

NEWSLETTER

Compass
Special
Schools



Welcome to a special December edition of our Compass Special Schools newsletter, in which we will share some of our December highlights and also signpost some of the things yet to happen this term!

Our elves were busy last weekend decorating all parts of the schools including Swingate Lane, Oakmere Road, sixth form and Rowan Wood. All have slightly different themes and delighted the children and young people when they arrived in school on Monday.



This week we have had two important groups of visitors who have joined us for school tours. On Tuesday, a group of Royal Borough of Greenwich professionals joined us for a tour of both sites and both schools. This group of people are often in meetings with our team but have never visited the school or met our children and young people. This can create a barrier in understanding why we organise or do things in the way we do. The visiting group were very excited to join us and were uplifted and inspired by their visit. We accidentally crossed over with parents' coffee morning, so a huge thank you to our Compass Special Schools parents who spontaneously gave some lovely feedback about our school. One of our visitors emailed us afterwards to say 'Thank you for your warmth and hospitality, but most of all thank you for your hard work and dedication to the most vulnerable children and young people. The love and care you give every day shone through in the faces of all the staff and children I met yesterday and it was truly uplifting'.

On Wednesday we were joined by the Head Teachers from EKO special schools. You may remember, that in preparation for the upcoming merger I visited their amazing schools before half term as a way to get to get to know each other and find areas of common interest. We serve very different groups of children but immediately found shared interests and passions. I was impressed with the respect they afford their children and their strategies for getting the best from them, and the EKO team gave so much time to us on our visit that we wanted to provide a reciprocal visit of a similar kind. We had an inspiring and enjoyable morning including tours, where the EKO team also spoke to a focus group of adults and a group of children and young people, which they enjoyed tremendously. We think that we have made a great start to building positive working relationships for the future.

Yesterday was our long-awaited Winter Wonderland Community event. We would like to wholeheartedly thank everyone involved in donating, making, selling and supporting this event. We loved seeing all of you! It is joyous to have the opportunity to spend time together celebrating at this time of the year. Look out for our grand total in the next newsletter, but as always, our community events are about being together as a community, which is more important than any amount of fundraising.

If you are looking for something to do out of school hours, we would recommend you visit the wreath trail at Eltham Palace, where you will see Willow Dene's wreath, lovingly made by Woodlark class. This wreath was inspired by Woodlark class's passion for the outdoors and environment. It is a bird feeder wreath designed with our feathered friends in mind and completely environmentally friendly!

Theatre groups performing pantomimes have visited all key stages to mark the month of December. Still to come, we have all of our performances, our parties and Santa visits and our Christmas lunch which we will tell you about in our next newsletter.



You may have noticed that our three goats arrived last week, and they are making themselves at home in our orchard area and getting used to us! We are currently voting on whether or not to change their names and will let you know what we decide!

In other animal news, if you would like a unique 2026 pet calendar featuring your pet's photos, made by Forever Friends who are one of our sixth form business groups let us know via reception or by email: willowdene@compassps.uk

We hope to see you many of you in the weeks remaining to wish you season's greetings in person.

Rachel

News from Rowan Wood

At Rowan Wood the Year 7 children have begun exploring 3d shapes. The children have also been focusing on their individual targets including naming 3D shapes, sorting and grouping them and looking at their properties.

In English the children have enjoyed reading and retelling the story of 'The Rapping Princess', they are now learning about the seasons. This week they have focused on the season of autumn, they identified key features of autumn, created beautiful drawings and have begun working on a seasons booklet.

In Science the children have continued their learning on floating and sinking. Last week they made their own boats out of everyday recyclable materials that the children chose. This week they loved testing them to see if they floated!

In Learning Technologies the children have continued to build on their typing skills, learning how to make finger spaces, capital letters using the shift key and the enter key for a new line.

MERLIN CLASS

This half term, Merlin Class have been on a sensory adventure! Both inside and outside the classroom, we've been busy strengthening our sensory integration skills through a mixture of alerting, organising, and calming activities that help prepare our bodies and brains for learning each day.

We kick off our sessions with lively body-action songs—lots of big movements, big smiles, and a whole lot of wiggling to wake up our muscles! Then we move on to working with sensory tactile rings and therabands, stretching, twisting, and pulling them in rhythm with upbeat music. These activities help us organise our bodies and focus our minds.

To finish, we shift into calming mode. The children choose between two different hand-cream scents and enjoy a relaxing hand massage from an adult, or they receive some deep pressure input while watching their teacher blow magical, floating bubbles. It's a peaceful, soothing way to end our sensory time.

Our favourite session of the term has definitely been our class story, 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt'. We've loved exploring the tale through a sensory story—feeling the "swishy grass," splashing through the "thick mud," and tiptoeing into the "dark cave." Afterwards, we dive into sensory mark-making activities inspired by each part of the journey



Monarch Class

Monarch class have had a fun and busy Autumn 2!

Science is thoroughly enjoyed by all of the class and we have been exploring materials throughout the Autumn term. This half term we have been investigating floating and sinking! The children were given a range of items and made some fantastic predictions on whether they would float or sink! We then got to test them and investigate if their predictions were correct. We then used this information to help us decide what to use to make a boat - the children have worked very hard on designing and making them. We can't wait to test them out in our lesson next week!

We have some wonderful artists in the classroom and have been enjoying our new creative art curriculum. This term our unit is 'Heartbeat to HipHop', we have experiment using paint, crayons, and pastels to respond to the rhythm and beat using different colours, lines and marks. We have explored printing and used a range of different tools to respond to the music and have made our own tools while listening to a variety of different songs.





CHILDREN IN NEED - 14TH NOVEMBER 2025



This year Willow Dene and Rowan Wood worked together to raise money for Children in Need. We wore bright or spotty clothes to school and ran a bake sale that children and staff could attend throughout the morning. We had some wonderful donations of cakes from our families and staff, and some amazing home-made treats, that were snapped up!

We raised a whopping £466 for Children in Need.

Thank you to everyone who participated and joined in the fun.
We could not do it without you!



IMPORTANT DATES

Please see the dates below for when the seasonal performances are:

- 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
- Tuesday 16th December - Christmas dinner
- Wednesday 17th December – Christmas parties – Swingate Lane
- Thursday 18th December – Christmas parties – Oakmere Road

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

First day of Spring Term – Monday 5th January 2026

February half term – Monday 16th February – Friday 20th February 2026

GREENWICH SEND VOICE
Parent Carer Forum

PRESENTS

SEND FAMILY FUN & INFO DAY

SATURDAY 13TH DEC - 10AM TO 12:30PM

FREE TO ATTEND

LOCATION :
**WOOLWICH WORKS,
THE FIREWORKS FACTORY
SE18 6HD**

- FIND OUT ABOUT & JOIN THE NEW SEND PARENT CARER FORUM
- COME TALK TO THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH SEND SERVICES & HEALTH INFORMATION STALLS

FREE EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- HEAD2HEAD SENSORY THEATRE PANTOMIME @ 11:30 - JACK & THE BEANSTEM
- ARTS & CRAFTS
- SOFT PLAY
- FACE PAINTING
- HEAD & NECK MASSAGE
- REFRESHMENTS

FREE CHRISTMAS HAMPER RAFFLE

NHS Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust in partnership with **ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH**

CONTACT : JACQUELINE.WYE@CONTACT.ORG OR 07939069220 FOR FURTHER ENQUIRIES

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 3.12.25
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

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 |](#)

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.