



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 1st December 2023

Head Teacher's Message



You will be receiving this newsletter on December 1st just as our calendar of exciting winter events begins.

We have just had our first touch of winter weather and remembering our snow disruption at the end of the Autumn Term last year, we thought it is worth reminding you what happens at Willow Dene in the event of snow. If there is snow laying on the ground, we will immediately talk to transport to see whether children's journeys from school are going to be safe and we will also risk assess the school sites. If either of these are unsafe, we will be in touch immediately to let you know. Our first contact will be by text message and email. We will also update the school website and X (Twitter) as soon as we can.

In the meantime, the school sites look beautiful in the frost. When the weather is icy our lovely premises team will immediately grit the pavements and crossings to keep everywhere as safe as possible.

Therefore, please stick to these routes as you are walking across the sites.

Speaking of snow, we are getting very excited about our Winter Fair which is taking place on 7th December at Swingate Lane from 5.00pm – 7.00pm. There will be lots to see and do and absolutely everyone is welcome. If you have been to any of our previous community events, you will know they are a lot of fun and an amazing way to catch up with the school community. Without giving too much away there will be incredible winter photo opportunities at this event!

Also, at the Winter Fair we will be showcasing the entry to our annual Siblings Competition. It is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate the relationships that our children have with their brothers and sisters. We know from last year that a lot of thought and creativity goes into the entries, and we are looking forward to seeing them all.

All across the school children are immersing our Performance Arts Power Days. Each class have taken a delivery of white t-shirts so they can try their hand at costume design. We are looking forward to seeing some of these sceneries that the children are working on during our Christmas performances which are taking place between 14th and 20th December.

In the meantime, everyone is having the opportunity to be part of an audience at the beginning of this week. Some of our children joined the cast on stage during the pantomime Robin Hood presented by Head 2 Head Theatre Group. This week at Oakmere Road our children and young people have enjoyed HobGoblin Theatre Company performing The Legend of King Arthur and there are still more performances to come!

We are very excited about all the things happening in school over the next few weeks and we are sure that we will see lots of you in person before the end of term.

Rachel

PUPIL VOICE – Merlin Class

Merlin Class have been working hard on their communication, focusing on their likes and dislikes and eventually making a choice between two PECS symbols. This has been especially apparent in our Design and Technology lesson where the children have been working towards making their own sandwiches.

The children have used all their senses to help them explore a variety of different ingredients through tasting, smelling, and feeling. During our initial taste testing lessons, children were encouraged to try a range of different foods including honey, cheese, cucumber, and lots more. The children were able to indicate what they liked by tasting more or asking their adults for more by guiding their hands to the food. For those ingredients that they did not find so yummy, the children demonstrated their dislike by pushing the food away. Through the research part of our DT lesson this encouraged the children to make choices between their two most preferred ingredients to help them make their perfect sandwich. The children were all successful and this really supported not only their communication and choice making but their independence as well.



FoWD - News

A huge thank you to all of you who supported our most recent bake sale by making, buying and selling cakes. We made a whopping £504.82 and the event was well enjoyed by all!

We would also like to express gratitude for those of you who joined our Sponsored Selfie Circuit which raised £887.90. We all had a great deal of fun taking selfies as superheroes, pirates and cowboys!

Message from Chartwell re Christmas Lunch

Chartwells, our school meal provider, is serving up Christmas Lunch on 19th December 2023 – featuring all the Christmas classics. Children can enjoy succulent roast turkey served with crispy roast potatoes, stuffing, peas, carrots, cocktail sausage and gravy. For vegetarian guests, Chartwells have created a delicious roasted vegetable and cranberry slice. Dessert is a festive shortbread biscuit with chocolate or vanilla ice-cream.



Siblings Core Priority

As part of our work with siblings, we took a group of teenage siblings bowling last week. Although we have met lots of our teenage siblings during our school events in the last few terms, going out into the community together and having fun as a group gave us a new context to get to know each other and build friendships. Feedback is that both the young people and the staff involved had a fantastic time and are looking forward to the next event. We are currently contacting our Willow Dene adult siblings to meet us virtually and talk to us about what we can do to involve them more fully in the school lives of their brothers and sisters.



Last week we had Braiswick, our school photographers in school. This is the second time we have had school photographers since the COVID pandemic and the first time we have offered a slot for family groups to have their photographs taken. We appreciate all your feedback about the experience for your child. As a result, we are exploring some new and exciting options for school photographs for next year and we will be asking for your thoughts on these shortly.

Speakeasy

During the last term we have been busy working as part of our Core Priorities to radically reform our Annual Review process. We have made some big changes to the way we are going to report to you, and we are prioritising what is most important to you and your child. Lisa and Katie will be joining a 'Speakeasy' before the end of term to get some parent views on our plans, and we look forward to hearing what you think. Our new look Annual Reviews will begin next term.

Parents Therapy Information Session

As promised at Parents Evening there are two upcoming dates to meet with our Therapy and Nursing Teams. The first date for our new parents whose children joined us in September is Wednesday 6th December 12.00pm – 1.00pm. The second date is also on 6th December at the later time of 1.00pm – 2.00pm and this is for current parents to drop in and talk in more detail about therapist and nursing teamwork with your child. This is an opportunity to come and find out more about how we work with Health Services at Willow Dene.



We will continue to be extremely busy with visitors to the run up to the winter holidays. Next Tuesday 5th December is a very busy day with visitors from Mary Rose School joining us in the morning. You will remember that Mary Rose has been supporting us to set up our Sixth Form. As an outstanding special school they have a lot to offer in terms of expertise and knowledge. On this occasion they are joining us to learn more about how we have implemented the teaching of phonics at Willow Dene.

In the afternoon we are welcoming visitors from the DfE (Department for Education). Over the years we have met colleagues from the DfE virtually for a range of reasons, most recently for the Sixth Form expansion. It is exciting that they are keen to come and see Willow Dene for themselves. We hope they get a really good sense of the school during their time here.

Sixth Form News

In the last two weeks we have had our first look inside the new Sixth Form building. As we know the building works have not always gone to plan, so we were very excited to finally have a look inside. Already we can see that the space is going to be perfect for our Sixth Form young people. It is light and spacious and designed to support maximum independence. We feel well supported by the building team and are awaiting a further update about the progress of work.

Our final shout out for this newsletter is to everybody who was involved in supporting our Children in



Need Day. Hot on the heels of our family cake sale we felt it was important to do something low key and affordable. It was a lot of fun to see so many children and staff in their bright clothes and pots and our £1 donation collectively raised over £170.00 for Children in Need. We are very proud of everyone's efforts.



If you are considering a move, you will need to reapply for transport. Please be aware applications take 28 working days to process.

If you require a transport application please follow this link:

<https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/xfp/form/773>

Important Information

School number

020 8854 9841

Greenwich
Transport

020 8932 8652

School website:

[Willow Dene School](https://www.willowdene.org.uk)
- [Home](https://www.willowdene.org.uk)
([compassps.uk](https://www.willowdene.org.uk))

Twitter(X):

@WillowDeneSch

Important Dates

New Parents Therapy and Nursing Information Session	6 th December 2023 (12.00pm-1.00pm)
Current Parents Therapy and Nursing Drop in Session	6 th December 2023 (1.00pm-2.00pm)
Friends of Willow Dene Winter Fair	7 th December 2023 (5.00pm – 7.00pm)
EYFS Christmas Performance	14 th December 2023 (10.30am)
Christmas Parties and Santa EYFS Christmas Party and Santa	15 th December 2023 (pm)
KS3/4, Sixth Form Christmas Winter Wonderland Performance	18 th December 2023 (10.15am)
Christmas Dinner	19 th December 2023
KS1 and KS2 Christmas Winter Wonderland Performance	20 th December 2023 (Time to be confirmed)
Last day of school	21 st December 2023 school finishes at 1.30pm

School Vacancies

Join our Talent Pool

We do not currently have any vacancies available at Willow Dene School. Please visit our careers page at MyNewTerm to join our talent pool and we will review your application.



Join Talent
Pool

Please follow the link to apply [Willow Dene School - Vacancies \(compassps.uk\)](https://www.willowdene.org.uk)

WHAT'S ON



Free 6 Week course

**YOGA AND
RELAXATION SESSIONS**
for Willow Dene
parents and carers.

Wednesday mornings 10-11am
15th November - 20th
December
Willow Dene School
Swingate Lane

Limited spaces, if you wish to sign up please call Vicky House on 0208 854 9841 or email vhouse@willowdene.compassps.uk for more info.





WILLOW DENE
SCHOOL

THE SIBLING PROJECT 2023

IT'S COMPETITION TIME!

Do you want to be in with a
chance of winning a **£50**
Amazon Voucher?



Open to all Willow Dene children and their siblings, this is an opportunity to get creative together and make something that represents you and your relationship.

You could write a poem, create a song, make a video, paint, draw, photograph, create a sculpture, do a dance, the possibilities are endless! Think outside the box and get creative to impress our judges.

Your work will be exhibited at our Winter Fair for all of the community to see!

Deadline for submissions:
Monday 4th December 2023



WILLOW DENE
SCHOOL



THE SIBLING PROJECT

SUBMISSION FORM

Submit this form along with your creative piece. If your submission needs to be sent digitally you can email it to Joshua at jgarrett-smith@willowdene.compassps.uk

Names:

Ages:

Class:

Use this box to tell us about your submission.

This will be displayed alongside your piece in the exhibition. You can use the back of this sheet if you need more space.