



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 17th March 2023

Head Teacher's Message

As we approach our busiest time of the year, the nights are getting lighter and the weather warmer, we are feeling excited for the term to come. We have finally reached the end of the planned industrial action by the NEU. Although there may be more to come in the summer term, for now we are looking forward to a smooth run up to the Easter holidays and beyond. We wanted to thank you all for your support and understanding. It is very much appreciated. We hope you have all found the time to watch our most recent parent briefing focussing on some of our news and adding more information about the strike action this week.

This week has also been busy. We began with our Water themed Book Day on Monday. All across the school children experienced storytelling and books on the theme of water. We even had a water themed menu for our school dinner! Some of you told us that dressing up for World Book Day was costly so this year we opted for a creative 'make your own headgear' theme and we were amazed at some of the fun and creative ideas that you came up with at home.

Today we have joined the Comic Relief Red Nose Day, coming together to raise smiles and some money by wearing red and having a brilliant bake sale. We have had a fun filled and memorable day.

Next week we also have our Discovery Power Day. Power Days give children a vast range of experiences

within a given place. From here we can find out more about what children enjoy and are interested in and then use these to inform children's Careers encounters as they move through the school. This Power Day focusses on the history and geography elements of our Time, Place, People and Culture curriculum. Children will experience activities such as discovering the Stone Age and Ancient Egypt or using the VR headsets for world exploration or going on a treasure hunt or archaeological dig! We look forward to sharing photographs with you.

We are planning a coffee morning for all Year 11 parents on 28th March at 10am. This will be to meet with us and the local authority for an update on our sixth form planning. As you know, the public consultation stage is now finished and we are within the final stage 4 planning phase, so we are hoping that we will have news to share very soon.

Rachel



Since our last newsletter we have had our two day review with Challenge Partners. A team of three reviewers, all with special school experience came to observe in classes, talk to children, parents and staff and find out more about us.

They aim to 'get under the skin' of the school by asking complex questions and gathering a lot of information. The report is now on our website if you would like to read it. Moreover, we met and bonded with like-minded professionals from other outstanding special schools and will be paying reciprocal visits to each other in the coming months. We are delighted with the outcome that Willow Dene has been graded as a 'leading' school and would like to share one of our favourite quotes from the report:

'The relationships between school staff, pupils and their families are fantastic. When pupils come into school in the morning, trusting relationships between staff and pupils are evident. For example, in the pouring winter rain, each taxi van takes it's place outside reception and a stream of staff quickly help the pupils unload and welcome them into school with bright and welcoming voices to start the school day'.

While our reviewers were here they were able to see some of our Careers Week activities and find out more about some of our Key Stage 3 specialist interests and how we identify and grow our children's passions and strengths as they get older. Children had a lot of fun designing their own app during this Careers Week and we were amazed at some of their ideas.

SCHOOLS COUNCILS

Over the next few weeks, before the end of term, there is no sign of things slowing down. On Monday our Compass School Council representatives will be attending the first face to face meeting of this group since the pandemic.

They are a very important group, who were responsible for introducing the '11 before 11' and '16 before 16' principles which all Compass school want children to experience during their time with us. We are looking forward to some of the decisions that Tyrese, Harry and their colleagues make at the next meeting!



We also have our much anticipated 'Spring Fling' from 5pm on Thursday. This will have the outcome from our Sibling Selfie competition as well as raffles, stalls and fun activities for you all to enjoy! Classes will be repeating the £10 challenge, where they make something to sell to try and double their money. After the success of Winter Wonderland, we cannot wait to see you there!



After school next week we have our Sibling evening aimed at older brother and sisters. There will be a huge range of well-being activities on offer as we encourage our families to get to know each other and have fun.



On 28th March we will also be at The Albany Theatre in Deptford with our Shakespeare cast performing Midsummer

Night's Dream as part of the National Shakespeare Schools Festival. This performance is in the evening so do contact us if you would like to come along and support us.



GOLDCREST CLASS-PUPIL VOICE

Goldcrest have been having great fun in Art this term. They have been learning about Frank Bowling and re-creating his masterpiece! They have been using different techniques each week to add more paint to their canvases and they look beautiful!

Aiden's favourite technique was using the spray bottles independently. Whilst Jordan's favourite was dripping paint on the canvas and moving it around to add a drip effect.

In our Literacy sessions, Goldcrest have been developing their communication skills by guessing what's in the bag. They had great fun putting their hand inside the bag, having a feel and using communication aids to guess what it was. Shangith was very excited to put his hand in to have a feel.

Michael recently discovered the balcony and has been having a great time, especially on the scooter!




SQUIRREL CLASS

Squirrel class have been having lots of fun at the local park this half term for our Play and Leisure lessons. Our topic is 'Out and about with our friends' and we have been working on our social and play skills by playing alongside our friends and taking turns with the playground equipment. The tyre swing is a firm favourite for lots of us. Even the adults had a go!

Squirrel class have also been learning to cross the road safely, using different types of pedestrian crossings and practising 'Stop, Look, Listen, Think' before crossing each road. We have been practising what we are learning by going on short walks near to school and of course on the way to the park!





Would you like to share your expertise and help
shape our provision for children with SEND?

Join our Compass SEND Parent Forum

As part of our continuing focus on how we work to best meet the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families, we would like parental representatives from across our schools to have the opportunity to work with leaders to offer input on aspects of policy and practice.

This would involve meeting at least three times a year, providing input on policy development as well as considering government guidance and research and how these impact on practice within our schools.

If this is something you are interested in, please email a brief personal statement, explaining your experience and why you are interested in joining the group, to **mbernard@compassps.uk**

THE
COMPASS
PARTNERSHIP OF SCHOOLS

CAN YOU HELP FRIENDS OF
WILLOW DENE?

WE NEED CHOCOLATE!

WE ARE GATHERING CHOCOLATE DONATIONS
TO MAKE UP DELICIOUS HAMPERS AND PRIZES
FOR OUR CHOCOLATE RAFFLE AT OUR SPRING
FLING 2023.

ALL DONATIONS TO ALISON AND REBECCA IN
THEIR OFFICE BY MONDAY 20TH MARCH 2023

A HUGE THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT,
FOWD TEAM



Friends of Willow Dene
Charity Number: 1139449



WHAT'S ON

This Easter the 'Funfair on Circus Field', Blackheath have agreed to run a special SEND quiet session. It will be sensory friendly with no music, flashing lights, reduced capacity on site, and a reduced need for queuing (as far as is possible). The session will take place from 10am-12pm on Wednesday 12th April 2023. This is outside of the usual public opening hours.

There is no need to register or get tickets, just turn up. Entry is free and there will be further discounts once inside.



speakeasy

Spring Term 2023

A weekly Coffee Morning for Willow Dene parents & carers

A safe space to talk, listen, share, encourage and make friends.

Important Information

Tuesday 21st March - Mandy Baines the Sensory Processing Co-ordinator and Joleigh Case who is the newly appointed Sensory Processing Co-ordinator are joining the coffee morning.

Joleigh would like to introduce herself to parents and explain more about her role and how sensory programmes are implemented across the school. Also looking at how sensory experiences can sometimes affect the way our children behave and how parents/carers can manage some sensory behaviours at home. Come and meet Joleigh and say goodbye to our lovely Mandy, who is sadly leaving us at the end of this term.

For more information please contact: Vicky House on 0208 854 9841

Greenwich Parent Carer Participation Forum (GPCPF)

JOURNEY OF LIFE INFORMATION DAY

Information day for Parent/Carers with a child/young person aged
0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

Friday 31st March 2023 10.30-2pm

At the Moorings sociable club Titmuss Ave, London SE28 8BH, bus 472, 244 & 301.

If you're a parent or carer with a child/young person aged 0-25 with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) come along and get advice and information about local services that can support you and your family from early years through to adulthood.

Meet representatives from:

- Health
- Early years
- Social Care
- Short Breaks
- Leisure
- Parent support groups
- Education
- Voluntary and community groups

This is a free event and you can drop in any time between 10.30-2pm. Free to attend.
For more information call 07852101492 (leave a message) or email
admin@greenwichpcpf.org



WILLOWDENE COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Early in 2022 a flyer dropped through my letter box, inviting local residents to an Open Morning at Willow Dene School. As a retired teacher and psychotherapist, I thought it would be interesting to learn more about a school that is literally on my doorstep. I really had little idea of how they operated. The Open Morning changed all that. I was blown away by the breadth, variety and expertise that they provided to some of the most vulnerable children in our community, i.e., those with severe physical disabilities and /or those with developmental disorders. No wonder their latest Ofsted inspection rated them as “Outstanding”.

I was very happy, therefore, (and a little surprised!) to find myself invited to my first community committee meeting that very evening. The committee meets at least once each term and comprises two Deputy Heads and four other local residents with a variety of experiences and knowledge. The committee is part of Willow Dene’s extensive inclusion policy, which encourages local and wider community involvement, including local residents and businesses (e.g. Morrisons). This can be seen in the Open Day tours, community events such as last term’s Winter Wonderland, and the forthcoming Spring Fling, as well as in the Community Newsletter and access to the school’s website.

The community committee contributes a local perspective in respect of the planning and feedback involved in the above activities and can generate ideas about how to further encourage local involvement in the school, e.g., a Community Library box in Swingate Lane. They can also provide direct discussion with other local residents they meet, for example when delivering Willow Dene flyers and newsletters. Local views on the school can then be fed back via the committee, or residents can be encouraged to attend Open Days and fund raising events, or to visit the school’s website to learn more about what a world-class educational resource they have on their doorstep. Educationalists from all over the world visit Willow Dene to learn more about the provision of specialist education. This two-way communication between local residents and school can also enable the school to hear what concerns the residents may have about things like parking, etc.

Committee members can also contribute their own experiences of issues connected with children and their families in receipt of special educational provision. For example, I am particularly interested in the extensive plans the school has to encourage sibling involvement and a sense of pride in the way they manage having a brother or sister with special educational needs. As a family therapist I saw only too vividly how the siblings’ needs could be overlooked, with dire consequences to their mental health and family relationships.

I am always impressed by the way my fellow committee members contribute their particular areas of knowledge and experience to ideas about community involvement, including education, marketing, and charity work. I think we all share a commitment to enabling two-way communication between the community and Willow Dene, so that both are more fully aware and informed about what each has to offer the other.