

NEWSLETTER

Compass
Special
Schools



As we approach the end of 2025, we are reflecting on what a busy year and an exciting term it has been. Hopefully you will have had chance to watch parent briefing which will give you more detail about some of the things in this newsletter.

One of our greatest achievements this year has been opening Rowan Wood School. Although it has not been without changes of plan and timelines, we have had an amazing start. We are delighted to have been co-located at Willow Dene for the first part of the year, as it has given us a chance to truly be one community and to get to know our new group of children, parents and staff. We are very excited about the positive start to the new school. The children have been amazing and we are building on a strong start for the future.



During the last two weeks we have had the privilege of taking part in Christmas performances across the school. From 2 years old to 19 years old, everyone has had the chance to celebrate and show their creative arts skills. We have had amazing parental support for each event and lots of positive comments about how much they have been enjoyed. This has made us reflect on how far we have come on our creative arts journey with children and young people being involved in set and costume design and feeling confident to share their skills in

music and dance. We are already planning new creative arts opportunities for all next year.

This week we have had a focus on fun! With our Christmas dinners, parties and Santa visits. We were delighted that our parent group held their annual festive singalong and were also in celebratory mood! As usual, Santa brought each child a book which was funded by Friends of Willow Dene. The importance of children being read to is something that we strongly believe in and so it always seems appropriate to gift a book to each child at this time of year.



In our last newsletter we promised that we would share the amount raised at the 'Winter Wonderland' event. We were delighted that all the hard work resulted in more than £1700 raised for Friends of Willow Dene. All of our festive events have given us yet another reminder about how lucky we are to be surrounded by our community and how important it is to spend time together enjoying each other's company. This takes on even more meaning when we think about our friends who were with us last Christmas and who we will be spending our first Christmas without. Our memories of Tilly, Noel, Ryan, Jamie, Amy, Felix, Victoria and Izzy are filled with love. We are in contact with all their families and they know that their memories are safe and cherished with us.

This term we are saying goodbye to one of our longest serving members of the Willow Dene team, Karen Fleming, who is retiring at the end of term. Karen has been a teacher at Willow Dene since 1993 and has transformed the lives of many, many children and families. First in our early years, and then through the setting up and running of Toucan, our unique 2 year old provision for children with complex needs, Karen has brought so much skill and knowledge to her job. Celebrating with her this week and catching up with some of the families whose children have had Karen as a teacher has been very emotional and another cause for reflection. Karen has poured love and passion into her job at Willow Dene for a very long time, and we will always be thankful for this. We are very much hoping that after her retirement Karen will continue to support Katie as the new Toucan lead and will not be a stranger to us.

There is currently a consultation in process about the future of wheelchair services. We were alerted to this by one of our local councillors who wanted to make us aware that the closing date for the consultation is 5th January 2026. This is one of the services we are very much hoping for change in the future, so if your child is a service user please try and find time to have your say. <https://letstalkhealthandcareselondon.org/wheelchair-service-survey>

We wanted to thank you for your donations to our food bank and our preloved stall. We know at this time of year that there are families in our school community who are struggling and where we can help them, we will endeavor to do so. This holiday we are sending out more food packages to our families than ever before, and this would not be possible without the support we received from you and our staff team.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your support and positivity. Compass Special Schools wouldn't be possible without you. We hope you have an amazing holiday and that everybody is safe and happy. Of course, if you need to speak to somebody in an emergency our phone line 07716 388634 will connect you to a leader.

Have a happy new year and we will see you in 2026 for another exciting term.

Rachel



Message from Lynne Wainwright Chair of Governors Compass Special Schools

As we come to the end of the autumn term, I have had the privilege of coming into school for some of the many events. From EYFS through to 6th form the children and young people as well as the staff have worked hard, and I am sure a few tears of emotion were shed by families as you watched your amazing children and young people! It was also lovely to meet and chat with some of the parents. Last week was the Winter Wonderland which is always a lovely event. There were lots of stalls including some selling items made by the children and young people as part of their enterprise activities.

This term governors were really pleased to come in to do a monitoring visit with creative arts. We watched the choir practicing and part of music assembly and we were really impressed with what we saw. It was lovely to see some of the Rowan Wood children currently based at Swing Gate Lane – I know the team are looking forward to having their own school building soon. One of our meetings this term was the very first governors' meeting focused on Rowan Wood (At this point both Willow Dene and Rowan Wood will have the same governing body) and what a very positive first term Rowan Wood has had! It was also good to hear from staff who will be working across both schools to see how their roles will work.

We have recently been joined by some new governors Nicole Allwood and Dennis Mitakos. In January we will be joined by a new parent governor, and I must say thank you to Yan Zhong who just completed her 4 year term as a parent governor.

I am sure you will join governors in thanking all of the Willow Dene and Rowan Wood staff for their hard work this year. For those of you who celebrate have a wonderful Christmas and I hope you all have a restful holiday and a happy new year. See you in 2026!

Lynne Wainwright

News from Rowan Wood

The children have had a wonderful end to the autumn term full of festive fun!

In Literacy, we have been studying winter poems and learning new vocabulary and rhymes. We will use what we have learned to write our own poems later this week.

The children put on a fantastic performance for families and friends; everyone was incredibly proud of them. It was wonderful to see them showcase some of their many talents. We have been busy with lots of festive crafts in class including making decorations for our Christmas dinner, party hats, Christmas cards and salt dough decorations. Also, we created wonderful marshmallow snowmen and decorated biscuits using icing sugar. The children particularly enjoyed following a recipe provided by one of our parents to make some delicious cupcakes.

Thank you to all parents and carers for your continued support this term, we look forward to a successful start to 2026!

Ross

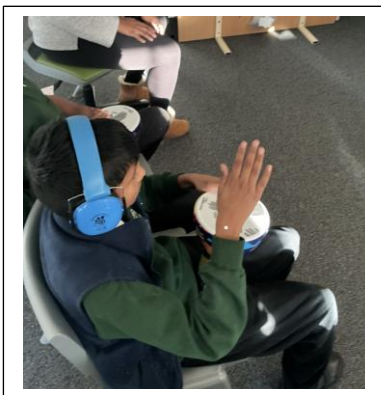
Rowan Wood children and staff have had a fantastic first term together. We have seen the children grow and develop in so many ways which has been fantastic to see and ended this term with a fantastic Christmas performance.

We are looking forward to meeting new friends in January as some children from Swingate Lane join their Rowan Wood classes over at Oakmere Road and for Skipper and Swallowtail to open for their children in January.

Claire

As the autumn term draws to a close, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Peacock and Monarch for their outstanding Christmas performances of *Over and Under the Snow* last week. It was a joy to see our CYP bring together the creative arts skills and experiences they have explored throughout the term, culminating in a confident and expressive performance for their friends and families. The production was a truly special way to end the term together. Looking ahead to the new term, I am excited to be supporting our two new Rowan Wood classes, Swallowtail and Skipper, as part of my role within Creative Arts, with a particular focus on Drama and Dance.

Charlie



Message from Royal Borough of Greenwich

Our commissioned service 'Growing Against Violence' (GAV) is offering parents sessions looking at keeping their children safe, explaining about exploitation and gangs. Further details will be available in the Spring Term.

About GAV:

Growing Against Violence (GAV) is a charity that aims to protect young people against peer-to-peer violence and exploitation both on the streets and online. The charity grew out of a partnership with London's Metropolitan Police Service and since 2008 GAV has delivered workshops to over 300,000 young people in over 1,500 schools. GAV believes violence is preventable rather than inevitable and examines the causes of violence using a listening and investigative approach that teases out issues specific to local communities. The charity follows the World Health Organisation's 'public health approach to tackling violence', using data to identify risk factors for violence and the delivery of evidence-based violence prevention workshops. The Board and Senior Management have personal and professional expertise in violence prevention. This unique partnership brings together senior professionals from health, law, policing, academia, accounting, IT and the private sector to provide effective governance and enable the charity to thrive and expand.

Speakeasy

It was such a pleasure to welcome Greenwich Carers Voices, who are a singing group of parents and carers of adults and young people with autism and learning disabilities to our coffee morning this week.

We enjoyed plenty of festive cheer with Christmas songs and even some classics like "Downtown." The room was filled with laughter, happiness, and of course, lots of delicious food.

Keep an eye out for next term's coffee morning—everyone from both Willow Dene and Rowan Wood is warmly invited. We're a friendly bunch and would love to see you there!



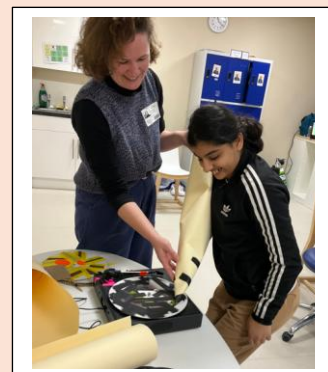
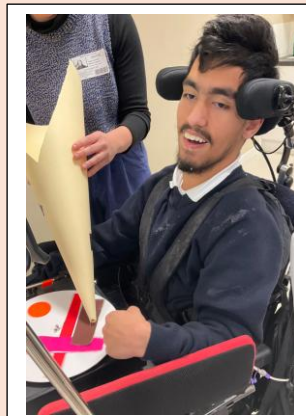
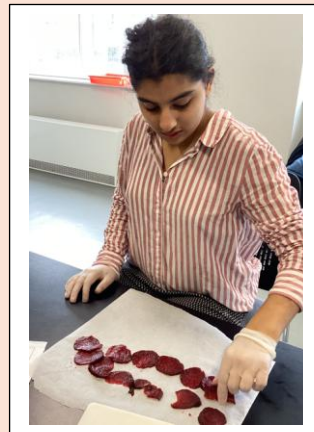
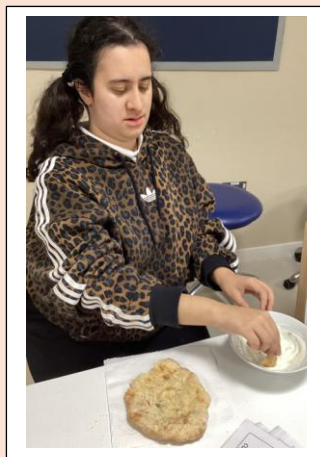
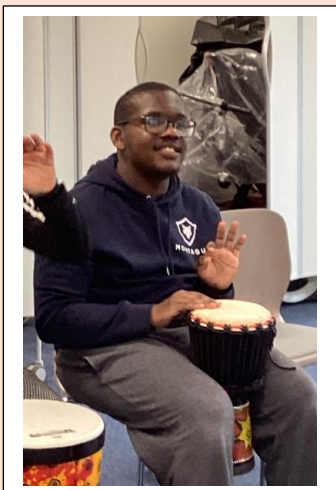
Moorland Class

Moorland class have had a fantastic term so far. All of our young people have settled into their business groups and enjoyed showcasing their finished products at the Winter Wonderland event.

As part of our learning about 'Healthy Living', Moorland class have been thinking about our favourite treats and finding healthy swaps for them. Some recipes we have tried are frozen yoghurt, vegetable crisps, roasted chickpeas, yoghurt bark, greek yoghurt flat bread and a mint dip. All of the recipes have been delicious, and we will definitely be trying them again!

We had a brilliant session recently when visited by the British Library who did a fantastic session helping us to explore sound. The class were engaged and curious throughout the session and created some fantastic sounds. We are excited for the next session.

Moorland are a very creative class and have enjoyed music sessions over this half term. They have been exploring music in one of three groups: sensory music, drumming or singing. Each group practised each week and worked towards the Christmas concert. Each group's performance was incredible, and I don't think there was a dry eye in the room. We couldn't be prouder!



CHAFFINCH CLASS

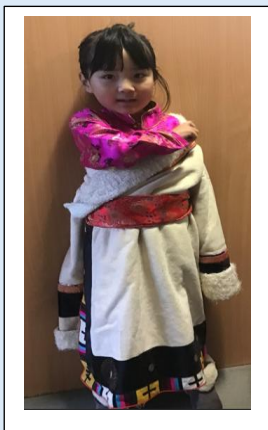
This term in Chaffinch Class, we've started something really special. As part of our school's focus on *Funds of Knowledge* — recognising and celebrating our children's cultures — we've been exploring festivals that are meaningful to the families in our class.

Recently, we learnt about the celebration Lhabab Duchen, a Tibetan festival that's all about kindness, peace and remembering the Buddha. It was a beautiful session where we all went on an imaginary journey to Tibet — a place high in the mountains, full of snow, colour and light.

We felt the cold with sprays of artificial snow, waved colourful prayer flags, and turned prayer wheels while listening to the calming sound of singing bowls. The children were mesmerised by the traditional clothing and were especially curious about the rich textures and patterns.

One of the highlights of the session was trying khapse — a crunchy, sweet Tibetan biscuit. It was extra special because the khapse was lovingly made by one of our parents, for all the children to try.

Celebrating Lhabab Duchen in this way brought joy and calm to our classroom and helped us build even stronger connections with our families. Thank you to all parents for sharing your cultures and traditions with us — we're really looking forward to exploring more together.



TOUCAN



This term Toucan has been pleased to welcome new 2-year-olds and their families. We have worked closely with parents to get to know children, help them to feel secure and settled and learn about what they like and what they are already able to do. They are doing so well and we look forward to seeing these children grow in confidence, build relationships and benefit from lots of exciting play experiences and environments.

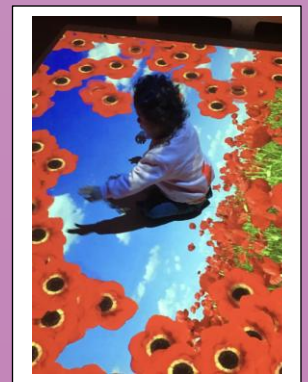
We have been looking at how children develop focus, interest and curiosity. Seeing children gain more independence in their play, movement and mobility and ability to feed themselves have been highlights this term.

We have some new toys which have been very popular, particularly a mirrored box with holes of different sizes. Children have been involved with finding balls to fit the holes and then retrieving them from inside the box. They have responded to being given lots of time and opportunity to repeat, to modelling and support to extend their play.

The children have had a lovely, messy time planting hyacinths to take home as Christmas presents. We have had fun with music and games for our Christmas concert. We look forward to sharing this with families and friends in the last week of term.

Children have become more comfortable with Milo and had some lovely sessions. This has included stroking Milo, playing with toys with him and walking with him. Thank you, Milo!

Happy Christmas from us all in Toucan.



IMPORTANT DATES

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

ADMIN NEWS

Important numbers

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](http://www.willowdene.compassps.uk) www.willowdene.compassps.uk

Rowan Wood School website [Rowan Wood School - Home](http://www.rowanwood.compassps.uk) www.rowanwood.compassps.uk

School Instagram [@WillowDeneSch](https://www.instagram.com/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.