



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 9th February 2024

Head Teacher's Message

We hope you have had time to watch the parents briefing released earlier this week. As always it contains the most up to date information, and some more context about what is happening at Willow Dene at the current time. You will receive this newsletter on the very last day before half term. It has been a record-breaking short half term at four weeks and four days. It feels like we have barely started the year before half term is here. We follow Royal Borough of Greenwich term dates because many of our staff have their own children in Greenwich schools and therefore the setting of the holidays are out of our control. The good news is that the next half term is longer and summer term 2 is a beautifully long amount of time!

You may remember from our last parent briefing that Royal Borough of Greenwich has decided to open a Free School for children with autism, and that we were applying to be sponsors for the Free School. After completing a pre application to make sure we met criteria, we were informed that we have been shortlisted. The next stage will be completing a comprehensive application form, school tour and interview process before we find out whether we have been successful or not. Many of you have been in the position where you have needed to wait for a Willow Dene place for your child, and we are hoping that if we are successful in our Free School application that this will give us capacity to offer places for children when they need it. We will keep you informed as and when there are developments.

Our thinking about the Free School was compounded by our January primary panel where we allocated places for September 2024 based on the Year 6 children who are leaving us. In a new development, this will be the only panel this academic year. This decision was made collaboratively with Royal Borough of Greenwich to try and give parents some certainty and some time to plan rather than everything happening at the end of the summer term. After the first Spring panel meeting, we feel that there will be both benefits and drawbacks from this new way of working. One of the big benefits for us is that we will largely be able to complete our class lists earlier in the academic year meaning more thorough

transitions can take place. One of the drawbacks is likely to be that any child placed through tribunal will become additional to our already full capacity. The panel this time had 145 applicants for approximately 45 places. The vast majority of these applicants met our admission criteria. It was a very long and emotional meeting, making very difficult decisions. We are delighted that 45 new children will join us in September and hope that the outcome of the Free School process will give us further capacity to help.

In the last newsletter we included a list of important dates which will give you all a chance to get involved during the second part of Spring Term. If you would like to know any more about any of them, please contact us but rest assured that we will be giving you plenty of details closer to the time!

In the meantime, we are wishing you a happy and safe half term holiday. If you need us during half term do not forget that you can contact us on our emergency line using the number on the sticker in your child's home schoolbook. We will see you in one week ready for an exciting half term ahead. Thank you so, so much for all your support.

Rachel





Polling Day

You will have received a letter about Polling Day on 2nd May 2024. This year both schools are

required as polling stations because of the lack of accessible buildings in the local area. This will be a training day for staff and we will be closed to children due to the stringent requirements of the electoral services.



It has been a busy few weeks since the last newsletter. As you know we have had a lot of high profile visitors to Willow Dene during January. Last week we welcomed visitors from Ambition Institute. Ambition are one of the main designers and deliverers of training for teachers and school leaders at every stage of their careers. They were interested to know what teaching in a special school looks like, how we develop our teachers and what our advice would be for teachers working in special schools moving forward. We are looking forward to working with Ambition more in the coming months.



On Wednesday evening, we held our second 'Dads Group' organised by one of our Teaching Assistants who is also Dad to two of our secondary aged children. We are delighted that this group meeting was very successful, attended by seven Dads or male carers. We are very much looking forward to hearing more updates as you get to know each other, and the group grows.

CELEBRATING OUR SIBLINGS



Lily and Florence

Florence and I are identical twins; we love each other so much. We always laugh with each other, even though we sometimes don't even know what we are laughing about. We love playing with each other because we are having so much fun! To add to this, we always after school tell each other what we have done. Our mum and dad usually reads her book and I tell her what I've done. We will never stop loving each other.

This is a poem I would like to share with you:

We love each other.
Cuddles and kisses are always the best.
Whenever we need it.
Flo looks up to me like a superstar,
I look up to her like the greatest person in the world.
We will never stop loving each other.

Smiling cheers all the family up,
So does Flo's constant laughter.
She's such a bright and happy person,
Who will never give up.
We are always holding hands,
But not when we are playing with each other.
We will always love each other.

Lily is talented at sports.
Especially dancing which she performs.
A lover of school,
Who will never give up.
We are always dancing together,
But not when we are playing pool together.
We will always love each other.

Being a twin is the best thing.
Spending time together is amazing.
We both couldn't ask for anymore.
The love and joy of it.
We will never stop loving each other.

Swan Class



Swan class have had a bright and colourful half term exploring our topic of 'colours' which has brought about lots of fun, creative and sensory based experiences for us! Some of our favourite activities have included identifying colour through our sensory story 'I know a wee piggy'. This is about a mischievous pig who gets caught up in all sorts of trouble at a fayre where he gets absolutely covered in different coloured things like milk, eggs, clay, paint, tomato sauce and more! We loved rolling the pig around in all these materials and most of us ended up just as colourfully covered as the pig though this was all part of the fun!

We have also had the opportunity to explore rainbows which has been the inspiration for our sensory mark making sessions. We have had lots of fun warming up our fingers by creating playdough rainbows and practising gross motor movements by swishing our rainbow ribbons and moving our hands in rainbow coloured rice. Rainbows have also inspired our attention autism sessions, and we have enjoyed exploring lots of coloured cause and effect toys being pulled from the bucket and taking turns to participate in colourful activities such as sitting underneath the clear umbrella as coloured water was poured over us and building rainbow cup towers from coloured cups and pouring over rainbow rice to make it fall down.

In our creative session we have loved exploring mixing colours through sensory based experiences investigating what happens when we combine different combinations of colours and developing our messy play skills. We especially liked dipping our hands in paint, rubbing them together to observe the changing colour and then making handprints during the circle time activity. What a colourful term we have had in Swan!



Pupil Voice - Nightingale

We have had a great start to the Spring Term in Nightingale, exploring outer space to inspire our learning this half term! We have been having lots of fun during our sensory story 'The Queen's Lift Off', building rockets together and blasting off into space to discover the beauty of the planets and solar system.

In art, we've also been experimenting with UV paints in the dark, marbling colours using light up spheres and getting creative with foil to make our own glowing galaxy masterpieces!

In January, we had a wonderful time studying poetry for our focus day, reading the poem 'And a Tree' by Kate Wakeling. We really enjoyed coming together with friends from Skylark and Woodlark to experience an immersive sensory telling of the poem, having fun emulating branches through swaying movements using dance ribbons and fans and creating a giant web of roots to connect with everyone! Taking inspiration from the imagery in the poem, we collected natural materials from outdoors to make our own tree crowns – we loved sharing our creations and being Kings and Queens of the forest!



Sparrow Class

This term in TPPC, we have been learning about Africa. The children have been enjoying exploring different African patterns and clothing.



In English, the children have been enjoying the poem 'A Tree is...' They have enjoyed engaging in sensory activities to support their understanding.

Sixth Form

Our Sixth Form building is nearing completion. After all the delays, the outside of the building is nearly complete. There have been lots of positive comments about how good the outside of the building looks with a Willow Dene identity being provided with our logo on the external face of the building. Inside is a hive of activity at the moment with painting and carpet laying underway and final touches being added to the lift, hoisting and electrics. Over half term all of our long awaited furniture will be delivered and placed ready for the building to be handed over to us. As soon as this happens, we will set a moving in date and we will plan some opening celebrations with our patient and supportive Sixth Form parents being the guests of honour for our very first tours. We are confident that the building will be perfect for our Sixth Form group and are excited for you to see it.

On the subject of Sixth Form, now that we have registered Willow's Delish as a business and have the green light to cater and sell food more widely following our food hygiene inspection, our café team are branching out! Over the last few weeks, they have been extending their menu and are now offering healthy salads and they have been catering for all our important visitors including ordering and service. Compost Crew have taken on their biggest project yet, transforming the area next to the fencing at the side of the building at Swingate Lane. This massive job was started by gardening club who have planted the area opposite Woodlark balcony with fruit trees and herbs as a project using our Jack Petchey Environmental Award money. Compost Crew is now working with Growing Green to transform the rest of the area. Growing Green are an environmental charity supporting our planting. Compost Crew have been digging away making all of the ground ready for the implementation of a planting plan. Over half term many small saplings including willow and native hedgerows which will look lovely and attract birds and wildlife. We hope you can see the difference when you return after half term.





my child at school .com

When your child is absent, and you have not got time to call the school to inform us, you can send a message through the app which will be sent to the Admin Team.

✉

Log onto the app and click on the envelope icon.

To send a message, click on the drop-down box next to "New conversation" and select "Willow Dene School", enter your message at the bottom of the screen and click on the Flight icon. (Example, see below)

Hello Mrs Andrews, Can you tell me what Emma has to bring to the Red Hot Chili sessions please.

DID YOU KNOW

You can send messages via the My Child at School app.

IMPORTANT DATES

Last day of term	Friday 9 th February 2024 Finish at 3:15pm
Half Term	Monday 12 th February 2024 To Friday 16 th February 2024
School returns	Monday 19 th February 2024
World Book Day Swingate Lane	5 th March 2024
World Book Day Oakmere Road	6 th March 2024
Spring Fling Event	23 rd March 2024 (11am-2pm)
Shakespeare for Schools, Albany Theatre	27 th March 2024 (TBC)

Important Information

School number - 020 8854 9841

Greenwich Transport - 020 8932 8652

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



If you are considering a house move, you will need to reapply for transport and be aware applications take 28 working days to process before transport is provided.

If you require a transport application please follow this link:

[Application for Travel Assistance | Instructions \(royalgreenwich.gov.uk\)](https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/application-for-travel-assistance-instructions)

School Vacancies

We currently have 2 vacancies available at Willow Dene School:

powered by **my new term**

Fitness Officer

EDV/2024/WDS/85042

We are looking for a dynamic, passionate and enthusiastic fitness instructor, who is willing to learn and wants to support children to have fun with physical activity and maintain a healthy...

📍 Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD

🕒 Permanent | Part-Time

£ £18,606.78 Annually (Actual)

New • Apply by 09:00am, Monday 19th Feb, 2024 • Job start: ASAP



Apply Now

Learning Support Assistant

EDV/2024/WDS/18106

We are looking for an enthusiastic and committed individual to join our team to support children in their learning , 32.50 hours per week (term time only).

📍 Plumstead, London, SE18 2JD

🕒 Permanent | Part-Time

£ £21,241.07 Annually (Actual)

Actual salary will be pro-rata depending on hours/weeks worked

9 Days Remaining • Apply by 05:00pm, Friday 16th Feb, 2024 • Job start: ASAP



Apply Now

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

WHAT'S ON

Frame Running Sessions

Frame running sessions for children and young people aged 5 - 17 with a disability that affects your mobility and ability to walk or run independently

- **Where:** Sutcliffe Park Sports Centre (outside athletics track), SE9 5LW
- **When:** Saturdays - 2.30 - 3.30 pm
- **Ages:** 5 - 17 years old
- **Cost:** £3 per session
- All equipment provided



Register your interest here:

<https://bit.ly/FrameRunning-Greenwich>
Or scan the QR code



For more information, please contact:

020 7993 9883

Disability.Inclusion@AccessSport.org.uk

Supported by:  **BETTER**
The best good place



Charlton Park Academy

SPRING OPEN DAY

Saturday 2nd March 2024 10.00 - 14.00



To guarantee there will be enough staff available to show you around, we kindly ask that you book your space on the tour by contacting either :

Gail Tippett - gtippett@charltonparkacademy.co.uk
Sara Johnson - sjohnson@charltonparkacademy.co.uk

www.charltonparkacademy.com

All sorts of things in life affect our health and wellbeing.



Live Well Greenwich offers signposting and support to get the help you need with:



Eating well



Money, debt and benefit advice



Moving more



Employment, training and volunteering



Stopping smoking



Drinking less



Support with housing needs



Social and community activities



NHS Health checks and support for managing your long term condition

Choose which way Live Well Greenwich can help you:



Visit greenwichcommunitydirectory.org.uk the local one-stop website to find health, wellbeing, social care and community information and services near you.



Call the **Live Well Greenwich Line** on **0800 470 4831** a free helpline staffed by local, trained health and wellbeing advisors for signposting and support to live well.

Monday – Saturday 8.30am – 6pm

A message can be left outside of these hours.



Talk to a **local Live Well coach** at one of our community hubs for signposting and support to live well. Call the **Live Well Greenwich Line** on **0800 470 4831** for more information.

livewellgreenwich.org.uk



ROYAL BOROUGH OF
GREENWICH