



# WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 5th May 2023

## Head Teacher's Message

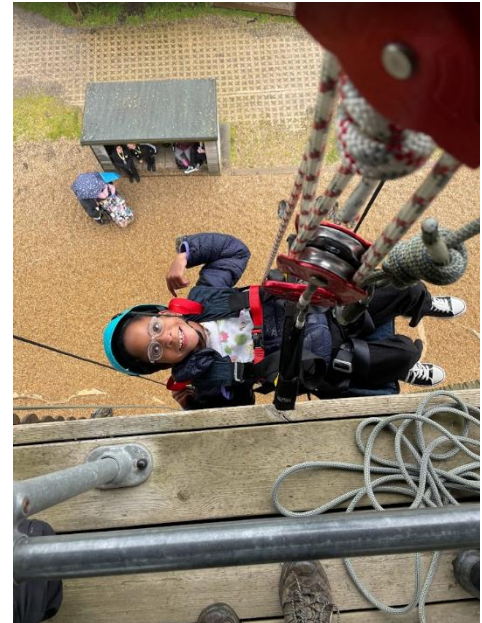
Welcome to our first summer term newsletter. We hope you all had a safe and happy spring holiday, although that seems a long time ago already! Hopefully you are all managing to watch the parent briefing videos which will give you some more detailed context around the teacher strikes. With the second and last in this series of strike action happening this week, we will be awaiting news from the government and teaching unions about whether a way forward has been found. As soon as we have any further information, we will share this with you. With the addition of two bank holidays this means that this half term has a very unusual configuration of weeks, but rest assured that we will be packing as much in as we possibly can.

As we near the final admissions panel of the year, we are showing round a lot of families considering a place at Willow Dene for their child. We know how stressful this time of year is for families and always try to give visitors our undivided attention so we can answer questions and give the information they need. At the other end of the primary age range, we are currently meeting with the secondary destination schools for our Year 6 children in preparation for planned transition meetings and visits next half term.

Last week we met as a Senior Leadership Team to plan the summer term's events. There is a lot to look forward to including a Saturday family event, a sibling event and a parent celebration evening. For children, we are looking forward to Sports Day and the Essential Skills and Well-Being Power Day. A full list will be coming your way soon.

This week we have been celebrating the Coronation of King Charles and enjoying being part of history in the making. Whatever you do this weekend, we hope you enjoy yourselves. We look forward to seeing everyone on Tuesday.

**Rachel**



## IMPORTANT DATES

8<sup>th</sup> May 2023 – Coronation Bank Holiday

Last day of Term - Friday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023

Pupils return to school - Monday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Parents Evening

12<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Little Night in – Complex Needs and ASD Groups

16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> June 2023

School Journey, Broadstone Warren

21<sup>st</sup> – 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023

Sports and MOVE Day

28<sup>th</sup> June 2023

Summer Fete

15<sup>th</sup> July 2023

## 6<sup>th</sup> Form Expansion



Following the announcement that planning has been granted for the new sixth form building during the spring holidays, we are very happy and excited to confirm that there will be a sixth form at Oakmere Road in September.

We are even more excited that we are taking forward all of the young people in our current Year 11 and not just some of them. We have a lot of work to do this term to be ready for September but are confident that everything the children need will be in place. We are planning on meeting with the parents of Willow Dene's first ever sixth form cohort next half term. The building work will be starting imminently at Oakmere Road and we will be keeping you updated of the progress.



## Making New Friends

Willow Dene continues to be a school of interest. This half term we are expecting visits from Mary Rose School in Portsmouth and Waverley School in London. They are joining us for a tour of Willow Dene and to look at different aspects of our practice, including how we teach phonics and early reading, how we work with therapists and our specialist teams and our curriculum.

We are particularly looking forward to welcoming colleagues from Mary Rose School, as their Headteacher was one of our reviewers on the Challenge Partners team. They have a similar cohort of children to us and we are looking forward to a reciprocal visit to Portsmouth to see their sixth form.

We are very excited to welcome a group of school leaders from Africa to Willow Dene later this term. Having read about Willow Dene on our website, they contacted us to see if we would be able to host a placement for a group of leaders at Willow Dene. They will be joining us to work alongside us and experience the day-to-day life of our school for 13 days in June. We hope that during that time they will meet with parents too and possibly attend one of the coffee mornings. Following their placement with us they will be visiting the Autism Show in Birmingham before flying back to Africa.



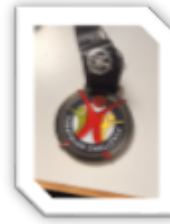


This week we had our MOVE Accreditation visit. The MOVE Programme is an activity-based framework that enables disabled young people to gain independent sitting, standing, walking and

transferring skills and forms the basis for the way we teach all our children and young people who are learning mobility skills. From learning how to be in different positions to head control, activity and movement skills like sitting and standing, our provision reflects the principals and values of MOVE.

As such, we have been a MOVE Centre of Excellence for several years and we are very proud of this. The re-accreditation, which happens every three years involves a lot of preparation for the full day visit, as we have to evidence how we apply each of the MOVE standards to our daily life in school. We also had a lot of exciting new innovations to share with the accrediting team. We look forward to sharing the outcome of the visit with you soon.

## Congratulations



Some of the Students from Pheasant and Pool Frog class were invited to participate in an integrated Swimming Gala on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> April, at Eric Liddle Sports Centre. The students did well, and it was wonderful to see so many children taking part

from other schools in the Gala. Our children were incredibly good in every race they took part in. They all received a medal for taking part.



## FoWD Fundraising

Friends of Willow Dene had their AGM last week where members once again gave their support to keep the charity running. A big thank you to all of you who volunteer with us; we could not do it without you!

We are currently being supported by Arky's Grandfather who is completing two cycle rides to raise money for Friends of Willow Dene. He is going to tackle the Pyrenees before completing 70-80 miles across Cheshire and North-East Wales. This is going to be quite the endurance test, so we wish him lots of luck and thank him for his support. If you would like to donate, you can at [Crowdfunding to Willowdene School Greenwich. An Outstanding Centre for children with Special Educational Needs, on JustGiving.](#)



[Help raise £1500 to Willowdene School Greenwich. An Outstanding Centre for children with Special Educational Needs.](#)

We are raising money for Willow Dene School Greenwich. An Outstanding Centre for children with Special Educational Needs. Support this JustGiving Crowdfunding Page.

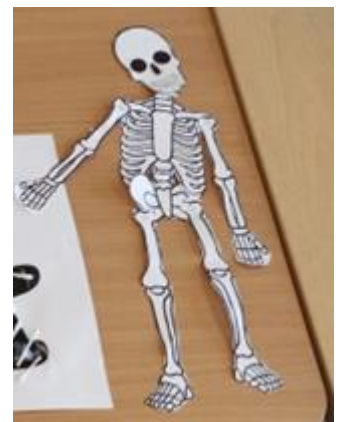
[www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com)

## Brambling Class

Brambling class have a love of learning and have been getting stuck into their lessons this term. In science they have been learning about the body. We had a great time exploring the skeletal system, with some pupils creating skeletons using q-tips and others building a human skeleton to learn about the different bones that make up the body.

In design and technology, the children have been busy exploring party foods to decide which ones they would like to make for a family picnic at the end of May. We definitely have some budding chefs within the group!

And...it has been great getting outside for some much needed forest school time. Whether collecting natural resources, using the swing or tight rope walking there is something for everyone!





# Kingswood School Journey

19<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023



On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April, we set off on our first post-pandemic school journey. It was four years coming, and the day had finally arrived! Our well-rehearsed (if somewhat rusty) plans went into action and we loaded up the van and minibuses with kit, luggage, and most importantly, people. Nineteen children from ten classes across the school, along with a hard-working team of Willow Dene's best. We waved goodbye to our friends and support team at school and set off, with much beeping of horns, heading down the A2 to Shorne Country Park.

Once there, we wasted no time in finding the adventure playground and exploring the equipment and getting to know each other. Then it was time for a picnic, and we all had a good lunch before loading the buses back up and setting off for Kingswood. Before we knew it, we were there, unloading our cases into our bedrooms for the next two days. Our activity schedule kicked off with **archery**, all together at the bottom of the field, which gave us an opportunity to see some of the site and the things we would be doing. Much loading of arrows and aiming at targets ensued... and bullseye! (Or somewhere close, at least). We topped off the day with a **campfire** with some excellent silly songs and delicious sticky s'mores.

After a good night's sleep (or some sleep, at least!), Thursday dawned with a packed day ahead of us. We were organised in two 'lines', each with a slightly different programme, but these are some of the things we got up to:

**Environmental art** – collecting natural materials and making faces from the things we had found, topped off with an impromptu karaoke session!

**3G Swing** – harnessed up, we pulled our friends up to giddy heights, before releasing them to plummet and sway.

**Scrapheap challenge** – we created crazy items to wear out of cardboard then had fun with a building contest.

**Laser tag** – we ran (and sneaked) around a concrete jungle, trying to get the other team (or anyone who crossed our path), hid around corners and sniped through windows.

**Crate stack** – we donned harnesses and helmets to ascend an ever-higher and ever-wobblier tower of crates before the whole lot inevitably came crashing down.

**Fencing** – with masks and foils, we cried 'en-guard' and parried towards each other, as the clash of blades rang out.

**Obstacle course** – climbing, crawling and balancing, through, over and under a range of hurdles.

Somewhere in the midst of that we fitted in an all-important lunch and dinner to keep our energy levels high, then finished off a busy day with a relaxing **Movie Night**. The popcorn flowed as we watched the winning film in our vote: Monsters Inc. As the credits rolled, sleepy children (and staff) headed back to their rooms for a shower and sleep.

Friday arrived and we didn't let the drizzle dampen our spirits. After a hearty breakfast, one group headed off for **shelter building** and after constructing tepees from strong branches, they were draped in tarpaulins for some much-needed cover from the rain. Meanwhile, the other line headed to the tower for **abseiling**. Bravery abounded as children ascended to the top of the 10-metre platform, then carefully lowered themselves back to the ground. Then it was time for the finale: the **zip-wire**. Yet again, children impressed us with their courage and trust. There were lots of cheers of encouragement as children whizzed down the wire and equally loud applause for our staff that wanted a go. There were lots of requests for more (some while they were still in mid-air).

That was it! All over for another year, except for a quick lunch and piling back into the minibuses (which had been magically loaded) to head back to school, eager to see our families. As always, after the incredible amount of planning and work that goes into a successful school journey, the trip itself left us humbled and grateful that we work with such an amazing and great bunch of children and such fantastic, kind staff. Without the unwavering support and hard work of staff who volunteer for school journey, it simply would not be possible, so a huge thank you to each and every one of them, as well as the extensive support team back at school who help in ways big and small to ensure everything goes smoothly.

We had a fabulous time and can't wait to do it again next year!

Claire Barnes and Joshua Garrett-Smith

# WHAT'S ON



CHARLTON PARK ACADEMY

## OPEN DAY

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2023**  
**10am-1pm**

Please contact:

Gail Tippet [gtippet@charltonparkacademy.co.uk](mailto:gtippet@charltonparkacademy.co.uk),  
Linzi Fennings [lfennings@charltonparkacademy.co.uk](mailto:lfennings@charltonparkacademy.co.uk) or  
Sara Johnson [sjohnson@charltonparkacademy.co.uk](mailto:sjohnson@charltonparkacademy.co.uk)  
to book a time for a guided tour

Preparing  
our students  
for an  
inspiring  
future



[www.charltonparkacademy.com](http://www.charltonparkacademy.com)



## Come And Have Your Say healthwatch Greenwich

Come and join us for our 6 weekly Healthwatch drop in session, to discuss your views and experiences with health and care services.

**Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 11am -12pm**

On Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May Kiki Bourcha Engagement manager from Healthwatch Greenwich is joining us to gather your feedback and experiences of Queen Elizabeth hospital.

NHS and social care staff are doing everything they can to keep us well during these challenging times, but there might be things that can be improved. Your feedback can help services spot issues that are affecting care for you and your loved ones. We look forward to seeing you – Come along and have your say!

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

London Philharmonic Orchestra

## OPEN SOUND ENSEMBLE ZOOM SESSIONS FOR NEWCOMERS

**WEDNESDAY 31 MAY 2023**



Join the London Philharmonic Orchestra for a **free** taster session of Open Sound Ensemble on Zoom on 31 May 2023.

The Open Sound Ensemble is the LPO's inclusive ensemble for young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Learn more about the group, meet our workshop leader and a musician from the Orchestra, make music together and have a good time!

**APPLICATIONS  
NOW OPEN:**

[lpo.org.uk/project/open-sound/](http://lpo.org.uk/project/open-sound/)

The LPO Open Sound Ensemble is generously supported by the Viney Family, the John Horniman's Children's Trust and the John Thaw Foundation

## GO KIDS GO "WHEELCHAIR SKILLS TRAINING"

Free, fun and inclusive sessions for 2-18 year olds. Extra wheelchairs provided so the whole family can join in!



Manual or powered wheelchairs  
Propulsion & manoeuvring  
Slopes and rough ground,  
Back wheel balancing,  
Road safety  
Emergency evacuation techniques  
Wheelchair sports & Dance

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> May  
10am - 2pm  
Darrick Wood School  
Lovibonds Avenue,  
Orpington, Kent,  
BR6 8ER

Please bring a packed lunch  
To book a free place email:  
[emily@gokidsgo.org.uk](mailto:emily@gokidsgo.org.uk)



WILLOW DENE  
SCHOOLS

## speakeasy



Summer Term 1 2023

A weekly support group for Willow Dene parents & carers

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

**Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 10.30am to 11.30am**

- Do you have problems taking your child to the dentist?
- Does your child struggle to clean their teeth independently?
- Do you find it a challenge to clean your child's teeth?

Then please come along and meet **Gwen Jerrom - Oral Health Promoter, Department of Community Special Care Dentistry**. Gwen will be joining us to offer advice and guidance around your child's oral hygiene.

For more information please contact:  
Vicky House, Family Support Worker at Willow Dene School on 0208 854 9841