

# NEWSLETTER

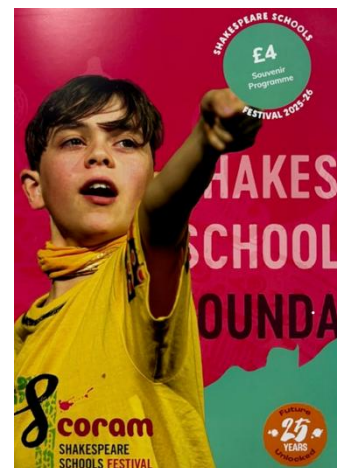
Compass  
Special  
Schools



As we write this newsletter, our second part of spring term is well underway. Growing season is here and if you are visiting Swingate Lane you will see that our allotment area has been renewed and that there are exciting planting and gardening projects happening. In the playground our mud kitchen is being upgraded, the chickens are enjoying their new hen house and the goats are out and about in the orchard area from early in the morning. Our gardening club are planting summer bulbs at the back part of school, near Teviot playing field and we will soon be planting the pond area with aquatic plants. We also have plans for a desert garden in the Courtyard. If you planted spring bulbs with your child last year at the entrance to Swingate Lane, as part of our 10-year anniversary celebrations, we hope to be able to see them flowering really soon. We are also eagerly awaiting our tortoises waking from their winter sleep!

You will know that we have made the decision to move our Community Cultural Celebration Day from Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> March to Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> May. We made this decision because of very helpful feedback from you about the original date coinciding with Ramadan, therefore making it impossible for some members of the school community to join in as fully as they might like. By moving the date, we will be making sure that everyone can be part of the day and hopefully the weather will be lovely too. You will get double community events in the summer term because we will be finishing the year with our live music events which everyone loves.

This week has been a particularly busy week! On Tuesday evening a group of staff and parents were privileged to visit The Albany Theatre in Deptford to watch Willow Dene's Shakespear Cast 2026 perform Twelfth Night, alongside performances from Greenvale School and Manorfield School. Our children taking part were remarkable. They showcased reading, singing, dancing and acting at its very best. The audience cheered and clapped for a long time after they finished. We were extremely proud! There will be photographs from the event on display soon.



On Wednesday we were visited by leaders from the Nexus Trust who wanted to find out more about our curriculum and provision. It was lovely to connect with a new special school, as Marjorie McClure school is part of the Nexus Trust. Our visitors enjoyed a tour at Swingate Lane as well as the opportunity to talk to Willow Dene leaders. They commented on how vibrant and busy the school was and they found both adults and children were happy and willing to share what they were doing. They said they didn't want to leave!

On Thursday we celebrated World Book Day with a range of exciting events beginning with a book swap. Every class chose some books to swap with another class, supporting the concept of book recycling. Each class also had the opportunity to choose a new book from a recommended list and these were delivered to classes along with some props. These books formed the basis of a range of Book Day activities along with some optional dressing up! Look out for photographs on Instagram soon.

Tonight, we have been invited to the Royal Borough of Greenwich Twelfth Year of Civic Awards ceremony, which recognises the work of individuals, organisations and businesses who have made an outstanding contribution to the social, economic and physical wellbeing of the borough. We are looking forward to sharing exciting news from this event soon.

Don't forget that school photographs are taking place on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> March, including a slot for families at the beginning of the day and our next sibling event is on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March. We look forward to seeing lots of you at these events.

Have a lovely weekend.

**Rachel**

## NEWS FROM ROWAN WOOD

### Monarch Class

We returned from half term eager to continue with our Specialist Interest Afternoons. Rowan Wood classes began these in January, and they are thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Each child is given their own dedicated afternoon across the school year to share something they are passionate about. Activities are carefully planned and thought out with the child to create an activity linked to their interest. These sessions have quickly become a real highlight of the week for everyone involved.

So far, specialist interests have included biscuit/cake decorating, play-doh making, shaving foam art and designing our very own websites! Every session is filled with excitement and pride, it is wonderful for us to come together to celebrate and enjoy one another's passions. Anthony and Suleyman in Monarch Class are incredibly enthusiastic and eagerly awaiting their afternoon! Regularly asking, "Whose special afternoon is it on Thursday?", and "When's my special afternoon?!" Many pupils are already planning what they would like their own activity to be, showing just how motivating and meaningful these afternoons have become. We can't wait to see how we build on these further in Year 8 and 9!



### Peacock Class

The children in Peacock Class were excited to be back at school, showing their readiness to play and learn. In the first week back, we had a successful swimming session, which takes place on Wednesdays.

In Literacy, we set up an engaging topic table with different natural materials and objects linked to nature as part of our new topic. We have started this term by exploring the beautiful poem 'And a Tree' by Kate Wakeling. The children have familiarised themselves with new vocabulary, noticed rhyming words and used their bodies to recreate parts of the poem.

### Skipper Class

Skipper class had a fantastic start to the new term. The children really enjoyed their Science lesson, where we explored electricity and the effects of turning things on and off. In Maths, we were excited to explore concepts such as long and short, and empty and full through practical activities. In Literacy, the children loved their new poem, *I Ain't Gonna Paint No More*, where they used brushes to "paint" different parts of their bodies as part of a fun, hands-on activity. Finally, in Citizenship, we began our new project supporting a food bank. We are looking forward to continuing our learning journey together.

### Swallowtail Class

Swallowtail have thoroughly enjoyed being back at school after a restful week. The children returned refreshed and ready to learn, and they loved beginning new learning across all of their lessons. A particular highlight has been exploring and manipulating clay in art, where the children carefully designed and created sculptures of their initials. It has been wonderful to see their creativity, focus, and enthusiasm shine as they developed their ideas and experimented with different shapes and textures. What a fantastic start to the new term.

# FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION!

CLASS FOCUS: CHAFFINCH



## WHAT IS FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE?

Funds of knowledge are the special skills, traditions, and experiences your family shares at home. These include things you know, stories you tell, and activities you do together, which all help you learn and grow in school and life.

We are using what we learn about our children, young people and staff's Funds of Knowledge to enhance teaching and learning at Willow Dene.



## What has this looked like in Chaffinch class?

In our class, we've really embraced the Funds of Knowledge focus in the Autumn term through our TPPC sessions. For instance, we had a session celebrating Tibetan culture with **Aquata**—since she's from Tibet—focusing on Tibetan Buddhism and traditions. We also linked a session on St. Nicholas Day (6th Dec) to **Adrian**, who's from Bulgaria, where children get presents from Santa not on Christmas day but on the saint's day. That's a bit different from the Christmas Day gift-giving many are used to, so it was lovely to share that. All children got a small gift, so they were all happy and Adrian was delighted with his fidget toy to celebrate this Bulgarian tradition.

The staff of Chaffinch class also organised a session together on how Christmas is celebrated in our homes, giving the children a meaningful insight into **Polish**, **Nigerian** and **Turkish** traditions. Staff shared stories, customs and festive foods (lots of yummy festive dishes) from their own family celebrations, helping children to see the similarities and differences in how families celebrate across cultures.

We also explored Epiphany, a public holiday in Poland and special to our teacher, the children enjoyed learning about the celebration (we had some gold, essential oil and incense to explore). More recently, we had a focus on the Hindu festival of Lohri, linked to **Ryan's** background, even though it's traditionally a harvest celebration and a bit different here in the UK.



## COMPASS COUNCIL

Compass Council had their first meeting of the new year last half term with both Rowan Wood and Willow Dene representatives attending. The representatives were asked to reflect and feedback on two things that the schools are doing well to support children's wellbeing and 1 thing for us to focus on further. Our Rowan Wood representative shared that adults help with learning and make every child understand and realise how special they are. Our Willow Dene representative, Miracle, shared that music and parents being able to come in when they were scared/worried were two good things in place to support pupil wellbeing. She also said that she would love more singing opportunities.

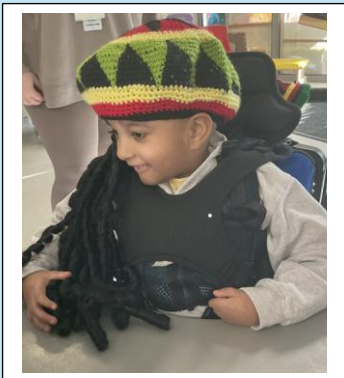
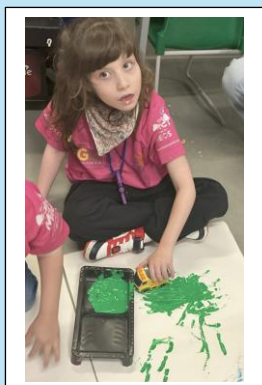
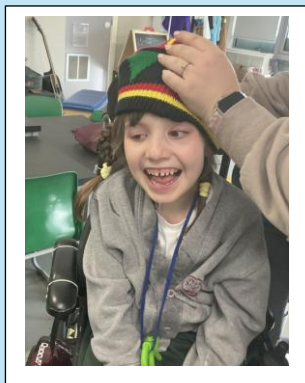
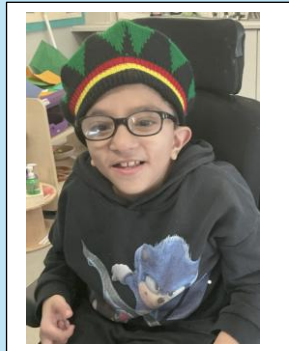
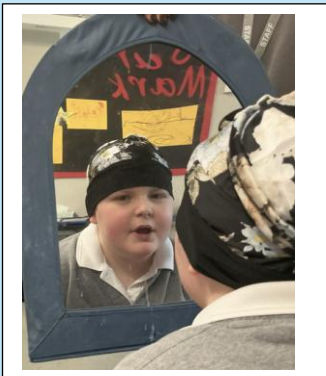
The meeting then moved on to what the school council will be focusing on for the rest of the academic year. Willow Dene's focus for the remainder of the academic year will be focusing on bus to class transitions, activities on offer at playtimes, access to learning via technologies and enrichment opportunities for the goats! Our representative from Rowan Wood voiced that as the schools grows and has their own school council, he would like the focus to be on what animals we may be able to have at Rowan Wood's site!

## GREENFINCH CLASS

Greenfinch Class have been very busy during the Spring term! In drama and communication, we have been exploring journeys and we worked collaboratively on a big scale project of a journey through a busy city. We listened to a soundscape of a busy city and made our own journey across the page.

In TPFC we explored cultures and diversities through the book 'Hats Of Faith'. We learnt about how different religions show respect for God by covering their heads and looked at ourselves in the mirror to see how we felt when we tried the head covering on.

We are looking forward to this half term where we are hoping the weather warms up to take some of our learning outside!



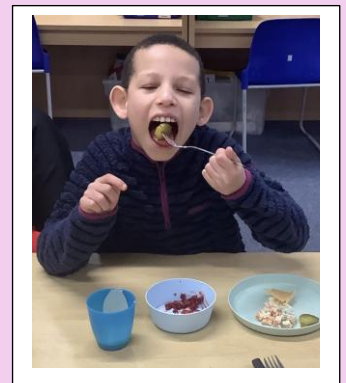
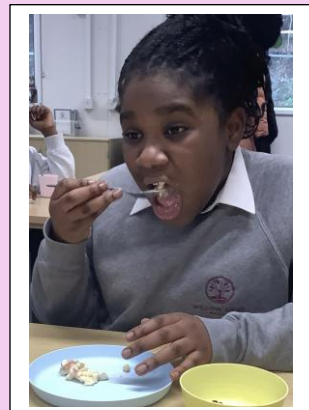
## PARTRIDGE CLASS



Partridge class have had a fantastic time exploring and learning about the different cultures we have in our class.

We have found Russia on the globe and identified Moscow as the capital city. We made a delightful model of St. Basil's Cathedral, made Kokoshnik hats and we have been listening to Russian folk songs. We have also been learning to say 'hello' and 'goodbye' in Russian as taught by one of our children. However, best of all we liked trying the Russian food.

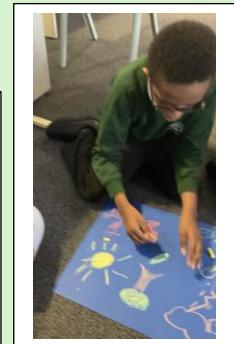
We also learned about Japan, and we had a tea ceremony to celebrate the cherry blossom festival. We have also been saying a few words in Japanese!



## PEACOCK CLASS

Peacock Class has had a fantastic Spring term, packed with exciting opportunities to learn, explore and play!

In Literacy, we explored the wordless book *The Chalk* by Bill Thomson. Without any words to guide us, we let our imaginations run wild, using the story as inspiration to create our very own sidewalk art. This immersive experience truly brought the story to life and helped us remember the key events, which included in our writing. It was wonderful to see creativity flourishing in every corner of the classroom!



In DT, we became ambitious young designers and sculptors! Our 3D sculpture project required careful planning, creativity and plenty of resilience. We visualised our ideas, sketched detailed designs and thoughtfully selected recycled materials to construct our models. With lots of PVA glue, layers of tissue paper for texture and vibrant paint to finish, our creations were transformed into impressive works of art. To celebrate our hard work, we proudly displayed our sculptures in our very own class gallery - a moment of great achievement for everyone!

In Numeracy, we tackled subtraction with enthusiasm and determination. Using a wide range of hands-on resources and concrete materials, we explored why numbers become smaller when we take away. The children practised new mathematical vocabulary such as minus, take away and equals, and successfully recorded their number sentences in their books. It has been fantastic to see their growing confidence and understanding. What a brilliant term of creativity, resilience and learning!



## IMPORTANT DATES

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

First day of 1st half of summer term – Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026

May Bank Holiday – Monday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Polling day – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026

Naomi Harryman, children's physiotherapist will be taking over Bryn Lasley's caseload whilst Bryn is on maternity leave.

## 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 right-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 of 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.

**Van  
Cols  
Schools  
Photographers**

**We're  
coming  
to take  
your  
picture  
on...**

Monday 9th March 2026



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

### Did you miss your teenage vaccines at school?

Visit a catch-up clinic to make sure you are fully protected

**Monday 9 February**  
15:00 - 16:15  
Waterways Children's  
Centre, SE28 8EZ

**Saturday 21 February**  
11:00 - 14:30  
Clockhouse Community  
Centre, SE18 5QL

**Saturday 7 March**  
12:15 - 15:15  
Holy Trinity Church Hall,  
Eltham, SE9 2SD

**Thursday 12 March**  
15:30 - 16:30  
Waterways Children's  
Centre, SE28 8EZ



Scan the QR code or call  
020 3903 3345 to book an  
appointment or for more  
information