Dear Parents/Carers

We seem to have fitted a huge amount into this first half term of the year ... 90 new additions to the Damers family have all settled in beautifully, well-received first ‘Stay and ...’ sessions, coffee mornings and workshops for new parents, a national award presentation in London for our Eco entrepreneurs followed by a celebration at Clarence House, year group trips to hook children into their new history themes and of course our long-awaited Ofsted inspection which you will hopefully hear more about when the report is published later this week.

It was great to see so many of you at the parent/teacher consultations a couple of weeks ago, apologies if the staff were in a slight ‘mid-inspection’ daze! If you were unable to attend a meeting this time, Mrs Scott will be contacting you to arrange an alternative appointment before half term.

As promised in the last newsletter, your responses to our most recent parent questionnaire are now on the school website along with a summary of our learning development priorities for this school year, which should show how your responses have influenced our planning. We had a record 187 responses this year. Thank you for such a positive and constructive response and also to all those parents who met with inspectors a couple of weeks ago to share their views on our school and the way that it is led. You have made us smile, feel as though we’re doing a good job and subtly highlighted just a few areas where we can do even better - thank you!

Included in the newsletter this time you will see our new DASP attendance statement which reflects the change in the law now regarding term time absence. Please read this statement carefully so that you are fully aware of the changes that have been introduced with regard to penalty notices and please ask if you have any questions about this.

I’m delighted to let you know that we have a date at last for the installation of our outdoor play equipment and if all goes according to plan the long-awaited new equipment will be installed just before the end of term.

I will now hand over to the children to share some of their highlights from this first half term. I wish you and your families a happy and restful half term break and look forward to seeing you back in school on Tuesday 31 October.

Catherine Smith
Headteacher
Number Fun!

We have been having great fun playing with numbers in foundation. We have been counting, matching and ordering numbers up to 20. Some of us have even been thinking about more and less!

Year 1 went on a hike to Hardy's Monument to try and discover why it was there. The children also took part in a scavenger hunt looking for different in colours.

Dogs - many of our families walk to school with their dogs and their dogs wait very patiently outside the school grounds. Please make sure that your child is warned not to pat / stroke a dog that they don't know on their way in, just in case the owner would rather they didn't.

Come to an Incredible Years Coffee Morning at Damers on Thursday 19th Oct from 9-10am. Don't forget Stay and Play too, every Tuesday, meet at Liscombe Street entrance.

Thank you to Dorchester Community Church for the donation of £122 towards our new bird hide.

We just wanted to remind parents that our school has two main entrances for the majority of children - the Lychgate and the lower gate which are next to the Great Field pathway. The gate on Liscombe St is for the specific use of children within our specialist base provision and kidsclub. Due to the needs of the children within Copper Base we need to keep this entrance as quiet as possible and we would ask that all parents respect the intended specific use of this gate and use the main entrance gates next to the Great Field. We thank you for your support and recognition of this aspect of our provision.
The Celtic Way

Year 3 have had a brilliant time at the New Barn field centre this week, where they have been learning the way of life of a Celt. It was very hard work and very tiring grinding the wheat, making butter and carving sculptures from the pieces of chalk.

Everyone learnt a lot from "Dave the Celt" and had a super time.

Oyez Oyez!

Year 2 had a marvelous time with the Town Crier discovering some of the history of Poundbury. We can't wait to show the Mayor around ourselves next time!

Thank You!

We are extremely grateful to the Duchy of Cornwall for providing our parents with adult cycle storage next to the Lychgate. We know that these will be well used and will provide a great addition to our Active Travel provision. Many thanks!

Maths Mania!

Let's go 'conkers'! Why not try some of these maths ideas when you are collecting conkers?

- Count how many conkers you have.
- Practise your addition and subtraction skills - write numbers on your conkers, pick two and then add them together or subtract them
- Find the biggest/smallest one
- How many conkers will weight 1/2kg?
AGM
Thank you to everyone who came along to the first meeting of the year and AGM. Committee members Sarah Collins (chair), Sophie Duke (deputy chair) and Abby Johnson (secretary) will serve for a second year in their current roles and Mike Yard (treasurer) will continue after several years in the post.

An EGM will be held in the New Year with a view to a re-election, so if anyone is interested in taking on a committee role, come to the next meeting on Monday 13 November to qualify for nomination.

The meeting put in place plans for the term and year ahead. This year, the funds you help to raise by supporting PTA events and activities are more important than ever and will be put to full use to plug any gaps in school funding and supply extras, such as supporting Bike Breakfests and other bike/scooter initiatives and putting money towards the school’s exciting outside space project.

Last year, the money Damers First School families helped to raise funded, or part-funded:

* Damers Road leaving gifts for every pupil
* Damers Road farewell celebration evening
* Costumes and set design for Key stage 2’s end of year production, The Wizard of Oz
* Year 4 pupils leaving book gift, bingo (and a new bingo machine!) and BBQ
* Book bags for new Foundation pupils
* Golden ticket treats
* Christmas gifts for every class
* Subsidised Christmas lunches for Year 3 & 4 pupils
* Children’s magazines for the school library
* Contributions to subsidise school trips during the year

PTA events raised an amazing £6,417 with additional income from a variety of other sources including commission on Christmas card sales, easyfundraising.com and donations from Athelhampton House’s Easter egg hunt. Thank you for your help in raising these vital extra funds.

D - I - S - C - O!

Friday 3 November 6-7pm

Although DJ Debs will be greatly missed, the tunes will play on (if we can work the decks!). Tickets will be on sale after half term for £2 per child (adults are free but must accompany children) available from the office to avoid disappointment or from the door on the night.

For new Foundation families, please note that Foundation children are welcome to come too, but that it is a proper disco and can get busy, loud and dark!

There will be a be a bit of a spooky theme so come dressed up for dancing in the main hall or chill out in the small hall for refreshments and craft. Last time, keeping refreshments to the small hall worked well in helping to reduce rubbish and damage to the lovely new carpets in the corridor! Thank you for your cooperation with this.

Other Events Coming Up …

Secret Shop - Friday 24 November
Christmas Fair - Friday 1 December (after school)

More details to follow in next month's newsletter.

Bring the Brownlee Brothers to school!

Please vote for the school for a chance to win a scoot-athlon at Damers, hosted by triathlon stars Jonny and Alistair Brownlee! Scooters and other prizes are also to be won but we need lots of votes. Go to http://www.thecollectivedairy.com/scootathlon/ and VOTE FOR DAMERS!

The next PTA meeting will be held on Monday 13 November (time TBC) and everyone is welcome, contact us any time damerspta@gmail.com.
Young Enterprise Awards Day

In July, a group of children from the Eco Club and Entrepreneur Club were announced as the national winners of the Young Enterprise Fiver 5 – 8 year olds Best Group Category and Most Profitable Product for ‘Spick ‘n’ Span’, beating children from over 1000 primary schools. A group of them went to an all expenses paid Awards Ceremony at the HAVAS Media Centre, London last Tuesday. The awards were presented to them by David Ribi, Channel 5 Milkshake presenter and Ben Towers, who at the age of 19, is tipped to be the next Richard Branson. The children were also treated to a ‘Muggles Walking Tour’ of London.

Clarence House Visit

Four children from our Eco Crew have just been on a very exciting trip to London to celebrate their achievement of winning two National Young Enterprise Awards for their unique, environmentally friendly, multi-purpose cleaning product ‘Spick ‘n’ Span’. The day was organised by Mark Jankovich, CEO of Delphis Eco. The children had the chance to meet Mark and ask lots of questions. Mark presented the children with the second ever box of 100% Post Consumer Recycled Plastic Bottles. The first box had gone to Sir David Attenborough! Click to read Mark’s blog about Damers' eco work with video clips of the children’s views about plastic bottles.

The children then went off for their special reward and a visit to Clarence House, which was extremely special as Clarence House isn’t open to the public during September. The children had a talk from Prince Charles’s Sustainability Officer about all the Prince’s eco work and the children talked about all the eco work they had done at school. They then had a tour of the house and were able to sit on the furniture and handle some items. There were many pictures of the royal family especially the Queen Mother, a solid silver model of Nelson’s flagship, The Victory, and a piano that Sir Elton John had played.

The garden had beehives (the children discovered that Prince Charles likes honey in his tea), a huge vegetable patch, compost, bug hotels and a huge range of different plants.

Message from the Eco Crew - did you know that only 5-7% of nearly 300 million tonnes of plastic waste used annually is being recycled, while almost 3% ends up in our oceans. This needs to change.

Join us by spreading awareness and pledging to make a difference by visiting

https://themilkbottlechallenge.org/pledge

Empties Please

We have signed up to Empties Please, a website which recycles printing cartridges and toners for money which the school will receive. Please give your empty printer cartridges to your class teacher. Here is a list of all the cartridges that can be recycled. This will support our work to retain the Eco Schools Green Flag when we apply for it again in April 2018.
Year 4 Curling

Year 4 have been supporting each other having a go at curling! No, we haven't got a new ice rink, the curling 'stone' is on wheels.

Bike News

Monday 6th November: Be Bright Day Day
As the mornings and evenings are getting darker for longer, help us raise awareness by making ourselves extra visible!

- Wear something bright/reflective on your school uniform to help you be seen
- ‘Bling up’ your bike or scooter to make it really bright. Make sure your decorations do not stop the brakes and wheels working

Friday 10th November: Bike-Breakfast (weather permitting!)

***NEW FOR 2017/18 - an additional Foundation Bike Breakfast will take place in the foundation area for our youngest pupils. The Bike-Breakfast for Years 1-4 will remain on the main courtyard.***

Reading

ROCKS!

Dorchester Library is the place to be this half term. There are two brilliant events on that might interest you.

The first, on October 21st, is a creative workshop with Damers favourite Darrell Wakelam. Darrell will be creating artwork inspired by The Cat in the Hat. This free workshop is suitable for children aged 5-10 years. There are two workshops from 10am - 12 noon and from 1pm-3pm. For more information please contact Dorchester Library.

The second, on October 25th, is a Woodland Creatures Story and Craft Session. This event is suitable for the under 10s. Children under 8 must be accompanied. It is a free drop in event - no need to book. It runs from 10.30-11.30am.

We are hoping to get our own school library back up and running after half term.

From 8:30am until 8:50am, there will be drinks and snacks (flapjacks and fruit) for everyone who cycles and scoots to school (walkers invited too!). If your child has any food allergies, please see a member of staff/PTA on the morning when you arrive for the breakfast. This is free to attend and is being funded by PTA donations, support and staff members’ time. Any donations will be gratefully received and used to help continue such events.

Monday 6th - Friday 10th November: The Great Damers Bike Off Stamp

Building on the success of our stamp sheets when we moved schools, we will be hosting a 1 week stamp sheet event. Walkers, cyclists and those scooting will be able to get a stamp to collect on their sheet. Try to get a stamp for each day!
Copper Base News

The base children have been enjoying exploring and investigating though play this half term. We are having fun getting to know each other really well, playing outside and working together. We have had great fun enjoying the story The Train Ride where we have been looking out for what we can see on our journey. We have been through a tunnel, up in a hot air balloon and passed a farm on our travels.

Please ensure that your child is supervised when cycling or scooting along the path beside the Great Field and that they are aware of the dangers at busy times. Most of the time this is perfectly safe and it is wonderful to see so many children arriving at school in such an active and happy way, we wouldn’t want to stop that, but we do ask for your assistance in ensuring that the children are supervised, aware of the dangers and are asked to step down off bikes or scooters at the times when the paths are particularly busy.
DASP Attendance Statement

It is essential that children and young people form good habits of regular attendance at school from an early age and that good attendance is maintained throughout their school career, the schools within the Dorchester Area School Partnership (DASP) deem attendance of 95%+ to be good. All DASP Schools are committed to working together to ensure that there is a consistent approach to school attendance and to supporting parents and carers to achieve good attendance for the children and young people in their care. It is a legal requirement that all children should attend their educational provision and it is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure that their children attend school. To ensure this all schools in DASP have agreed the following:

- It is important that pupils are in school on time. Time keeping is not only important in obtaining maximum benefit from education it is also a key skill for adult life. Lateness is monitored by the school and contributes to absence rates.
- Schools will monitor the attendance of pupils and work closely with Dorset County Council’s School Attendance Service to support parents and carers, children and young people where attendance levels are causing concern.
- Whilst we understand that children do become ill on occasions, children who lose a lot of time at school can suffer in the long term from significant gaps in their learning. If a child’s health continues to affect their education, schools are obliged to make a referral to School Health to ensure that appropriate medical advice and support is provided to support good attendance.
- If a child is ill or absent from school it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that they inform the school. DASP schools all operate a targeted “First Day Call” system, which means they will contact you to ask why your child is not in school and when they are expected to return. Please be aware that schools have a duty to safeguard pupils, failure to inform school or respond to a call from school, may result in your child being reported as missing to police or Children’s Services.
- Leave of Absence should not be granted during term time, except in exceptional circumstances. The definition of exceptional circumstances are where requests are rare, significant and unavoidable.
- It is essential that any requests for leave of absence for holidays, family events or any other reasons are discussed with your child’s Head Teacher prior to the request being made as they cannot be approved unless they are deemed as exceptional circumstances. Any absence which has not been authorised by your child’s school will be recorded as “unauthorised”. In line with Dorset County Council policy, if a child has 5 days (or 10 sessions) of unauthorised holiday within a period of 12 weeks, a penalty notice of £60 per parent may be issued by Dorset County Council, which if not paid within 21 days will double to £120. If this remains unpaid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates’ court.

DASP is committed to ensuring that every learner has the opportunity to thrive and achieve and recognises that good attendance is central to this.