



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 15th December 2023

Head Teacher's Message



We have been excited to enter December. Our decorations, which this year have a 'Polar Theme' went up during the first weekend of the month, ready for children to see when they arrived in school. Everybody greeted them with excitement. It always surprises us how quickly children adapt to the decorations. Considering there are so many shiny, interesting things, the children are amazing at just looking at it in wonder!

Some of you may have seen the information from Royal Borough of Greenwich about their competition to open a new Free Special School. As you will all know, we have been looking for opportunities to grow to help with our place planning issues, for several years. As a result, we have registered our interest for the Free School process. We will be releasing a parent briefing before the holiday so make sure you watch for further information about this.

All that remains is to wish you all a happy holiday when it arrives. We are sure that we will see lots of you at our performances next week. This time last year it was snowing and we were trying to rearrange all our dates in the last few days of the term! While we love the winter weather, this year we would like it to arrive during the holidays! Once again, we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your support and enthusiasm for Willow Dene. We wish you a very Happy New Year and will see you in 2024 ready for an exciting new term.

Rachel





Our tree was the beginning of our festive celebrations, paving the way for the Winter Fair on Thursday 7th December. The outside of school was transformed with a snow machine providing very realistic snow, much to the delight of pretty much every child who visited. Inside was also transformed with stalls and photo opportunities galore. We could not believe how many families, children and members of staff walked through our doors during a two-hour period. We caught up with old friends, laughed and talked. The most important thing about this event is bringing our community together. The fund-raising part is important but not as important as the fun and friendship. Having said that we were astounded to find out that we had raised over £2,200 for Friends of Willow Dene. This is the most money we have ever raised with any event so we would like to say a massive 'thank you' to each and every one of you who has supported, spent money, donated, made things and attended. You are all amazing.

On sale at the Winter Fair were goods made by our children as part of our Design Technology curriculum. From ornaments to chutneys to beautiful pinecones, there was an amazing display of what our children can do. Our Sixth Form were particularly good salespeople, and it was lovely to have them running their own stall for the first time.

We sold a lot of Willow Dene Honey at the Winter Fair, but we do have some left and you will receive a parent mail letting you know how you can buy some. We believe that local honey is particularly good for hay fever sufferers. All profits are reinvested in our Willow Dene hives.

On display at the Winter Fair were all the entries to our Annual Siblings Competition. What a lovely time we had reading all the entries which described some of the very unique and loving relationships between brothers and sisters in our families. A year on from siblings becoming one of our School Core Priorities, we feel like we know them so much better. Reading poems, looking at photographs and videos and art creations submitted by so many of our families was heartwarming and enjoyable. We left all of the entries on display in our main reception the following morning so that our whole school community could admire them too.





We were lucky enough to host some important visitors last week. We welcomed Mary Rose School, who have been patient and kind helping us start our Sixth Form journey. On this occasion we were the hosts, talking to Mary Rose School about early reading and phonics, curriculum, and science. Although the visit was only scheduled for half a day, it lasted for a full day because we had so much to talk about. We look forward to continuing this relationship.

On the same day we welcomed visitors from the Department of Education (DfE). This was an unusual visit because although we communicate regularly with the DfE in written form it is unusual for them to ask to visit a school. We were very excited to share our children's lived daily experiences with our visitors. Sixth Form provided them with cake! After the visit they wrote to us to say 'How could we fail to be inspired by the work at Willow Dene – amazing. A particular takeaway was seeing the kindness, humour and interaction between class friends and the enthusiasm and excitement within each classroom. The confidence of the Sixth Formers also really struck me and how their lifelong opportunities have grown as a direct result of the Willow Dene team'. We are already planning for our next DfE visit in January – watch this space for further information.

Message from the Governors

It is an absolute privilege to be a governor at Willow Dene School! We have been into school for a variety of meetings and monitoring mornings this term and it is always lovely to engage with the staff and children. Governors are always really impressed by the work that goes on in school. Your children are a joy!

This term has seen a major new venture for Willow Dene – the opening of our Sixth Form! Although our new building which I am assured is going to be amazing, is not yet ready for the young people to use they have made a brilliant start to the school year doing all sorts of great things including their business ventures.

At this point I would like to say 'thank you so much' to Natalie Palmer who has been a governor at Willow Dene for over 10 years and who has recently had to step away.

I'm sure that you and the children will have a great time at their winter events, Governors are also looking forward to being able to attend some of these and we want to say a huge thank you to the staff who as ever go above and beyond to make sure that all children and families have a good time.

On behalf of all of the governors, I would like to wish all of you who celebrate a very happy holiday and to those who do not I hope that you have a restful holiday and also a very happy new year to you all.



Best wishes
Lynne Wainwright
Chair of Governors

Reminders for Parents/Carers

We would like to remind you all about our new 'App' called 'OX Care' which will enhance communication between parents/carers and health professionals. This App will give an overview of client details, care plans and assessments. If anyone has an interest in finding out more about this 'App' please contact the Nursing Team in your child's school.



New patient online health record launched
We're excited to announce that our new patient online health record system has been formally launched.

For more information: <http://oxleas.nhs.uk/oxcare>

Sixth Form

Our Sixth Formers are continuing to enjoy the first term of their new curriculum and timetable. We have been very busy in our business ventures; Willow's Delish (our café at Swingate), Forever Friends (our pet business) and The Compost Crew (our horticulture group), where we have begun our weekly and daily routines.

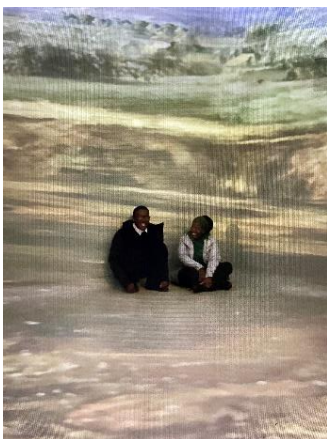
Willow's Delish delivery arrives on Mondays, so the time is spent unpacking, organising and preparing for the week ahead. Tuesday and Wednesdays are serving days where our young people make fresh items and engage with the customers.

Forever Friends and The Compost Crew have been busy making items for the winter fair and supporting the local community. The Compost Crew complete maintenance tasks on a weekly basis at Swingate Lane, including tending to and feeding the chickens, and their most recent project has been to dig over and clear an area that will be developed in the spring. Forever Friends have been making a selection of sample items for the winter fair. Milo has been a willing customer to trial these!



Not only have we been busy in our businesses, but we have enjoyed a number of visits and trips in classes and as a collective group including an exciting visit to

Frameless, the immersive art exhibition in Marble Arch. We travelled on the Elizabeth Line and enjoyed a festive walk along Bond Street there and back. We are looking forward to visiting Winter Wonderland at Bluewater before the term finishes.



Kingfisher Class



In Kingfisher class we are very excited about eye gaze. A few weeks ago, Noel installed it in our classroom and painstakingly trained us to use it. It is great having it in class because we can use it when the time is right for the children, and they have lots of opportunities to practice throughout the day.

Here are some photos of the children operating a range of programmes using their eyes. They are practicing looking, locating, tracking, making things happen, creating works of art and learning that they can make things happen. They can make music as well as visual patterns.

We can really see how much enjoyment and sense of achievement the children are getting from eye gaze, and we cannot wait to see how their skills develop.





Message from our Family Support Team

We had a really great time today at the Coffee Morning. We were joined by the Greenwich Carers Voices Choir. The choir is made up of parents of children and adults with SEN in Greenwich. We had fun getting into the Christmas spirit singing Christmas carols and songs. They will be joining us for another singalong again next year, so look out for the flyer!

For further information on the services and activities they provide please follow the link below.

[Greenwich Supports - Live Well Greenwich](#)





Important Information

School number - 020 8854 9841

Greenwich Transport - 020 8932 8652

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

Twitter(X): @WillowDeneSch

Continence Services

Here are the contact details for any of our families with children/young people who use continence products, or require help or advice with continence:

Parent contact number for the continence service: 0800 030 4466

Continence Advisor: 07990393723

Email address: oxl-tr.cypcontinence.inclusion@nhs.net

Important Dates

KS3/4, Sixth Form Christmas Winter Wonderland Performance	Monday 18 th December 2023 (10.15am)
Christmas Dinner	Tuesday 19 th December 2023
KS1 and KS2 Christmas Winter Wonderland Performance	Wednesday 20 th December 2023
Last day of school	Thursday 21 st December 2023 school finishes at 1.30pm School emergency contact number: 07716 388634
Pupils return to school	Tuesday 9 th January 2024

School Vacancies

Specialist Swimming Instructor/Lifeguard and Pool Plant Operator - 1 Year Maternity Cover

EDV/2023/WDS/61064

We are looking for a dynamic, passionate and enthusiastic swimming instructor who is willing to learn and wants to achieve the very highest standards of teaching and learning in the pool. We are...

📍 Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD

🕒 Maternity Cover | Part-Time

£ £27,807.00 - £29,214.00 Annually (FTE)



Apply Now

5 Days Remaining • Apply by 09:00am, Monday 18th Dec, 2023 • Job start: ASAP

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

WHAT'S ON



Royal Greenwich Together
**HOLIDAY
FOOD and FUN**

**Your child may be eligible for
a free holiday club place!**

Fun activities and good food available throughout the Christmas holidays.

Find out more at
Royalgreenwich.gov.uk/HolidayFoodAndFun

ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH



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.



Greenwich Carers Voices

A singing group for carers of adults with learning
difficulties and carers of autistic adults.



Sing your favourite songs & make new friends

All abilities and beginners welcome

Free + hot drink included

**Trinity Community Centre
265 Burrage Road SE18 7JW**

The Carers Social Group

Join us <https://eepurl.com/h0-Ken>
carerssocialgreenwich@gmail.com



Wednesday
Term time
12.15-1.30

funded by

ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH