

### **Local influences on our curriculum**

Downe is a small village school in a rural setting. We believe that the local environment is one of the most exciting and valuable resources we have. Down House, High Elms Country Park, Downe Scout activity centre, Christmas Tree Farm and Downe Orchard are all within easy walking distance.

Children are encouraged to participate in village festivities. We enjoy and value being a part of the Downe Community. It is important to know where your roots are and where you fit in.

We appreciate the opportunities available to us for outside learning in a rural community. We have forest school sessions weekly for Reception and Year One. We walk to High Elms Country Park in all weathers and seasons, and make use of their environmental learning programme. We have an orienteering course in the school field and accompanying recreation ground.

Downe is also geographically close to Biggin Hill, which was important in World War 2 and why we feel it is to study that aspect of British history; a percentage of our children live there. Downe is also in Greater London and we value the many opportunities that presents. We take every member of the school Council (which is every child by the end of Year 6) on a visit to Parliament, where they have a work-shop on various political themes. It is important they understand our political heritage and history, and the system of democracy that is fundamental to our culture.

Partnership: Downe is a part of the AFACT Foundation Trust with 3 larger local schools: Edgebury Primary School; Poverest Primary School, and Southborough Primary School. These schools have a diverse and different community to Downe, and working with them is valuable to us. We have shared in curriculum activities and celebrations. We annually have a music concert where choirs from all four schools perform to parents and the local community. We have shared educational speakers. We have attended multi-cultural week celebrations and workshops.

Family atmosphere: Downe has a family atmosphere: we are "a family of learners". Children in mixed ages classes are more likely to co-operate than compete. Research shows that "Mixed-age classrooms do not negatively affect student achievement, and students in these classrooms have significantly more positive attitudes toward school, themselves, and others"(Stone, 1998) The teacher's in-depth knowledge of the needs, strengths and interests of the children ensures success. Being small, we pride ourselves in attempting to give every child the opportunity to represent the school in some way. This may be through dramatic or musical performances, their selection for the various school sports teams or through the opportunities to participate in School Council.

The curriculum at Downe is designed to give every child a chance to shine.