize – The Results



Last month Jacob S and Alexander B made it through to the last round of the prestigious 'Townsend Warner History Prize'. Only 250 candidates from the initial 1036 made it through to this round. This final paper was a two-hour exam where they had to answer questions based on a wide range of topics. The paper is designed to give pupils a chance to show off their knowledge of history as well as the opportunity to write with flair and imagination.

Jacob came an impressive 128<sup>th</sup> beating his previous year's score of 182<sup>nd</sup>. Whereas, Alexander, who is only in Year 6, came 230<sup>th</sup> and is one of the youngest entrants to have made it this far. They both



performed extremely well in this challenging round and I am incredibly proud of them both; their achievements are fantastic especially considering the tough competition they were against.

*Helen Black*  
*Head of History*

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## Downsend's Eco Committee

On Monday the Lower School had their first Eco Schools Assembly. Members of the Eco Committee introduced themselves and set out our school action plan. We are focusing on encouraging biodiversity in the school garden and looking at how to reduce the impact of transport and waste within our school. Bella T, Amelia B and Stephania from Year 5 spoke about their concerns about environmental issues such as plastic pollution and the need to protect endangered animals. We encouraged everyone to “make one change,” thinking about how our actions impact upon the environment.

Members of Eco Club have been busy planting vegetables and flowers in the garden, before the school closure, with the hope of creating a beautiful space to encourage animals, birds and insects, and for us all to enjoy when we return to school.

*Mrs Ludlam*



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## Year 3ST Riddle

The children collected and discussed ideas collaboratively finally creating this amazing rhyming riddle poem!

Can you guess what it is about?

The children are currently writing their own rhyming riddle poems.

*Mrs. Temlett*

I am a silvery ball  
Above your head,  
A reflective mirror  
Seen from your bed.

A huge boulder  
Floating up high,  
A piece of rock  
That will never die.  
I have less gravity  
Way up here,  
With rockets  
Often shooting near.  
At midnight  
I'm easy to spot,  
But in the day  
You'll see me not.



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## A Note from our Charity Co-Ordinator

Further to Public Health England advice, recycling collection services have suspended their drop off locations. For the time being we will suspend the recycling of empty crisp packets. We therefore kindly request that no further packets are brought into school.

Many thanks for your support with this initiative to date.

*Mrs Beth Day*  
Charity Co-ordinator



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## Music News



After a wonderful few days at Godalming music festival I'm pleased to say that Horatio M won the beginners and U11 brass classes, Octavia M won the U11 woodwind, U12 recorder and U13 recital classes, and together they won the U11 duet class. Congratulations to you both!

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A huge congratulations to Chloe S for achieving Distinction in her Grade 5 saxophone this week. Well done Chloe!

Nicole Allison

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## Instrumental Lessons at Downsend

### We Have Vacancies!!

If your child would like to learn an instrument at Downsend with one of our tutors then please email the Head of Music at [nicole.allison@downsend.co.uk](mailto:nicole.allison@downsend.co.uk)

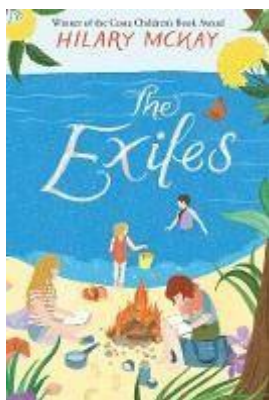
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## Library News

Dear Parents,

I know they all have plenty of books at home already to keep them occupied but I have encouraged the children to borrow 2 books from the library this week. Here are two suggestions to enjoy together or read alone about what it is like to live just within one family group or to be completely isolated from the world.

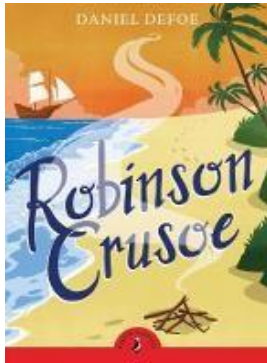
Book of the week in the Lower School Library:



### The exiles by Hilary McKay

The first novel in the witty and warm The Exiles series. Ruth, Naomi, Rachel and Phoebe Conroy love reading and having fun more than anything else. So the sisters are horrified when they learn that their parents are sending them away to Cumbria for the summer, to stay with their fearsome grandmother: Big Grandma. Big Grandma is strict, makes them do chores and doesn't let them have any fun - but worst of all, she refuses to let the girls read any books. Determined to enjoy their summer, the sisters decide they aren't going to put up with their grandmother's tough regime, and in doing so they somehow manage to cause inordinate amounts of chaos.

Book of the week in the LRC:



### Robinson Crusoe by Daniel Defoe

In 2019 we celebrated the 300th anniversary of the story of Robinson Crusoe - one of the most famous adventures of all time. After surviving a terrible shipwreck, Robinson Crusoe discovers he is the only human on an island far from any shipping routes or rescue. At first he is devastated, but slowly, with patience and imagination, he transforms his dismal island into a tropical paradise. For twenty-four years he lives with no human companionship - until one fateful day, when he discovers he is not alone...

One for the adults .... Educated by Tara Westover.

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## Message to Parents:

We would like to keep in touch with all of you during this unpredicted times, we will be active on all our social media channels, and would love you to follow us on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. We can be found on all channels by searching Downsend School.

While at home please send images of your children learning, exploring and creating, over the next couple weeks.

Please send your content to [editor@downsend.co.uk](mailto:editor@downsend.co.uk).

We will do absolutely our best to include the most of the footage you'll be sending to us.



## DPA News



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## A huge thanks to all from the DPA

As we prepare for home school arrangements starting from Monday, the DPA would like to express sincere thanks as follows to:

1. All the teaching and support staff at Downsends for their excellent response to the challenges posed by COVID-19. The cool, calm and pragmatic approach by all serves as a great model for our children as we move through these difficult times. We really appreciate everything you do!

2. Parents and caregivers who constantly provide help and support to the DPA throughout our ambitious programme of activities. Whilst we have had to postpone a number of things this term, we will come back fighting once things have calmed down and look forward to welcoming you all to DPA events again in the future.
3. Our children, who are moving through uncharted waters with heads held high, and with kindness and compassion for others.

So as we prepare ourselves for the next few weeks, we would like to wish everyone good health and much happiness, and we look forward to seeing you all back at school when we get back.

In the meantime, we hope you are all able to enjoy celebrating the strong bond of family this Sunday on Mother's Day.

If you have any questions regarding DPA activity in the future, please get in touch with the team at [downsendPA@gmail.com](mailto:downsendPA@gmail.com)

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The logo for Downsend+ is written in a black, hand-drawn, cursive style. The word 'Downsend' is followed by a plus sign '+'. The letters are slightly irregular and connected, giving it a personal, handwritten feel.

Further to the closure of Downsend school on Friday the 20 March it has been decided that both Downsend+ and Early Years+ will not be open during the Easter holidays. Parents who have already made bookings will be contacted over the next few days regarding any necessary transfers or refunds.

If you have any queries please contact Rebecca Peek on 07909 861 280 or email

[downsendplus@downsend.co.uk](mailto:downsendplus@downsend.co.uk)

*Rebecca Peek*

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## **INSPIRING YOUNG MINDS**

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