

NEWSLETTER

Compass
Special
Schools

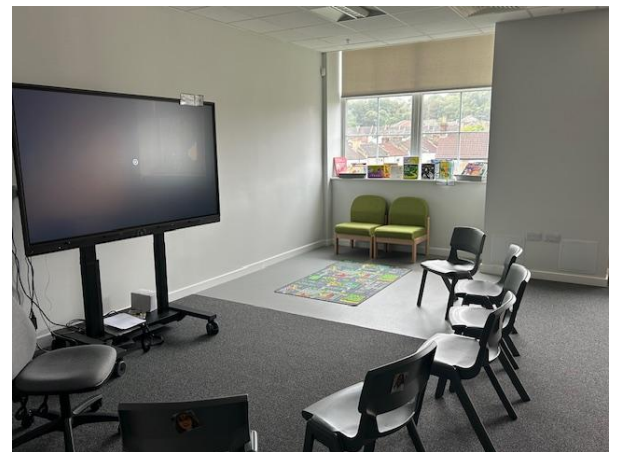


Welcome back to the first newsletter of the school year 25/26. We are delighted to be back together and to welcome both our first cohort of new starters, their families and our first ever year group for Rowan Wood School. In this newsletter you will hear from Dr Ross Silcock, Rowan Wood Headteacher Designate, and some of the team who will work across both schools. Hopefully you will all have received the first parent briefing of the year and will have had time to catch up with a more detailed update. Having said this the start of the school year has highlighted some technology glitches with our school systems, so if for any reason you did not receive the briefing please let our office team know.

The summer holiday was busy with the first two weeks being very full with playscheme. There was a lot of positive feedback from children and adults. We are currently working with colleagues at Royal Borough of Greenwich to look at the future for our short breaks. Once our gates were closed to children, a flurry of building and premises work took place. At Swingate Lane, the focus was on redecorating areas of the school including classrooms and grounds maintenance. At Oakmere Road, we started the huge tasks of overhauling the perimeter wall and roof. In addition to this we needed to make sure that the former Professional Development Centre space was fit for the school to take occupation and move in on the first day of term. Our team worked tirelessly to make sure all health and safety checks were in order, works were finished and furniture and resources ready to install. We are very happy with the finished result. The classrooms we have gained are bright and airy and spacious.



Our two new Rowan Wood classes, Monarch and Peacock and our two sixth form classes, Woodland and Highland moved in, during the first week of term and are already settled in their new space. Our work in this part of the building is not done yet, and over the coming months our focus will be on displays, artwork, setting up the gym and making sure that we are happy with the environment.



Our inset days at the start of the school year ensured that all of our mandatory training was completed. This included medical training, work with our therapy teams, annual safeguarding and positive handling. This training is invaluable and ensures that all classes are safe to open at the start of the year and to meet the needs of our Children and Young People.

After all of the inset days we were so happy and excited to welcome children and young people back to school and we are pleased to report lots of excitement and smiling faces in return. For our class teams the first focus areas of the year are making sure that learning environments are appropriately set up and resourced, reflecting the needs of the children in each class and to establish routines, transitions and expectations so that children and young people feel safe and secure.

We have lots of exciting plans this term for learning and we are planning some amazing performing arts opportunities. We will be publishing more information about these in upcoming newsletters.

In the coming week you will also see a change to Willow Dene term dates. This is to facilitate a conference specifically aimed at the area of inclusion which will be planned by our Compass team. You will see that there will be no inset day in January and instead this will be changed to a date later in the year. These dates will closely be followed by term dates for Rowan Wood. Before we publish any changes, we will be liaising with our colleagues at Royal Borough of Greenwich and the contractors for the building at Hargood Road for updates about the works. You may have seen on social media the progress of the new school building. We are very excited to be able to visit and see the inside of the buildings for the first time on October 1st. We will be taking some Rowan Wood teachers and children to this event.

We are looking forward to hearing about what is planned for our sixth form business groups this year. We believe that there will be a DIY business joining the already established four business groups. Three years of sixth form hardly seems possible, but our first group of Year 14's are beginning their final year of sixth form. As part of this term we will be seeking work experience placements for all year 14's, talking to parents about what's next at annual reviews and beginning independent travel training for some young people.



As you know, we are always looking for opportunities to expand the holistic offer that we have for our school community so we are excited to have the opportunity to acquire some new animals to add to our existing family! We will be adopting three pygmy goats who will present new opportunities for animal care as well as keeping our orchard area at Swingate Lane in good order. We have also been given the rare opportunity to adopt some adult tortoises which will again provide new encounters and learning opportunities for our children and young people. We look forward to keeping you updated as the term progresses.

I hope you have an enjoyable weekend.

Rachel

We have had a fantastic start to the first term, and first academic year at Rowan Wood. Currently based at Willow Dene, the Year 7 children have been making new friends and building positive relationships with staff. The children have enthusiastically embarked on their Key Stage 3 curriculum journey which is focused on enabling them to become active learners, moving towards independence, autonomy, control and choice.

Children and staff were incredibly excited to learn that the first Rowan Wood classroom had been completed and are looking forward to visiting the new school building. Jaydon commented, "I can't wait to play in the new playground and learn maths in the new classroom." Suleyman was similarly enthusiastic, "I'm excited for soft play and a science lesson in the brand new classroom." On Wednesday 1st October, a few children and staff from Rowan Wood will attend the reveal of the first Rowan Wood classroom.



Ross

I hope that all families had a good summer break. Welcome to our new students and welcome back to those returning.

This term has seen the opening of Rowan Wood School which is currently based at Willow Dene whilst their own building in Kidbrooke, is being finished. Willow Dene governors have the privilege of governing both schools and we are very much looking forward to working with all the young people and staff.

It is always a pleasure to come into school, as governors in addition to meetings where we discuss important information with senior leaders to hold them to account, we undertake monitoring visits guided by the school core priorities as well as important areas such as safeguarding and Health & Safety. This enables us to see the 'school in action' and to spend time with the children and staff. I really enjoying spending time doing activities with the children. It's hard to believe we are already 3 weeks into term 1, the weather is cooler and wetter and before we know it the Christmas period will be upon us! The many festive events are often a time when governors can not only see the children performing and having fun but also have the opportunity to meet parents and families.



Lynne – Chair of Governors

Creative Arts Lead

Hello, my name is Charlie Walsh, and I am delighted to share that, alongside my Literacy role, I have recently been appointed as Creative Arts Lead at Willow Dene and Rowan Wood. I am extremely excited about this new role and the opportunities it brings. I will be working across our sites to support the development of a rich and inspiring Creative Arts curriculum, as well as extending the range of opportunities our children and young people already enjoy. This includes leading the Creative Arts core priority with our team, focusing on enhancing the curriculum and extra-curricular offer, and supporting staff to build confidence in teaching the arts and using them to enrich learning across all subject areas.

As part of my role, I will be running an Orchestra, Choir, and Drama groups at Willow Dene and Rowan Wood, overseeing instrumental learning for pupils with a keen interest in music at Oakmere Road, and creating immersive jam band sessions for our children with complex needs. I will also continue to deliver weekly music assemblies, ensuring that all children and young people have a variety of musical opportunities to develop their musicality, confidence, social skills, and love of music while strengthening our school community.

I will be supporting Willow Dene Sixth Form in enhancing and embedding their Creative Arts curriculum by running the drama and music modules and exploring the different roles and job opportunities the creative arts can offer, as part of the Summer Showcase scheme of work. In addition, I will be continuing to establish creative arts connections within our local community by working closely with the Greenwich Music Hub and the Tramshed Arts Centre and running extra-curricular performance opportunities such as the Coram Shakespeare for Schools Festival and the chance for our pupils to perform at the Greenwich Music Hub's Singing Spectacular in the summer term.

I am supporting transitions for Rowan Wood through music and drama sessions that help children and young people develop social communication skills and positive relationships, and I look forward to working with the Rowan Wood team to establish their own Creative Arts curriculum. I am excited to see the joy and creativity these opportunities will continue to bring to our school.



Head of Virtual School for Learners with Autism

Hello, my name is Claire Bayfield and in my new role I will be supporting across both Willow Dene and Rowan Wood and in the future across Compass schools.

My role will primarily focus on how we best support children and young people (CYP) with autism access the world around them particularly at school and what needs to be in place in terms of learning tools and environment to get the best from our CYP. I will continue to support transitions across and in and out of the schools to prepare children and young people for their next step.

Behaviour/ mental health and sensory support is a passion of mine and so continuing to work collaboratively with other professionals in health/social care to support this, is crucial in my role so that our team, CYP and families can move forward.

I lead and support on delivering autism specific training for both staff and parents covering autism awareness, behaviour, sensory and communication needs as well as training on NVR (non-violent restraint).



IMPORTANT DATES

Last day of autumn term

Friday 24th October 2025

First day of autumn term 2

Monday 1st November 2025

CORE PRIORITIES 2025-26

Every year Willow Dene has seven core priorities which form the basis of our school development plan for the year. These seven areas drive school improvement for the coming year and are something that every child and adult in our wider school community contribute to. You can see this year's priorities below and on our website. You will see core priorities mentioned in newsletters, social media and at parents' meetings throughout the year and reflected in the work that we do. Today we wanted to specifically share the core priority which relates to our families:

'To apply Funds of Knowledge theory, recognising, valuing and celebrating the diverse culture and social backgrounds of Children and Young People, using their lived experiences to enhance teaching and learning'.

Funds of Knowledge theory uses skills, passions or knowledge that children bring from home to school as tools to enhance their learning. To be successful with this core priority we will need your support and help so look out for updates from Joshua and Emma who are leading this core priority.

For the first time ever, Rowan Wood have their core priorities also. There are four of these to reflect the newness of the school and three of them are shared with Willow Dene ensuring that we are working together and improving and learning together as Compass Special Schools.



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL CORE PRIORITIES 2025-26

To apply Funds of Knowledge theory, recognising, valuing and celebrating the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of CYP, using their lived experiences to enhance teaching and learning

To enhance the impact of creative arts opportunities and embed and promote best practice by developing a holistic curriculum which can be shared more widely



To work collaboratively with all teams to develop proactive, reactive and reparative communication strategies that interpret and respond to behaviour as a form of communication, sensory and emotional well-being need

To secure a future for our Year 14 leavers as life-long learners and valued and valuable citizens, including tailored post-school destinations guided by their strengths, interests and experience

To embed the learner centred pedagogy and its implementation with particular focus on the responsive adult so that it positively impacts the learning experiences and progress of children and young people in Compass Special Schools



To develop structures which create consistency across the school in everyday routines and ensure adult understanding of how to support progress in learning and independence at these times of the day



To ensure consistency, quality and ambition, in all classes in the teaching of early reading, phonics and writing through CPD, policy, curriculum materials and assessment



ROWAN WOOD SCHOOL CORE PRIORITIES 2025-26

To engage with and promote our new building to our school community

To enhance the impact of creative arts opportunities and embed and promote best practice by developing a holistic curriculum which can be shared more widely



To embed the learner centred pedagogy and its implementation with particular focus on the responsive adult so that it positively impacts the learning experiences and progress of children and young people in Compass Special Schools



To develop structures which create consistency across the school in everyday routines and ensure adult understanding of how to support progress in learning and independence at these times of the day



ADMIN CORNER

Important numbers

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| School telephone number | 020 8854 9841 |
| Willow Dene contact email | willowdene@compassps.uk |
| Rowan Wood contact email | rowanwood@compassps.uk |
| School website | Willow Dene School - Home www.willowdene.compassps.uk |
| School Instagram | @WillowDeneSch |

School Office Hours

Opening hours:
8.00am – 4.30pm
Monday to Friday

My Child At School

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

Change of details

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

Illness

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

Royal Borough of Greenwich
travel application

[Application for home to school
travel assistance | Instructions](#)



Speakeasy **Bromley Healthcare** better together

A weekly Coffee Morning for Willow Dene, Oakmere Road
and Rowan Wood parents & carers

Tuesday 23rd September from 10.30am

We are pleased to be welcoming **Gwen Jerrom - Oral Health Promoter for Bromley Healthcare** to our coffee morning.

Bromley Healthcare is a Special Care Dental Service that provides dental care and oral health promotion for children and adults with special care needs, in the boroughs Bromley, Bexley and Greenwich.

Please come along to find out more!

Please note - This takes place at our Swingate Lane site.

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

**Peeps
Together over
breakfast**
Join us for food at
Giraffe!



Southbank Centre, Riverside Level 1, Central
London, SE1 8XX



Friday 26th September 10:30am-12:30pm



For families registered with Peeps

Spaces must be booked in advance so we
can arrange a table and pre-order



Children are welcome! Changing Places in
the Southbank Centre



NHS
South London Children and
Young People's Community
Immunisation Service

Missed your flu vaccine?

**Live or attend school in the borough of
Greenwich? Aged 4 - 16?**

Come down to a flu catch-up clinic and
protect yourself!

Saturday 4 October, 10:00 - 14:00
Clockhouse Community Centre, SE18 5QL

Monday 6 October, 15:00 - 16:15
Waterways Children's Centre, SE28 8EZ

Thursday 16 October, 15:00 - 16:15
Charlton Family Centre, SE7 7EL

Call 020 3903 3345 or
scan the QR code for
more information or to
book an appointment



NHS
South London Children and
Young People's Community
Immunisation Service

Missed your flu vaccine?

**Live or attend school in the borough of
Greenwich? Aged 4 - 16?**

Come down to a flu catch-up clinic and
protect yourself!

Tuesday 28 October, 10:30 - 14:30
Greenwich West Community Centre, SE10 8JL

Thursday 30 October, 10:30 - 14:30
New Eltham Library, SE9 3QT

Friday 31 October, 09:30 - 13:45
Clockhouse Community Centre, SE18 5QL

Call 020 3903 3345 or
scan the QR code for
more information or to
book an appointment

