



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL

Friday 14th February 2025

Issue 8

This newsletter will reach you on the last day before the half-term holiday. We hope you have had chance to watch our last parent briefing which contained an update on everything current and an introduction to Ross who will be the Headteacher Designate at Rowan Wood School.

We would also like to thank you for allowing us the flexibility to attend the funeral of Tilly Gleeson on 10th February. We were able to be with Tilly's family to show our love and pay our respects. Our newsletter contribution about Tilly was part of the eulogy. Tilly's family chose donations to the school in lieu of flowers and we will make sure that we use the money on something that Tilly would love.

It is at sad times like these that we appreciate more than ever being part of such a close and caring community. As we prepare for half term, we are conscious that many aspects of daily life are challenging for our families, and that services can sometime be difficult to engage. We are here to help wherever we can, so please do not hesitate to talk to us no matter what the circumstances. This week in your child's book will be the usual sticker which has important numbers for half term including the emergency telephone number (07716 388634). If you call this number and leave a message a leader will always call you back. In recent weeks we have reached out to our colleagues in the social care team to find out if there is a better way for us to work in partnership to improve lives for our children and families. We will keep you informed of the outcome.

Last week we presented to a National Foster Carer Network to win hearts and minds by talking about what can be gained by fostering a child with special educational needs. We know that this is an area where foster carers are much needed and felt that we could contribute to the conversation by sharing what we gain from our children every day. The whole school community contributed to the presentation including parents, staff members and of course children and young people. The feedback we had was extremely positive and we hope that we will help to make a change in this area.

On Tuesday our Willow Dene Dance Company had the privilege of performing at Sadlers Wells. As part of Making Moves which is a new choreography and performance project for schools and youth groups across England, run by Sadler's Wells. Connecting young people with the ideas of some of the world's most exciting choreographers, Making Moves aims to raise the profile of dance being created in school and youth

settings and offers a chance to perform on one of Sadler's Wells stages. On Thursday our Open Orchestra was the opening act at The Compass Music Concert at Halley Academy.

We hope that you heard in our parent briefing, the exciting news that we have been recredited by the National Autistic Society as an Autism Accredited Advanced setting, which is the best possible outcome for us. Thankyou to everybody who took part in the process.

We finished the school term on Friday 14th February with a non-school uniform day to support the Children's Heart Federation. We gave children and staff the option to wear something they love to school for a donation of £1.00 and we will let you know how much money we raised. All monies raised will be split between Children's Heart Foundation and Friends of Willow Dene.

We would like to wish you all a happy and safe half term and we will see you again on Monday 24th February, ready for a new half term and the start of spring.

Rachel

Noel Phillips



In our parent briefing you will have heard of the sad loss of Noel Phillips, our IT Technician who was a much-loved part of Willow Dene's team for many years.

As well as his IT skills, Noel was known for his bee keeping and honey production by many of you. Anyone visiting the school will have encountered Noel striding from place to place, always on hand to answer our requests for IT help! Noel was completely dedicated to his job and always full of love and enthusiasm for the Willow Dene community. Noel died following a brief illness and will be greatly missed by us all.



I went to Sadlers Wells
 I loved dancing on stage
 with Rachel and my
 Friends. I love to perform
 and I love to watch the
 theatre,
 'Subashini'

Badger Class

IMPORTANT DATES

14 th February 2025	Last day of 1 st half of Spring Term
17 th February 2025	Half Term holiday begins
24 th February 2025	First day of 2 nd half of Spring Term
4 th April 2025	Last day of 2 nd half of Spring Term

Special Events

14th – 24th February 2025
 Willow Dene Exhibition at Woolwich Works

26th February 2025
 Shakespeare for Schools – Albany Theatre

6th March 2025
 World Book Day

21st March 2025
 Comic Relief

Sixth Form

As always, our Sixth Formers have been busy in both business and the wider curriculum. Our routines are well established now during business days and the young people are working hard to develop their independence skills, AQA unit knowledge and application in a variety of contexts. As the year progresses, we are planning on expanding each business' offer which is an exciting prospect.

Alongside this, many of our young people are rehearsing for the upcoming 'Shakespeare for Schools festival' on 26th February where we will be performing Macbeth. We will be hosting an art exhibition of our work completed this half term on 28th February which parents and all are welcomed to. We are also attending sessions at Sutcliffe Park gymnasium, where our young people are using the equipment, playing games and learning practical skills to build habits for the future.





CELEBRATING 10
YEARS OF OUR
BUILDING

WILD FLOWER SEEDS

AREA PREPARED AND SEEDS CHOSEN BY



WILLOW DENE
SCHOOL

Celebrating
10 YEARS

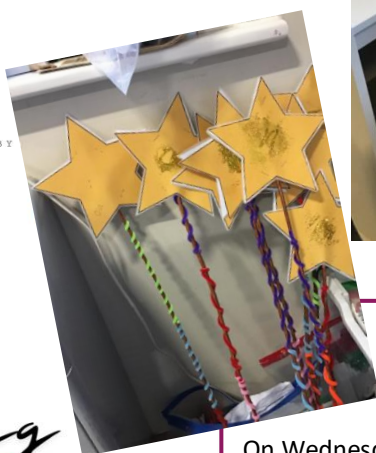
OF OUR SCHOOL BUILDING

WEDNESDAY 5TH FEBRUARY 2025

We will be celebrating by collating and burying a time capsule, creating crafts from willow and all contributing to a new celebration garden!

Pop by to Swingate Lane between 10am-2pm to plant a seed with your child in our new celebration garden.

Refreshments available throughout the day



10 Year Celebration – Our School Building

On Wednesday 5th February 2025, we celebrated the 10-year anniversary of our primary school building at Swingate Lane. There was lots of excitement, reflection and some surprise amongst staff that we have had our building for 10 years! Time really does fly when you are having fun.

We marked the day with a range of activities to celebrate. All classes were invited to create and collate items to put into a time capsule which will be buried on our site at Swingate lane, to be dug up in the future and look back at what classes and staff had contributed in 2025. There were a wide range of items that went into the time capsule – these included: photographs, artwork, self-portraits, and much more! We even added in contributions from our school dog, Milo.

Callum in Pheasant class really enjoyed thinking about what should be put in the time capsule. Because he was so inspired by the idea of the time capsule, he asked Mary, his teacher, if Pheasant class could plan and create their own time capsule.

Next up on our itinerary for the day was our celebration garden. Our wonderful Compost Crew from Sixth Form identified a patch of land at Swingate Lane and got to work preparing the ground for the planting of some seeds. They worked hard to identify flowers that would grow and ordered the seeds. The seeds were beautifully packaged with personalised stickers designed by the group. On Wednesday, the Compost Crew were on hand to welcome our families and support them in planting their seeds. We look forward to seeing our Celebration Garden grow and bloom!

Lastly, every child and young person in the school got to work using pieces of willow to create a masterpiece to take home to commemorate the day. Children and young people were able to turn their willow into a wreath, a heart or a wand. They were then encouraged to take these home and add further decoration and memories to their sculptures.

We have received some lovely feedback from our school community about our day of celebration, with one parent commenting on how impactful the experience was, and what a wonderful school community we have! There was also some amazing feedback about how helpful, welcoming and supportive our fantastic young people in our Sixth Form were on the day.

We cannot wait to see what the next 10 years at Willow Dene brings.



Show us your moves!

We are absolutely thrilled to share that Willow Dene Dance Company were selected to take part in *Making Moves*, a prestigious program commissioned by Sadler's Wells.

Our incredible company of 13 children and young people dedicated themselves to developing their dance and performance skills through weekly rehearsals, culminating in our powerful piece, *Who We Are*. This performance explores themes of self-identity and discovery, inspired by professional choreographer Kloe Dean, who worked with us as part of the *Making Moves* team at Sadler's Wells.

Each dancer, supported by adults who know them well, chose a word that best represents their personality. These words —Resilient, Kind, Caring, Powerful, Inquisitive, Curious, Independent, Joyful, Spontaneous, Bubbly, Clever, Prankster, and Confident —not only shaped our creative process but were also proudly displayed on the front of our dancers' costumes, with their names on the back.

We set out to create something inspiring and uplifting, and we truly achieved that! On Tuesday, February 11th, we travelled to Sadler's Wells (Angel) for an unforgettable day filled with dance and performance. The team at Sadler's Wells went above and beyond to accommodate the additional needs of our children and young people, providing us with a dedicated rehearsal space, a quiet space, and extra technical rehearsal time. Our dancers carried themselves with professionalism and enthusiasm throughout the day, embracing the incredible opportunity to perform at the Lilian Baylis Theatre.

The audience, made up of *Making Moves* staff, fellow young performers from other dance schools and colleges, professional choreographers, practitioners, and proud parents, were deeply moved by our performance.

Our piece began with a heartfelt video dedicated to the loving memory of Noel Phillips, followed by each dancer introducing themselves and sharing their chosen word using their preferred communication method —whether voice, AAC, or text. From there, we launched into our movement piece, and by the end, there weren't many dry eyes in the house! Tears of pride and joy filled the room as our dancers inspired everyone present.

The feedback has been nothing short of beautiful. One student from another performance group shared:

"Miss, it was just their confidence to be who they wanted to be and to love being on stage. It's about the joy! They made me dance with so much more joy, focus, and happiness—they were inspirational."

The students from this performance group are so keen to work with our dancers, they will be coming to do a day of workshops for us in the near future.

I couldn't be prouder of our dancers and everything they have accomplished. This experience has been truly magical, and we are so grateful to have been part of it! Watch this space for our next performance, this is just the beginning!





Friends of Willow Dene
Charity Number: 1139449

Please nominate us for a
Movement for Good award,
and we could win

£1,000

**It only takes
a moment**

Scan the QR code or visit
movementforgood.com
and add our details



FRIENDS OF WILLOW DENE
Charity number
1139499



Ecclesiastical Insurance Office is the promoter

We are excited to share an incredible opportunity for Friends of Willow Dene to win £1,000 as part of the Benefact Group's annual Movement for Good Awards. Over £1 million is being donated to charities and good causes, and we'd love for Friends of Willow Dene to be in with a chance!

Nominating us is quick and easy. Simply visit the website www.movementforgood.com or scan the QR code with your smartphone.

The winners will be drawn at random, and the more nominations we receive, the better our chances of being selected.

Friends of Willow Dene supports Willow Dene School by raising funds through various events, and we also work to strengthen the connection between the school and its community. Currently, we're fundraising for playground equipment for the children and young people to enjoy across the school.

Thank you for your support – your nomination could make all the difference!

We would like to share with you that we are currently being supported by The Classroom Experts who are helping us to raise funds for a new Magic Carpet.

The team have lots of fundraising events planned over the coming year and are keen to support the school. Through a connection of theirs we were also fortunate enough to hold a music party with a DJ for children last week; this was very well received by the children.



Admin Corner



Did you know that you can contact the school admin team via your child's MCAS account by clicking on the envelope icon in the top left-hand corner of the app.



If you are moving, change your mobile number or have a new place of work, please remember to update the school with your new details.

**School office
opening hours
8am - 4:30pm
Monday to
Friday**

Important Information

School number - 020 8854 9841
Greenwich Transport - 020 8932 8652

School website:

[Willow Dene School - Home \(compassps.uk\)](http://compassps.uk)

Twitter(X): @WillowDeneSch



If your child or young person has vomited and or has diarrhoea, they should remain off from school for 48 hours after their last bout.

WHAT'S ON



[Exhibition: Let's Make Some Noise | Woolwich Works](#)

Monday 8am - 6pm Tuesday 8am - 6pm Wednesday: 8am - 9:30pm Thursday: 8am - 11pm Friday: 8am - 11pm Saturday: 9am - 11pm Sunday: 10am - 9:30pm. Note: our outdoor areas close when the building closes or at 9pm.

www.woolwich.works

COMMUNITY **DROP IN**

2 LION ROAD, BEXLEYHEATH
DA6 8NR

EVERY THURSDAY
10AM-2PM

A DROP IN IF YOU ARE:

- HOMELESS
- STRUGGLING FINANCIALLY WHILST ON BENEFITS
- BEING EVICTED FROM YOUR HOME
- STRUGGLING WITH ALCOHOL OR DRUGS

WITH SUPPORT & ADVICE FROM:

- BEXLEY HOUSING
- STREETLINK
- PIER RD DRUG & ALCOHOL SERVICE
- DWP
- BEXLEY WINTER SHELTER
- AND MORE!

TEA & COFFEE AVAILABLE

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL US
 **0208 092 7256**



Greenwich Carers Voices

We are carers of learning disabled and autistic children and adults

Sing with us!



Sing your favourite songs & make new friends
All abilities and beginners welcome
Professional choir leader and teaching

Free + hot drink included
Trinity Community Centre
265 Burrage Road SE18 7JW

Wednesday
Term time
12.15-1.30

The Carers Social Group
www.carerssocialgreenwich.com
carerssocialgreenwich@gmail.com

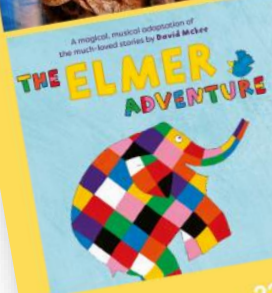


funded by
ROYAL borough of
GREENWICH

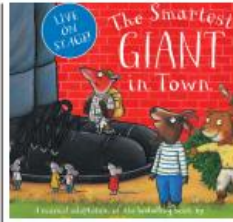
2025 FAMILY EVENTS

BLACKHEATH HALLS

020 8463 0100 • blackheathhalls.com



23 LEE ROAD, LONDON SE3 9RQ



THE SMARTEST GIANT IN TOWN

SAT 22 FEB 1pm & 4pm
SUN 23 FEB 10am & 1pm
£17 | £15 u16s | free u1s
Suitable For: 1yr+

This heart-warming tale about friendship and helping those in need is brought to life in a musical adventure based on the best-selling book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.



THE GRUFFALO

SAT 15 MAR 1.30pm & 4pm
SUN 16 MAR 11am & 2pm
£17 | £15 u16s | free u1s
Suitable For: 3yrs+

Join Mouse on a daring adventure through the deep, dark wood in this musical adaptation of the classic picture book by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler.



FARM BOY

SAT 5 APR 1.30pm & 4pm
SUN 6 APR 11am
£17 | £15 conc.
Suitable For: 8yrs+

Michael Morpurgo's compelling sequel continues the story of Joey (War Horse) and a long-kept secret Grandpa has never shared. A delightful, show combining drama, storytelling, and original music.



TEACH REX! - T-REX SHOW

SUN 13 APR 11am & 1.30pm
£12 adults & u16s | £42 Family
Suitable For: 3yrs+

Get up close and personal with life-like dinosaurs and let Teach Rex take you on an immersive, prehistoric journey.



THE ELMER ADVENTURE

FRI 25 APR 1.30pm & 4.30pm
SAT 26 APR - SUN 27 APR 10.30am & 1.30pm
£17 | £15 u16s | free u1s
Suitable For: 3yr+

Join three friends on a joyful jungle adventure in this musical adaptation of the much-loved Elmer books by David McKee.



PUSS IN BOOTS

SUN 18 MAY 3pm
£17 | £15 u16s
Suitable For: 2yr - 14yr

Based on the original version by Charles Perrault, Let's All Dance brings a new version of Puss in Boots about a friendship between a magical cat and a young man with a talent for music.



Senfocus & Community Food Bank



In partnership with:



St James' Church Kidbrooke

Every 1st Friday of the month @ 18:30 - 19:30
St James Rectory, 62 Kidbrooke Park Rd, London SE3 ODU
Charity Number: 1206695