



# WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023

## Head Teacher's Message



It has been a busy few weeks since the last newsletter. Children, classes and teams have become use to each other, settled into a routine and learning is well under way in all classes.

At the moment classes are planning new displays for our corridors to reflect the learning from this half term. These will be put into place just after half term and you will be able to see these at Parents Evening, and other events in the run up to the winter holidays.

Our newest cohort, the Sixth Form have been extremely busy since our last newsletter so much so that they have started their own newsletter. They are releasing a weekly bulletin to keep their parents and everyone else informed of Sixth Form news. This week they have decided on names and logos for the business ventures, and these will be revealed soon. They have made decisions about their work uniforms which will also be unveiled in the near future. On Tuesday our Careers Link Governors made their first visit to our Sixth Form to talk about our plans and meet our Sixth Form young people in person.

Our own strategic core group of Headteacher, Deputy and Assistant Heads have also been inspired in the last two weeks by a strategic thinking day led by Fyfe Johnston. Fyfe was our lead reviewer during our Challenge Partners review in the spring term. On this occasion he started our strategic thinking off with

some inspiring ideas on how we can refine what we do further. We came back from the day with lots of

thoughts about how to improve what we do and be more efficient. We look forward to sharing some of those ideas with you as the term progresses.

Inspired by the London Philharmonic Orchestra and our Arts Mark journey we are planning new ventures this year at Willow Dene. Harnessing the power of eye gaze technology and new instruments we are opening our own Youth Orchestra with musicians across the school. We are also starting a Willow Dene Dance troop for children with strengths and creative Troupe. We are looking forward with much excitement to seeing what these dynamics bring and look forward to sharing some of their work later on in the year.

Please look out for a termly planner which will highlight important dates between now and the end of term.

*Rachel*

## IMPORTANT DATES

**Children in Need – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Half Term**

**Finishing at 3:30pm on 20th October 2023**

**Pupils return to school on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023**

**Parents Evening 15<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

## Willow Dene and the Arts

**YOUNG  
LONDON  
PRINT  
PRIZE**



Over the last two weeks, following on from our Gold ArtsMark Award we have been busy supporting our friends and associates in London based arts organisations. This week we took part in the Young London Print Prize. This is something we have done annually for several years.

Visiting artists worked with children in Key Stage 2 to explore new printing techniques and develop colour mixing skills. The results were some stunning masterpieces which will soon be on display in our art gallery.

Our friends at Royal Museums Greenwich have also kept us busy. Our very own Lisa Parascandolo was one of the guest speakers at the Twilight Play Conference at the National Maritime Museum last week. The conference aimed to bring people together across the cultural and educational sector to share ideas and practices which explored a subject of play and its importance in today's society.



**Artsmark  
Gold Award**  
Awarded by Arts  
Council England

**London  
Philharmonic  
Orchestra**

Our friends at the London Philharmonic Orchestra are planning their open sound session for half term. These will take place on 25th and 26th October at Woolwich Works in Greenwich. Having hosted these sessions at Willow Dene before we know they are both inclusive and fun. To find out more visit their website at:

<https://lpo.org.uk/project/open-sound/>

## Greenwich National Maritime Museum outdoor play area



We were very proud to be invited to the preview of the Greenwich National Maritime Museum outdoor play area last week. We are extremely excited because the play areas contain 3D replicas of the artwork by the children at Willow Dene which is on display in 2D, in the museum itself. Not only are the play areas inclusive, it is something that we have inputted into with regards to the design and this has now been recognised by the inclusion of our children's art. We are looking forward to attending the opening of the area next week where we will be joined by some of our children and their families.

### Seasonal illnesses

On a less positive note, the Autumn season is well underway and we have seen, in line with other schools in the country an increase of viral illness and COVID cases.

Although testing is not mandatory in schools at the moment, if you are able to get tests and can test your child if they have any symptoms or if they have been in contact with someone with COVID, this information remains very helpful to us.

Regardless of whether your child has COVID or not, please do not send them into school if they have symptoms of any viral illness that could be passed onto others. Viral illness spreads quickly in schools and affects both our staffing and the health of other children, whom some are extremely vulnerable.

We will notify you of any further updates on winter illnesses in our next parent briefing after half term.



## Sixth Form Update

We have had a busy and exciting start to our new sixth form provision. Our young people returned on 15th September, and we have already completed:

- numerous visits
- began business ventures fieldwork and research
- establishing business day routines
- as well as embarking on a whole new curriculum.

We shared our framework and structure with all staff and look forward to the support of the school and trust to support our businesses. We will soon reveal our business names and logos in the next issue of the newsletter and look forward to our business uniforms arriving.

As mentioned, we have enjoyed a number of visits including Greenwich Park, Pets at Home, local cafes, parks and nature areas and George Mead stables. Moorland Class have enjoyed shopping for their own snacks.

As we patiently await our new build, the young people have been fantastic in adapting to our temporary learning areas. As a new member of staff, I continue to be overwhelmed with the kindness and co-operation of the Willow Dene team. A big thank you to the sixth form team and the whole Oakmere team who are supporting us and sharing the space.

Watch this space for updates on our business ventures and community living!



*Kate*



Friends of Willow Dene  
Charity Number: 1139449

# A message from... Friends of Willow Dene

**Hello!** We are so excited for a new academic year, which brings about another year of fantastic fundraising events.

If you are new to the Willow Dene family, we are FOWD and we are a charity made up of staff and parent volunteers who raise money that benefits the children through events, experiences, resources and equipment. If you think you might like to join us, get in contact with our Chair, Katie via email -

**[kdooley@willowdene.compassps.uk](mailto:kdooley@willowdene.compassps.uk)**

We appreciate any support that you can give! No matter how small.



## A HUGE THANK YOU...



... to Arky's Grandad, Richard, who completed two cycling trips this summer, including 7 days cycling in the Pyrenees and a further cycling trip in Cheshire and Wales! Richard's efforts raised a huge **£1643.07** for Friends of Willow Dene. Amazing!



**ALL PRIMARY  
CHILDREN IN LONDON  
ARE NOW ENTITLED TO A  
FREE SCHOOL  
MEAL**

**ALL CHILDREN CAN ENJOY  
A FREE SCHOOL MEAL IN  
RECEPTION, YEAR 1, YEAR 2  
AND NOW YEARS 3-6 TOO,  
SAVING UP TO £440 A  
YEAR PER CHILD!**

Make sure you sign up with your school **TODAY**.

Find out more at:

[Free School Meals | London City Hall](#)



## Improving direct payments in Greenwich -where next?

The conversations we have had with you have given us lots to think about. We've heard lots of detail about what is working and what's not working so well. We want things to change and improve and we are ambitious about this. So, we think the things we should focus on for three remaining workshops with Think Local Act Personal should be about the things that would make most difference:

- Making sure direct payments can be truly flexible so you have full control over how the money is spent to meet your needs
- Making sure there are enough personal assistants who are paid well enough to do a good job
- Making sure that personal assistants are not the only option available where you can have full control
- Making sure everyone involved right from the first conversation about care and support through to ongoing dialogue taking and managing a direct payment is clear about what the council is trying to achieve, focused on people being best placed to decide what works for them
- Making sure this is all done co-productively, with people and workers having an equal voice in deciding on and making changes

In short, we want to develop a **new vision for direct payments** in Greenwich that outlines this ambition both on the part of people and the Council. From the work we've already done together we'll be able to fill out the detail of realising this vision over the coming year.

We have worked hard to make sure as many people as possible can contribute to this work so far, and will continue to do so, but we think it's important to be certain and clear about next steps and get moving with them so we've booked the following sessions. We look forward to seeing you there in person. Please do pop the date in your diary and confirm you'll be joining us by clicking on and responding to [this form](#).

Date and time of the next workshop: 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 from 1pm until 4.30pm

Location of the next workshop: in person at Woolwich Town Hall (Wellington Street, SE18 6HQ) in Room 5. A changing places accessible toilet is available across the road in the Woolwich Centre.

Love2Shop vouchers will be available for attendees: a £45 Love2Shop voucher will be available for attendees, subject to your attendance, contribution and link to Greenwich. To receive a reward, you will need to meet our eligibility criteria for this workshop which are: 1. You have lived experience of using care services and live in Royal Greenwich, or 2. You care for someone who lives in Royal Greenwich/uses Royal Greenwich services. You may be asked to share your home address as part of the approval process.

Best wishes,

The Direct Payments Team