



# WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2025

Issue 7

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2025, which will reach you in the third week of term. We hope to publish this half terms parent briefing next week which will give some further detail about some of the areas mentioned in this newsletter.

We started the spring term with our Annual Compass Conference, which saw all staff from Compass schools gathering together at Halley Academy. The focus of the conference was technology, and the opportunity to look more closely at how we can make technology work for us. It was fascinating to hear more about Artificial Intelligence and how we might harness this in the future. Our keynote speech from John Camp focussed on the importance of education in the face of adversity, given some of the challenges in the world around us.

We were delighted to see children returning on Tuesday 7th January with so many smiley faces. Whilst we all enjoyed our holiday, we are always at our best when we are together as a community and are excited to be reunited at the start of the term. There is a lot of exciting learning planned this half term, and we were very ready to get started.

Ross Silcock joined our Compass Special Schools team for his first day as Rowan Wood's Head Teacher Designate on the first day of term. Ross will be based at Willow Dene for several days each week until Rowan Wood opens. He will be getting to know all elements of Willow Dene life as well as preparing for Rowan Wood's pre-opening inspection which will be in the summer term. You will have the opportunity to meet Ross if you are visiting school and he will be recording his first parent briefing with me. At Rowan Wood's site, building work has now begun and we will be sharing videos of progress on X (Twitter) @WillowDenesch. Within the last few days we have received exciting news about the onward growth of Willow Dene which we will be able to share with you in the upcoming parent briefing.

This January we are launching our whole school Instagram account. We know that Instagram is a very popular social media platform, and we are excited to find out how we can use it to share more videos and photographs of what is happening at Willow Dene. To

start us off we are focusing on several 'spotlight' classes who will host their own Instagram takeover. Woodlark class started the term and have now handed over the Instagram baton to Pheasant class for the next two weeks. Follow us at willowdenesch1 to find out more.

This week we have welcomed 24 Dutch visitors to Willow Dene for a tour so they can find out more about us. All of these visitors are in the UK to visit BETT, the biggest education technology exhibition in the world and all have an interest in education for children with special needs. We look forward to telling you about this soon. Last week, Emma and Lynne our Chair of Governors presented at a symposium, talking about our work with siblings. They presented the research paper that was written as a result of our core priority, and we were really pleased that this was well received as it is a subject area close to our hearts.

Look out for details of upcoming events including our Siblings events for this term and details of guest speakers for coffee mornings. We look forward to seeing you all soon.

Rachel

## IMPORTANT DATES

14<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Last day of 1<sup>st</sup> half of Spring Term

17<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Half Term holiday begins

24<sup>th</sup> February 2025

First day of 2<sup>nd</sup> half of Spring Term

## Special Events

12<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Grandparents Stay and Play

13<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Compass Music Event

14<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Willow Dene Exhibition at Woolwich Works



## Tilly Gleeson

We started the new year with heavy hearts as we learned of the death of Tilly Gleeson on 4th January 2025. You will all have received the letter telling you about this.

Tilly died peacefully and unexpectedly at home with her family, having just celebrated her 13th birthday. Tilly and her family have been a part of the Willow Dene community since Tilly joined nursery at the age of 3 and we were delighted that her secondary education was also at Willow Dene. Over her time here, Tilly grew into a brave, fearless character who would try anything with confidence. Tilly loved nature and the weather no matter if it was raining or shining. She developed a reputation across the school for being an outdoor adventurer, always ready to experience the natural world and the elements. We will always think of her on days when the wind is blowing, or when there is a storm with a smile, and remember the value of making sure that all children have the opportunity to enjoy and experience these things.

Tilly was one of Willow Dene's amazing positive role models who will continue to influence what we offer to our children in the future. We have worked with Tilly's family for a very long time, and they have always supported Willow Dene in everything that we do. Staff and parents from Woodlark and Nightingale classes and other adults who have worked with Tilly will be attending Tilly's funeral on Monday 10th February, to show our respect and love for them all. When we lose children, our relationship with families continues and, in this way, we are able to keep memories alive.



## Sixth Form



Our sixth formers are continuing to develop their business experience and knowledge. In the latter half of this year we are looking forward to expanding our services within each business and will share further details with you soon.

We are additionally focusing on Art this half term and we enjoyed a visit to The Tate Modern viewing the Anthony McCall exhibition. Alongside this we are practicing for Shakespeare for Schools and enjoyed an actor workshop who developed our performance and played drama games with us.

Moorland and Woodland are starting a six week block of sessions at Sutcliffe park gymnasium and every young person is continuing to develop their independence through their individual learning.



## Falcon Class

Falcon Class are having a wonderful Spring term, there is so much to do to keep us busy.

We are lucky enough to be able to attend Forest School. Despite the cold weather everyone is excited to take on the challenges that Jorge provides each week, and all of the children love to explore. They are particularly enjoying spending time going down the slide and relaxing in the hammocks!

During our TPPC sessions we are learning about different cultures and are having fun dressing up and trying different foods that we would not normally try. Play and Leisure this term also involves a lot of dressing up and both pupils and staff are embracing the chance to become someone else. From fairies to rock stars, you never know who you will bump into in Falcon Class on a Friday morning. All are welcome to join in the fun and become anything you want. We even have a dinosaur roaming somewhere in the class. Listen out for the ROAR!

We continue to enjoy our swimming sessions and are making really good progress with our swimming skills. We are all very focused during the lesson and try hard to move ourselves forward in the water. After a strenuous lesson the class enjoy some free time. We especially like to climb on floats, play ball and jump in.





## Important Information

School number - 020 8854 9841  
Greenwich Transport - 020 8932 8652  
School website: [Willow Dene School - Home \(compassps.uk\)](http://WillowDeneSchool.com)  
Twitter(X): @WillowDeneSch



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 \(royalgreenwich.gov.uk\)](#)

## School Vacancies

For further information please follow the link: [Willow Dene School - Vacancies \(compassps.uk\)](http://WillowDeneSchool.com)

### Premises Assistant

EDV/2025/W05/15105

Willow Dene is a large special school in Plumstead for children aged 2-19 across two sites. We are a forward thinking and innovative school that is committed to providing an outstanding education...

📍 Swingate Lane, London, SE18 2JD  
🕒 Permanent | Full-Time  
💷 £30,987.00 Annually (Actual)



Apply Now

**New** • Apply by 06:00pm, Sunday 2nd Feb, 2025 • Job start: ASAP

### Learning Support Assistant

EDV/2024/W05/99838

We are looking for an enthusiastic and committed individual to join our team to support children in their learning . Up to 32.50 hours per week, 39 weeks per year.

📍 Swingate Lane, London, SE18 2JD  
🕒 Permanent | Part-Time  
💷 £21,241.07 Annually (Actual)

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



Apply Now

**36 Days Remaining** • Apply by Midnight, Friday 28th Feb, 2025 • Job start: ASAP

### Lunchtime Learning Support Assistant

EDV/2024/W05/93938

This role supports children at lunchtime. We are looking for a motivated person to join our Lunchtime team. 8.75 hours each week, Monday to Friday, 38 week per year (term time only).

📍 Swingate Lane, London, SE18 2JD  
🕒 Permanent | Part-Time  
💷 £5,570.81 Annually (Actual)

Actual salary will be pro-rata based on hours and weeks worked



Apply Now

**36 Days Remaining** • Apply by Midnight, Friday 28th Feb, 2025 • Job start: ASAP

If we do not have any vacancies matching your interests, please join our Talent Pool at MyNewTerm and we will review your application - click [here](#) →

GREENWICH  
**TIME  
TO  
TALK**

Free wellbeing workshop



**NHS**  
Oxleas  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Building Resilience Workshop

Resilience helps us to cope during particularly challenging times and 'bounce back' afterwards. It is not something that we are born with or without. It is something that can be developed and strengthened over time. Come along to our free workshop to learn more about how to develop resilience:

**10:30am – 12:30pm, Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February**  
**Willow Dene School**

Delivered by trained NHS professionals, this workshop looks at the different ways that we can build resilience by identifying and living by our values, developing our self-esteem and looking after our body and mind.

To find out more email [oxl-tr\\_gttt-workshops@nhs.net](mailto:oxl-tr_gttt-workshops@nhs.net)

Sessions are run by Greenwich Time to Talk, a free NHS Talking Therapies service which helps people with low mood and anxiety.

Call us on 020 3260 1100 or visit  
we're **kind** we're **fair** **listen** we **care**  
[oxleas.nhs.uk](http://oxleas.nhs.uk) Follow us @oxleasNHS



**Grandparents & Elders**

**STAY & PLAY**

• SENSORY • TOYS • FUN

**WED 12TH FEB 2025**  
**1:45PM-2:45PM**

**LARGE HALL, WILLOW DENE, SWINGATE LANE**

JOIN YOUR WILLOW DENE GRANDCHILD FOR  
AN HOUR OF PLAY AND FUN.

PLEASE EMAIL SARAH TO LET US KNOW YOU  
ARE COMING:  
[SSMITH@WILLOWDENE.COMPASSPS.UK](mailto:ssmith@willowdene.compassps.uk)

TRINITY LABAN

# Dance Ability

for disabled dancers



## Classes for disabled children & young people

Saturdays

Laban Building  
Creekside  
SE8 3DZ

A fun and creative weekly class, for young dancers with cognitive and/or physical disabilities, or who identify as neurodivergent.

Led by experienced inclusive dance artist, we uses props, music and movement to boost confidence, physicality and social interaction skills.

Recommended for 5 – 8 yrs (school yrs 1–3)



Visit our website to find out more: [trinitylaban.ac.uk](http://trinitylaban.ac.uk)  
Contact: [youthprogramme@trinitylaban.ac.uk](mailto:youthprogramme@trinitylaban.ac.uk)  
020 8305 9396



## Short Breaks drop-in

ROYAL BOROUGH OF  
GREENWICH

Come and join us for our termly drop in session, this is an opportunity for parents/carers to share any individual issues and concerns.

**Wednesday 5th February 10.30am-12pm**

Short Breaks Team from Disabled children and young people services and Direct Payments Team are joining us to support parents/carers on an individual basis regarding any issues or concerns you may have.

Short Breaks are designed to help families to care for their disabled children by providing them with regular breaks and to enable children and young people to access positive, meaningful activities in the local community.

We look forward to welcoming you!

For more information please contact: Family Support Team on 0208 854 9841



## speakeasy



A weekly Coffee Morning for Willow Dene parents & carers

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

**Tuesday 11th February 10.30am to 12pm**

Greenwich Carers Voices are a singing group of parents and carers of adults and young people with Autism and learning disabilities.

Greenwich Carers Voices are a friendly and vibrant choir who have a lot of fun together, all ages, all voices and all carers are welcome! Amy Kearlsey is their very experienced community choir leader.

They are all very excited to attend our Coffee Morning, to meet and catch up with Willow Dene parents and enjoy singing some favourite songs together.

For more information please contact: Family Support Team on 0208 854 9841