

NEWSLETTER

Compass
Special
Schools



Welcome to the first newsletter of the second half of the autumn term. We hope you all had a fun half-term holiday. We are pleased to report that we have started the half-term with everybody well and ready for a busy few months ahead.

Over half-term, although our gates were closed to children, a lot was happening behind the scenes. At Oakmere Road, we are delighted that the ongoing work on the roof has now finished. We are waterproof for the winter, and we finally have our car park back! The work on our boundary wall to keep it safe has also been completed. Our next plans for Oakmere Road include carpeting the noisy stairs in the new part of the building and refitting the former PDC reception ready for sixth form to occupy. At Swingate Lane the delivery of the two temporary classrooms which will house our two new Rowan Wood classes, Swallowtail and Skipper were delivered successfully. A huge thank you to our premises team who managed this and unexpected work from Thames Water at the same time. They also managed to build an enclosure for our goats who should be arriving this week. We have enjoyed seeing the children's suggestions for their names, which was a popular item on the last agenda for our school councils. We will keep you updated about the names we choose.

We started half-term by reviewing our displays to show lots of lovely learning happening across the school in all curriculum areas. The next time you visit school please spend some time having a look at these. If you are joining us for parents' evening next week this will be a good opportunity. Our annual parent survey will also be released next week so that you can have your say about what we are doing well and where you would like to change things.

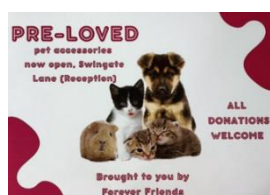
At the moment all of our class teams are outlining their plans for this year's class development projects, which this year is connected to our Funds of Knowledge core priority. This core priority is about finding out more about the things children experience in their home lives which we can use to support their learning and sense of identity in school. Class development projects are something that every class works on throughout the year, and this year's focus will certainly involve you, so please look for communication coming home soon.

This week has been a particularly busy week with filming on Wednesday with the Jack Petchey award scheme to support our Key Stage 3 specialist interests. This part of our school curriculum ensures that we identify, celebrate and share areas of strengths, interests and passions for every child in Key Stage 3. The Jack Petchey award allows us to extend this further by providing additional funding and publicity. This week we received an environmental award to celebrate the work on our memory garden and other environmental projects. Interviews with our team and parents will form part of a case study that Jack Petchey will use to celebrate what can be achieved by a team working together.



This is always a very busy half term for us and next week is no exception with parents evening and a visit from John Camp our CEO and Susan Skidmore our Chair of Trustees for our annual challenge and support meeting. This external validation looks at specific aspects of our practice in detail to ensure we maintain our high standards. On Friday we will have a visit from Essex children's services to look at the way that we share our practice with our Compass mainstream schools. We will report on all these visits in our next newsletter.

Don't forget to save the dates for our Winter Warmer and our seasonal celebrations which you will find further in this newsletter.



Finally, if you are visiting Swingate Lane look out for sixth form's Forever Friends pet business's new venture, which is a preloved scheme for pets accessories. The Forever Friends team has been collecting items that people don't want or need for their pets and will be offering them to staff and parents and visitors to the school in return for a donation. Pet preloved is located in the main entrance of Swingate Lane. Please look out for it and support if you can.

I hope you all have a wonderful weekend, **Rachel**

News from Rowan Wood

This term at Rowan Wood the children have been busy scientists investigating floating and sinking. The children were given a range of items and predicted whether they would float or sink, they then tested to see if their predictions were correct. In Literacy the children enjoyed going on a sound walk around the school and recording what they heard in different areas. This week the children's learning has been focused on Remembrance Day. To mark Remembrance Day, we shared a discussion about its importance and discussed the significance of the day and worked creatively with recycling materials to produce beautiful poppies. In Maths, we have continued our work on addition and subtraction using part whole models and the addition symbol. We have also been exploring communities and what communities the children belong to. We thought about what identifies us as part of the Rowan Wood community. In Play and Leisure, we have been exploring different ingredients in sensory trays, including following instructions to make flapjacks. In Art we have been listening to different music styles and used crayons and paint to respond to the rhythm and beat.

In class the children are really getting to grips with their independent learning at their workstations and working on their individual targets Olga, Sophie, Linda and Samira are incredibly proud of all the children's hard work. We have now completed all the children's baselines and it has been lovely meeting and hearing from you as parents as to how well the children have settled in.

This half term, as part of my Creative Arts role for Rowan Wood, we are focusing on all things *music*! Children who have shown a passion for learning an instrument are continuing to enjoy their music tutoring sessions, developing their drumming and keyboard skills. We are very excited for them to share their talents with their peers at the end of the term.

Alongside instrument tuition, some Rowan Wood children who love to sing have joined the Oakmere Choir. Here, we are developing their musical ear, exploring the different sounds we can make using the shapes of our mouths, and enjoying singing along to motivating songs such as *Stargazing* by Myles Smith.

In class, as part of our enhanced Creative Arts curriculum, I am supporting children to explore rhythm and tempo and to experience different genres of music such as Afrobeats and Hip Hop through our unit '*Heart Beat to Hip Hop*'. So far, we have enjoyed interactive movement games linked to Hip Hop music and have been learning how to create musical texture by layering our own Hip Hop tracks using the app *Incredibox*. Children are also having great fun exploring live instruments through a jamming game, where we are learning to listen carefully to one another and play together as an ensemble.

Rowan Wood Building Progress

This week we attended Rowan Wood Topping Out and Classroom Reveal ceremony of the first model classroom at the new school site at Hargood Road. The Mayor and Councillors from Royal Borough of Greenwich were also in attendance. The last time we visited the site was for the groundbreaking ceremony, where there was no building to see yet.

We were very excited to see the school building in place to the extent to be able to have a tour of the inside along with some of the people who have helped us along the way. Our two Rowan Wood representatives were children from Monarch class. They were amazing ambassadors from Rowan Wood, patiently waiting, socialising and having their photographs taken and wearing their PPE. There are some photographs on Instagram : @willowdenesch1 for you to see. We will be offering another tour for Rowan Wood families at a date to be agreed in January 2026.



BRAMBLING CLASS

Brambling class love to be outside! This term we have forest school and each of us are enjoying exploring the forest in our own way. We love to climb, swing, slide and relax as well as take part in imaginative play. We have been developing our independence skills by trying new activities with less adult support and showing our joy through smiling, laughing and vocalising.



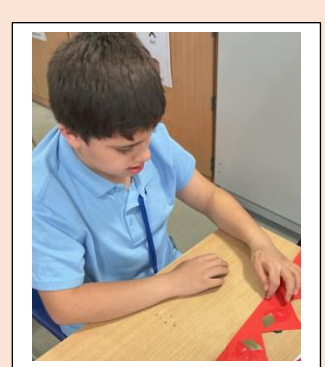
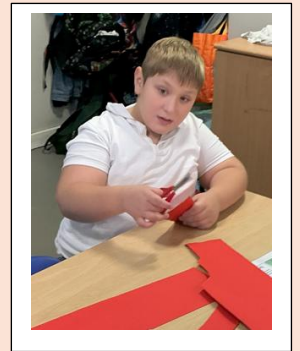
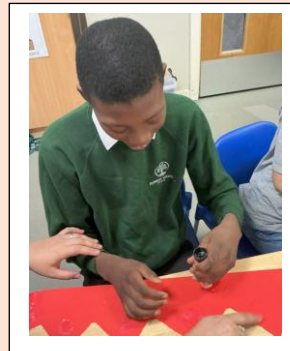
As a group of fierce Disney lovers, we have begun reading a new book called Stitch crashes Disney. We are loving laughing along as Stitch creates chaos in some of our favourite Disney stories. We are excited to continue searching for Stitch and creating some of our own scenarios to share with our friends and make them laugh.



STARLING CLASS

Starling class explored the topic of Kings and Queens over the course of the first Autumn half term. We loved dressing up as Kings and enjoyed giving instructions for our peers to follow. To decide who will be the next to reign we took inspiration from an old legend which claims that the next person to pull a magical sword out of a stone is going to be the king. However, as history taught us there will always be a next. Together we discovered kings and queens who grew Sussex into a bigger kingdom, established a parliament and brought together different kingdoms to create a United Kingdom. This leads nicely to some of the topics we will be exploring during this half term such as different communities across the UK and some of their religious stories as well as how to build community by celebrating the things we have in common. During our citizenship sessions we will also be looking at different rules that keep us safe within different environments e.g. on the road, inside a car, at school and at home. As well as establishing ways of how to ask for help and identifying who would be a good person to ask for it.

We are also very excited about our new Creative Arts Curriculum bringing together music, art, dance and drama to explore the history of music inspired by the book "Once Upon a Rhythm" by James Carter and Valerio Vidali. We will start by finding our hearts rhythm and extend this to finding the rhythm within music and speech. Using those rhythms to mark make, paint, move and dance. We can't wait to see where our rhythms will take us and am looking forward to seeing you for our Christmas performance!



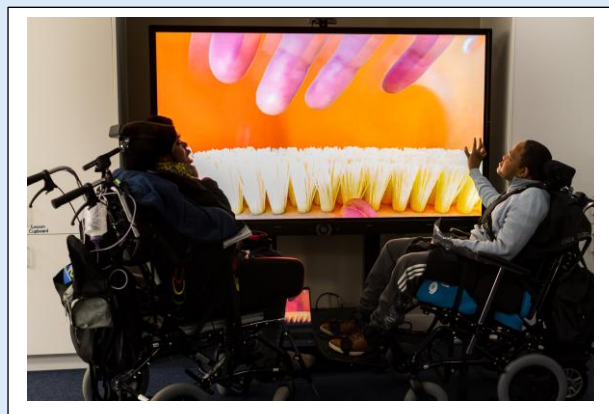
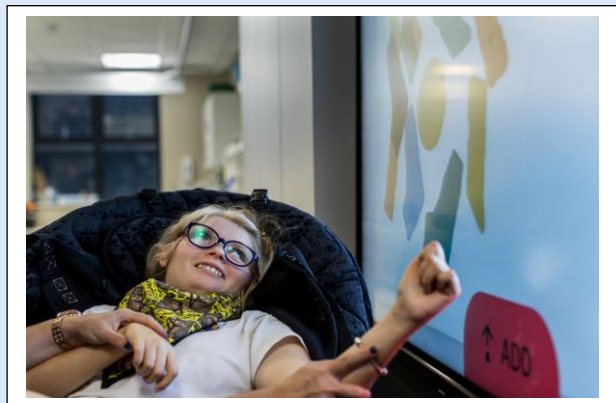
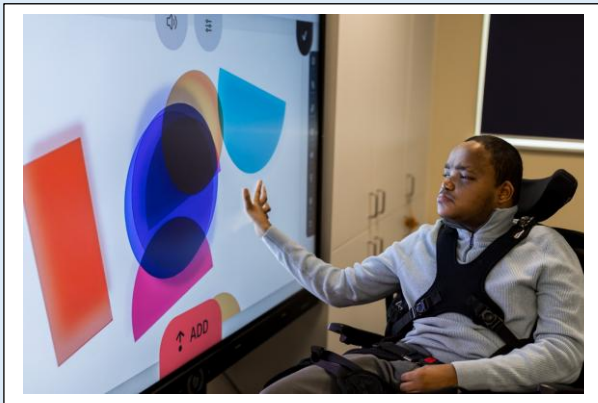
Meadow Class Collaborates with the Tate on an Exciting New Game App: LIGHTBOX

We are thrilled to share some incredible news from Meadow Class! Over the past few months, our young people have been part of a creative and innovative collaboration with Tate Schools, helping to co-design a brand-new web-based game app called LIGHTBOX.

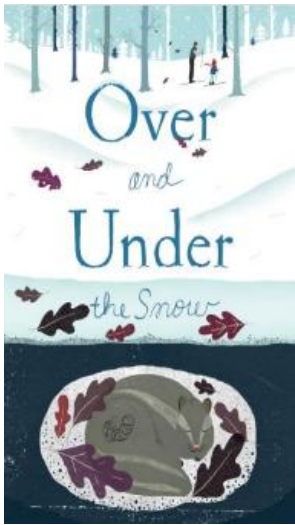
Meadow Class played a key role in shaping the app through hands-on sessions with the Tate team, exploring digital creativity, visual storytelling, and interactive design. The game is a playful, web-based activity that invites children and young people to explore art through light, colour, and composition. It is now live on Tate Kids, and features some of the brilliant images created by our young people during the development sessions. You can try it out here: <https://www.tate.org.uk/kids/games/lightbox>

The web-based game is still evolving, and our feedback continues to help shape how it is going to be accessed. In the near future, our friends from the Tate will come back to Meadow class and we will explore developing the game into an Eye-Gaze software.

We are delighted that the Tate has given us permission to share the images from our sessions.



Winter is coming to Willow Dene and Rowan Wood



As November flows into December, we are developing and rehearsing our winter showcases. This year our Primary and Secondary children and young people will be performing the story *Over and Under the Snow* by Kate Messner. The story takes readers on a cross-country journey through the winter woods to discover a joyous snowy adventure.

This year we have also linked our Christmas card designs to the story, creating snow scenes with trees, the moon and stars with forest animals in the foreground. Children have free form created the snow and used stencils to create other elements of the scene.

When creating their snowy scenery, children experimented with mark making techniques using a variety of everyday tools, from toothbrushes and combs to bubble wrap and foam, while building their body awareness by using their fingers in inks to make patterns on the page. Children then learned how to use stencils, exploring a variety of shapes from *Over and Under the Snow*,

applying a sponge to dab ink over their chosen shapes before revealing characters from the story magically appear on their snow-covered forests.

If you would like to purchase your child's card design the deadline date for this is on 23rd November 2025. Any orders received after this date is classed as a 'late order' and unfortunately will incur additional charges.



IMPORTANT DATES

Parents Evening :

Wednesday 19th November 2026 3.30pm – 5.00pm

Please see the dates below for when the seasonal performances are. Letters with more information and ticket requests will be sent home soon.

- Monday 8th December – Primary / Swingate Performance
- Tuesday 9th December AM – Toucan Performance
- Tuesday 9th December PM – Secondary / Oakmere / Rowan Wood Performance
- Thursday 11th December AM – EYFS Performance
- Thursday 11th December PM – Sixth Form Performance

Last day of Autumn Term – Friday 19th December, school will finish at 1.30pm

ADMIN NEWS

Important numbers

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

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.

School Office Hours

Opening hours:
8.00am – 4.30pm
Monday to Friday

Royal Borough of Greenwich travel application

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

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.



WILLOW DENE PRESENTS
CHRISTMAS SIBLING EVENT
PRIMARY AGED SIBLINGS AND FAMILIES WELCOME
Wednesday 10th December 2025
4.30pm – 6pm Swingate Lane site
Arts and crafts, biscuit decorating, face painting, refreshments, bouncy castle, selfie station and more
PLEASE RSVP BY 9.12.25
jsimson@compassps.uk



EXPLORING STRENGTHS IN PARENTS/CARERS WORKSHOP

TUES 9TH DEC 2025 (9.30AM - 12PM)

Join this 2.5 hour **FREE** virtual workshop for **parents/carers of autistic children and young people (aged 8-15)** and:

- 1) Build **Awareness** of your own strengths;
- 2) **Explore** your own strengths in action;
- 3) **Apply** your own strengths in daily life when supporting your autistic child or young person.

REGISTER VIA LINK OR QR CODE

<https://t.ly/5qrPN>




DR. JIEDI LEI
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD


DANIELA KROUZKOVA
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD


RACHEL VANDAALLEN
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD


SUSAN LIVERMAN
PARENT FACILITATOR




SAVE THE DATE!

Winter Wonderland

THURSDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2025

5-7PM

WILLOW DENE,
SWINGATE LANE
SE18 2JD

Peeps Together over breakfast

Join us for food at Giraffe!



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



Friday 5th December 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



For more information or to book your place head to www.peeps-hie.org/whats-on/ or use the QR code above

Future Planning SEN Transitions Fair Autumn 2025

An information event for students, parents and carers. Find out about relevant adult services and opportunities available once your teenager transitions from children's services.

Learn about:

- SEN colleges, education and vocational opportunities
- Adult health and therapy provisions for adults with complex needs
- Adult social care, Advocacy, and SEN Day Opportunities
- Leisure services and carer support

Includes presentations on:

- Moving to Adulthood (Social Care)
- Community Learning Disabilities Team
- Deputyship / Advocacy / Power of Attorney
- Transition Nursing support

Date: Wednesday 19th November 2025
Time: 09:30am - 12:30pm
Service Talks: 10am-12pm
Venue: Heathview, Goldie Leigh, Lodge Hill, Abbey Wood, London, SE2 0AS.



Free parking on site

To book a free ticket / register interest please scan QR code






PRESENTATION SCHEDULE 19TH NOV 25

01

TRANSITION NURSING
10AM - 10.30AM

02

CLDT (COMMUNITY LEARNING DISABILITY TEAM) 10.30AM - 11.55AM

03

GREENWICH SOCIAL CARE
11.20AM - 11.50AM

04

YOUNG PERSON EXPERIENCE OF TRANSITION
11.50 - 12.10PM

Willow Dene term dates 25/26

Rowan Wood term dates 25/26

Autumn term 2025	September	Mon 1 st	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Tues 2 nd	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Wed 3 rd	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Thu 4 th	First day of autumn term
	October	Fri 24 th	Last day of 1 st half of autumn term
		Mon 27 th	Half-term holiday begins
	November	Mon 3 rd	First day of 2 nd half of autumn term
	December	Fri 19 th	Last day of 2 nd half of autumn term
		Mon 22 nd	Christmas holiday begins
	Spring term 2026	January	Mon 5 th
February		Fri 13 th	Last day of 1 st half of spring term
		Mon 16 th	Half-term holiday begins
		Mon 23 rd	First day of 2 nd half of spring term
March		Thurs 26 th	Last day of 2 nd half of spring term
		Fri 27 th	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Mon 30 th	Easter holiday begins
Summer term 2026	April	Mon 13 th	First day of 1 st half of summer term
	May	Mon 4 th	Bank Holiday
		Fri 22 nd	Last day of 1 st half of summer term
		Mon 25 th	Half-term holiday begins
	June	Mon 1 st	First day of 2 nd half of summer term
	July	Fri 17 th	Last day of 2 nd half of summer term
		Mon 20 th	INSET Day – School closed to children

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	March	Thurs 26 th	Last day of 2 nd half of spring term
		Fri 27 th	INSET Day – School closed to children
Mon 30 th		Easter holiday begins	
Summer term 2026	April	Mon 13 th	Moving day – school closed to children
		Tues 14 th	Moving day – school closed to children
		Wed 15 th	First day of 1 st half of summer term
	May	Mon 4 th	Bank Holiday
		Fri 22 nd	Last day of 1 st half of summer term
		Mon 25 th	Half-term holiday begins
June	Mon 1 st	First day of 2 nd half of summer term	
July	Fri 17 th	Last day of 2 nd half of summer term	
	Mon 20 th	INSET Day – School closed to children	