

# NEWSLETTER

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Schools



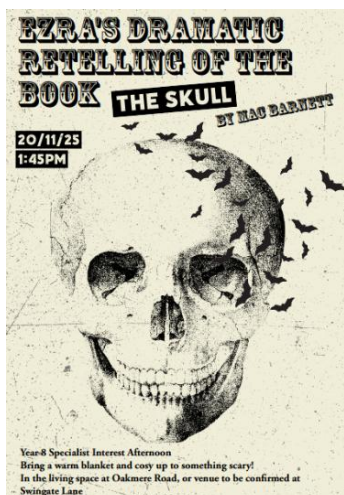
It has been a busy two weeks since the last newsletter. We very much enjoyed meeting Headteacher Willy Tan who was visiting us from Singapore. In Singapore, special schools meet the needs of a very different group of children so seeing what we do at Willow Dene and how amazing our children are was both interesting and thought provoking for him. Willy left us with some Singapore tea and a yearbook from his school! Our visitors from the Netherlands were interested in how we use technology for learning and had lots of questions about our specialist equipment. They left us with an invitation for a return visit.

At the end of last week, we met with representatives from Children's Services who informed us that there will be a further delay to the completion of the Rowan Wood building at Hargood Road. The completion date has now moved from the Easter holidays to summer half term. This is because the building team have been unable to make up the time they lost initially when damaged modules were delivered because of a burst water main over Christmas and New Year. The implication of this will be that Rowan Wood big move will be delayed by half a term. To facilitate this, we have moved Willow Dene and Rowan Wood Inset day from Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026 to Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2026 meaning that children will end spring term on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026 and summer 1 half term on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026. The updated term dates are included in this newsletter. Although we can't wait to move into the new school, it gives us a little more time to be together as one community and to ensure that all children are fully ready when the time comes.

Thank you to the parents attending the Deputyship information morning on Wednesday. As we support our young people who are approaching adulthood, we have recognised how little information is readily available and what a complex landscape it is for parents to navigate. We hope that the more information and the more connections we can make, the easier the process will be.

This term we have implemented a new approach to our termly progress meetings, enabling us to look very closely at the provision that children and young people receive at Willow Dene and the individual progress they make. This will allow us to celebrate where children and young people are making amazing progress and to highlight when changes need to be made. At the moment, link leaders are meeting with teachers all across the school and then we will be able to share what we find out.

Our January new starters have been with us almost half a term in classes across Swingate Lane and have settled very quickly. Last week the admission panels for our September intake of children with complex needs and for children with autism who are reception transfer age took place. The larger cohort of children with autism for primary intake will be considered at a separate panel in March. We are expecting panel outcomes and confirmation of secondary placement within the next three weeks.



We are all very much enjoying the KS3 specialist interest afternoons taking place this half term. Every child in Years 7, 8 and 9 has their own special afternoon where they share something that they are passionate about or that they have strengths in. Each child has their own invitation which they deliver to the other children in their year group before planning and leading their own event. From a school disco party celebrating love of dance and DJ-ing to making dog biscuits with a dog lover, we have enjoyed the variety of them all. Specialist interest afternoons support children's sense of identity, self-esteem and confidence and build community amongst our KS3 year groups. They also support our work with the Jack Petchey Foundation forming the basis of our annual grant applications which enable our children in KS3 to further pursue their specialist interests.



I hope you have a lovely weekend. Rachel

## News from Rowan Wood

Monarch Class have been enjoying their new book, *Journey* by Aaron Becker, we have explored the feelings of the main character and the reasons why. The children realised she really wanted to go and fly a kite with her parents, so this inspired us to make our own! The children worked fantastically following instructions step by step. In Science the children have begun investigating some of Newton's laws, focusing on forces and gravity so far. In Art our focus has been 3d sculptures, the children chose an animal they would like to make and selected their materials. They showed fantastic resilience creating them and this week the children have enjoyed painting their animals.

This term in Peacock class, we have been quite busy! In Phonics, we have been learning new digraphs, identifying them in words, and practising reading words with them. In Literacy, we have been celebrating the idea of being different and unique. We all agreed that it would be so boring to be the same, and it's wonderful to have our own 'ingredients,' passions and strengths. Our learning has been inspired by the book *This Is Me* written by George Webster. In Science, we continue exploring Isaac Newton's Laws and the invisible forces—push and pull. The experiment helped us understand which objects were easier to move when a pushing force was applied. It was great fun!

Skipper had a lovely start to the term. The children settled well into their new classes and enjoyed meeting their new classmates and teachers. They quickly adapted to new routines and showed enthusiasm and curiosity in their learning. The children particularly enjoyed their Science lessons, as well as Literacy and Arts. They used their creativity to make icebergs using a variety of resources, and in Science they familiarised themselves with concepts such as up, down, push, pull, and twist. All in all, it has been a lovely start to the term.

Swallowtail have been settling into their new class over the past three weeks. During this time, we have enjoyed getting to know one another and have especially loved our interactive drama sessions together. We are very much looking forward to the months and years ahead as we continue learning and growing as a group. In particular, we cannot wait to move into our new school building.

### Ross

Rowan Wood are settling into their first term on a split site. Monarch and Peacock continue to develop relationships with their new additions. The groups have been working on their independence skills and are responding well to their workstation structures enabling them to complete tasks with a bit more independence which is great to see. All the children have come on in leaps and bounds with using their personalised timetables in organising their days.

Swallowtail and Skipper continue to settle into their new classrooms. Their environments are looking really good and the children are thoroughly enjoying exploring their new resources. Children are settling into their routines and benefitting from the sensory equipment that we have ordered for them to help regulate.

### Claire



During this Spring half term, as part of my creative arts role for Rowan Wood, I have been continuing to support Rowan Wood's new classes, Skipper and Swallowtail, with their drama sessions. As mentioned in my last newsletter, as part of the curriculum offer, we have been exploring *Reading Through Drama* and have enjoyed taking part in immersive drama activities based on the picture book *Last Stop on Market Street*.

In particular, our young people have been enjoying activities such as *The Rain Game*, where CYP have been making choices about which sensory materials they would like to explore when experiencing rain under their umbrella, just like CJ and Nana do in the story. Another activity that both Skipper and Swallowtail have enjoyed is the *Storm Parachute* game, where we have been developing social skills by creating a rainstorm soundscape using our class parachute. We have also been developing our turn-taking skills by making choices and waiting for our turn to go into the middle!

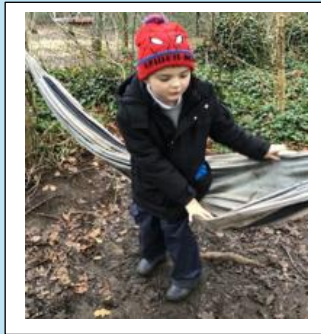
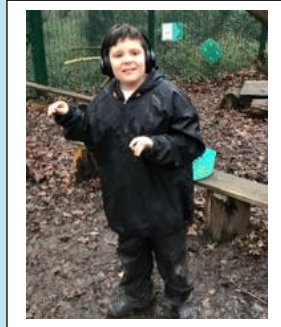
For the next two weeks, we are going to be exploring *Reading Through Drama* based on another book, *Immi*, as part of our *On Top of the World* creative arts unit. Here, we will be exploring a very different landscape, the Antarctic, and taking part in sensory drama games based on snow, the frozen world, and the aurora lights.

### Charlie

## FALCON CLASS

Falcon class have had mixed emotions this term, we have all been missing our friends that are embarking on a new journey in their new classes in Swallow Tail and Skipper. We wish them both well and look forward to hearing of their successes in the future. However, our spirits have been lifted and we have been lucky to have a new young person called Frankie join Falcon class who has come from Alderwood school. Frankie brings a big personality with him and has made a great effort to become part of the class. He is fitting in just fine and particularly enjoys his swimming sessions! Well done, Frankie and welcome.

Falcon class have been enjoying Forest School this term and have been exploring the whole area. They all love to be outdoors no matter what the weather brings. They are truly amazing. We are also enjoying our TPPC lessons where we are exploring different cultures within our class. We will be sampling foods from all over the world and experiencing the various tastes, textures and smells. We will also be listening to songs and dancing to music from all different cultures. We have already enjoyed dancing to some Bollywood music in our music session where we were dancing with ankle bells and swishing our scarves.



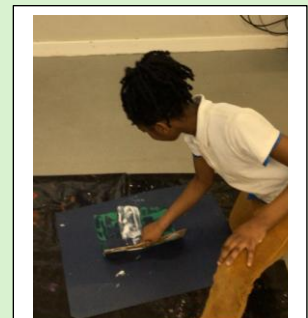
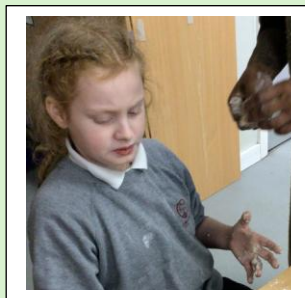
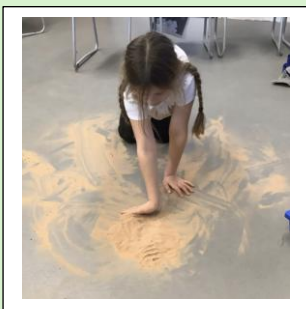
## OSPREY CLASS

Since returning from our Christmas break, we have delved straight into our 'Funds of Knowledge' project. The aim of the project is to allow the children to play an active role in the lives of their families and communities. We are seeking to develop a greater understanding of every child in the class and in order to do this we are using fun sensory experiences and exploring cultural foods.

During week 1 of the Spring term, we celebrated our pupils who come from Nigerian heritage. We listened to Nigerian music, did a paint drag to make the Nigerian flag and used dough to make and sample the famous Nigerian snack Chin Chin, which the children absolutely loved!

Week 2 saw us visit the beaches of the Caribbean, using sensory trays to dip our feet into water and play with sand. We then used dough again, but this time to make some Caribbean-style bread which the children enjoyed with pineapple.

As we move further through the term, we will also be exploring foods such as plantain using our chopping and mashing skills and sampling a number of teas to celebrate our British culture.





## Increasing Self-Esteem Workshop

Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026

10:30am – 12:30pm

This free wellbeing workshop is run by Greenwich Time to Talk, a free NHS talking therapies service and is delivered by trained NHS professionals.

The workshop looks at the different ways that we can increase self-esteem and to improve our mental wellbeing.

Come along to our free workshop to learn more about how to build your self-esteem.

This will be held at our Swingate Lane site.

If you are interested in taking part in this workshop, please contact us by Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> February 2026 to secure your place. Spaces are limited, so they'll be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Email [WD-FSW@willowdene.compassps.uk](mailto:WD-FSW@willowdene.compassps.uk) or ring Family Support Team: 0208 854 9841

## IMPORTANT DATES

Last day of 1<sup>st</sup> half of spring term – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Half term – Monday 16<sup>th</sup> – Friday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2026

First day of 2<sup>nd</sup> half of spring term – Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026

World book day – Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Comic relief charity day – Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Last day of spring term – Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026 – school finishes at 1.30pm

Please see the new term dates at the end of this newsletter

### ADMIN NEWS

#### Important numbers

School telephone number	020 8854 9841 option 1 for Swingate Lane and option 2 for Oakmere Road
Willow Dene contact email	<a href="mailto:willowdene@compassps.uk">willowdene@compassps.uk</a>
Rowan Wood contact email	<a href="mailto:rowanwood@compassps.uk">rowanwood@compassps.uk</a>
Willow Dene School website	<a href="http://www.willowdene.compassps.uk">Willow Dene School - Home</a> www.willowdene.compassps.uk
Rowan Wood School website	<a href="http://www.rowanwood.compassps.uk">Rowan Wood School - Home</a> 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.



# Community Cultural Celebration Day



SAVE THE DATE:

SAT 14<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2026 - 2-5PM

WILLOW DENE, SWINGATE LANE

We are hosting a cultural celebration afternoon, highlighting and celebrating the richly diverse cultural heritage of our school community. With music, art, storytelling, traditional games, food, traditional clothing and more!

## Can you help?

We are looking for support with:

- Can you volunteer your time to help run an activity or session?
- Do you have a skill such as traditional dancing or play an instrument that you would like to share?
- Can you contribute a dish or snack from your culture for others to taste?
- Do you have a favourite game or activity that you can share with us to recreate for families to take part in?
- Something else that you would love to share with the wider school community?

We can't wait to hear from you!

Email:

Joshua - jgarrett-smith@compassps.uk

and

Emma - ebennett@compassps.uk



## London Philharmonic Orchestra OPEN SOUND ENSEMBLE

TUESDAY 17 & WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY



[lpo.org.uk/open-sound](https://lpo.org.uk/open-sound)  
APPLICATIONS  
NOW OPEN!

### OPEN SOUND ENSEMBLE

TUESDAY 17 & WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 2026

Join the London Philharmonic Orchestra's free inclusive music ensemble for young people of secondary school age with special educational needs and disabilities and their parents/carers.

Tuesday 17 & Wednesday 18 February 2026  
Woolwich Works, The Firework Factory,  
Royal Arsenal, London SE18 6HD

Morning group: 10.30am-12.30pm | Afternoon group: 1.30-3.30pm

We will be making music in groups using both traditional and accessible digital instruments, playing alongside friendly musicians from the LPO.

*"Open Sound is the highlight of the school holidays for my daughter. She feels so confident, she knows her opinion is sought, and it's so lovely as a parent to see her grow in confidence. And we both laugh a lot!"*

Open Sound Ensemble parent, Spring 2024

To find out more or to apply, visit

[lpo.org.uk/open-sound](https://lpo.org.uk/open-sound)

If you have any questions please get in touch with us:

Email: [opensound@lpo.org.uk](mailto:opensound@lpo.org.uk) or Phone: 07793 837357

The LPO Open Sound Ensemble 2025/26 is generously supported by The Baily Thomas Charitable Fund and The Vesey Family Foundation.



Willow Dene term dates 25/26

Autumn term 2025	September	Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup>	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Thu 4 <sup>th</sup>	First day of autumn term
	October	Fri 24 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of 1 <sup>st</sup> half of autumn term
		Mon 27 <sup>th</sup>	Half-term holiday begins
	November	Mon 3 <sup>rd</sup>	First day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of autumn term
	December	Fri 19 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of autumn term
Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup>		Christmas holiday begins	
Spring term 2026	January	Mon 5 <sup>th</sup>	First day of 1 <sup>st</sup> half of spring term
	February	Fri 13 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of 1 <sup>st</sup> half of spring term
		Mon 16 <sup>th</sup>	Half-term holiday begins
		Mon 23 <sup>rd</sup>	First day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of spring term
	March	Fri 27 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of spring term
		Mon 30 <sup>th</sup>	Easter holiday begins
Summer term 2026	April	Mon 13 <sup>th</sup>	First day of 1 <sup>st</sup> half of summer term
	May	Mon 4 <sup>th</sup>	Bank Holiday
		Thur 21 <sup>st</sup>	Last day of 1 <sup>st</sup> half of summer term
		Fri 22 <sup>nd</sup>	INSET Day – School closed to children
		Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	Half-term holiday begins
	June	Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>	First day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of summer term
	July	Fri 17 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of summer term
		Mon 20 <sup>th</sup>	INSET Day – School closed to children



Rowan Wood term dates 25/26

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		Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>	First day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of summer term
July	Fri 17 <sup>th</sup>	Last day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> half of summer term	
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