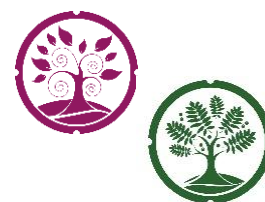


NEWSLETTER

Compass
Special
Schools



Welcome back to the summer term! We hope you had a safe and happy holiday and enjoyed some sunshine. It has been lovely to get back to school, knowing that children have been well and also lovely to see so many smiling faces on the first days back.

We returned from the holiday as the Compass Eko Trust following our successful merger of The Compass Partnership of Schools and Eko Trust. We have now been joined by 10 formerly Eko schools and our Co CEOs are John Camp and Rebekah Iyambo. John and Rebekah have made it clear that their primary aim in the next few terms is to ensure that schools can continue to run as usual without disruption, so in real terms you will see few immediate changes. You might notice the new Trust logo and some changes to email contacts, otherwise schools will continue to run in the same way. Behind the scenes leaders are working on a new Trust vision and strategy which will guide us through our first years as a new organisation. Our children and young people and our staff team have joined focus groups this week which will help shape thinking and ensure that everyone is represented.

Compass Eko
Trust

This half term our own strategic priorities will be no surprise to you:

- Our application to be the provider for Greenwich's new Transition Learning Centre is due to be completed by 8th May. As a result, we have done a lot of talking and thinking about our aspirations for our young adults for when they leave school. This has been exciting and thought provoking. We look forward to keeping you updated.
- At the end of this half term, we will have our annual Challenge Partners visit as external evaluation of the work of both Willow Dene and Rowan Wood. As you know every visit has a different focus and on this occasion our lead reviewer will look closely at our own self-evaluation, sixth form which is a new key stage since our last Ofsted and Creative Arts which was an area of excellence at our last review. Our reviewer, Calvin Pike, has visited us before several years ago so we are particularly interested to see what he thinks of the changes that have taken place.
- Our third priority is to prepare for Rowan Wood move to the Hargood Road site and our new building. New footage of the progress made has been posted on RBG social media accounts over the holiday and we can really see the changes taking place. As you know, there have been multiple points of delay during this project, but as far as we know at this point in time the move is going ahead as planned.



Some of you have been asking about the Government White Paper and whether this will make a change to the education of your child. Whilst the paper is still in draft form, as things look at the moment broadly it will mean very little change for special schools. We have put together a fact sheet to give you some more information and to give answers to some frequently asked questions. You will see this towards the end of this newsletter.

A very quick round up of things happening in school at the moment include; preparation for Sixth Form Summer Showcase at The Tramshed, London Mini Marathon encouraging everybody to get moving, preparation for our first school journey of the year to Kingswood, One Drum music group performing across the schools and rehearsals for the Singing Spectacular at Blackheath Halls.

Don't forget that the week of May 4th is a three-day week in school. On Monday 4th May school is closed due to Bank Holiday and on Thursday 7th May school is closed due to polling day.

If you'd like to read this newsletter online it is available on our website at [Willow Dene School - Newsletters](#)

I hope you all have a great weekend.

Rachel

FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION!

CLASS FOCUS: WOODLARK



What are Woodlark Focusing on?

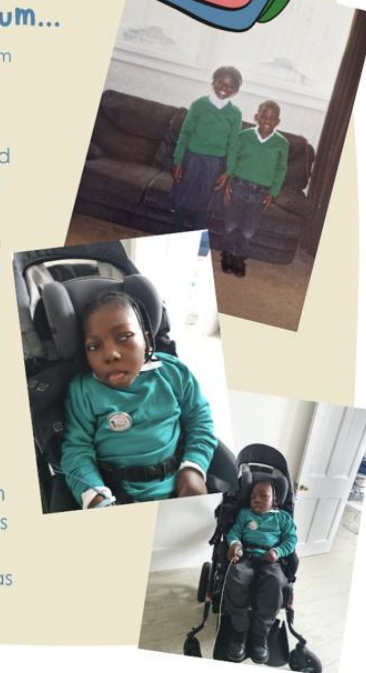
Woodlark class are developing a greater understanding of family histories and therefore strengthening children's sense of identity and a shared connection, with a family storytelling project.



A Childhood memory from Ezra's Mum...

Ezra's mum, Latoya, recalls a childhood memory about school uniform that has influenced how she dresses Ezra today!

"I wanted to share a memory from when I was younger. I went to primary school in Greenwich with my brother. And the primary school that we went to did not have a school uniform, you could wear your own clothes. But, my mum used to make myself and my brother wear school uniform every day. We wanted to wear our own clothes but she'd always buy different colour jumpers. One of my favourite colours was green and we had these nice green jumpers. A teacher called Miss Harcourt, once told us "you look so smart!". By the time I left primary school they made it compulsory to have school uniform and their school uniform is green jumpers. I feel like as a child I didn't like wearing uniform but it's something that I realise that I continued with Ezra, when he went to school I bought him different jumpers. One of my favourite jumpers for him was a green jumper because it reminded me of when I was younger. So I have been continuing on a small tradition, as small as it is, I am following it through with Ezra."



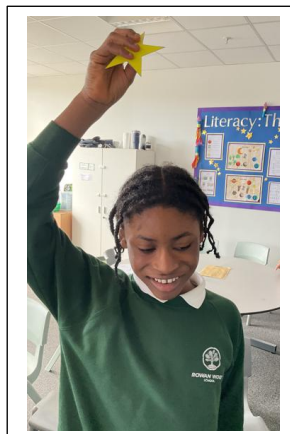
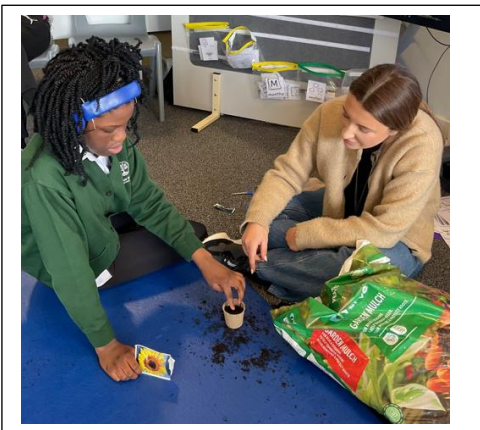
NEWS FROM ROWAN WOOD

Monarch

Monarch class returned from the Easter break feeling rested and ready to continue their learning. The children have begun exploring their new class book, *Where to Hide a Star* by Oliver Jeffers. Stars were hidden in different locations around the room, and the children eagerly searched for them. Once found, they worked on using prepositional language, supported by visual prompts, to confidently tell an adult where their star was hidden.

In Learning Technologies, the children have been learning about how wonderful the internet can be, as well as the importance of keeping themselves safe online. We enjoyed sharing the story *Penguinpig*, which helped the children explore the concept of fake news and understand that we cannot always believe everything we read online. This week, our focus has been on learning about what personal information should not be shared on the internet, including when creating usernames.

The children have been loving all of the Creative Arts lessons. In our Art lessons, we are currently working on creating our own piece of digital art to show how we imagine the world might look in the future - we can't wait to share them with you!



Peacock

As the weather gets warmer, Peacock Class is beginning an exciting new topic in Literacy. Inspired by *Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt* by Kate Messner, we will explore the fascinating world of the tiny creatures that live in the soil and how they help us grow vegetables and fruit. Along the way, we will learn new vocabulary linked to the changes in nature during spring and even have a go at growing our own herbs this term.

In Science, we are learning about different habitats and the animals that live in them. We will focus on key environments such as woodlands, deserts, mountains, oceans, and polar regions. The children will explore how certain features make animals better suited to particular habitats than others.

In Maths, we have begun practising counting in twos and fives as part of our early multiplication work. We used practical resources, such as socks and pairs of shoes, to help us understand this new concept in a fun and engaging way.

During Play and Leisure, we have been focusing on physical play. The children especially enjoyed learning about social rules while taking part in exciting and interactive parachute games with their friends.

Skipper

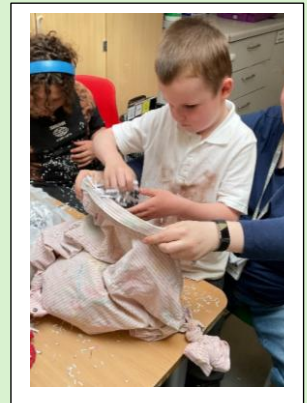
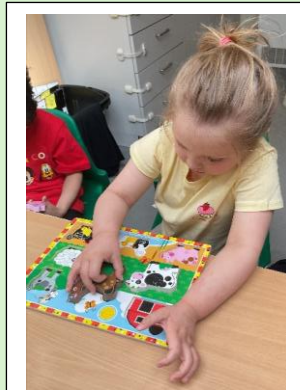
Skipper Class has had an amazing start to the summer term. The children really enjoyed exploring their communication lesson through a supermarket role-play activity, where we simulated a trip to the supermarket and practised exchanging coins to buy items from the aisle. We have also been making the most of the lovely weather by taking part in outdoor P.E. sessions and sensory circuits. In Maths, we began an exciting pirate hunt, and the children have been highly engaged in fun activities such as bowling and counting how many skittles they knocked down. We have also started our D.T. lessons with cooking classes, where the children practised important safety skills such as cutting, spreading, mixing, and stirring. Overall, Skipper Class has welcomed the new term with laughter and lots of fun activities.

Swallowtail

Swallowtail have returned from the Easter break happy, refreshed, and ready to learn. We have begun our exciting new topics for the Summer term, including exploring habitats and animals in science, which everyone has thoroughly enjoyed. The class is also very excited to start their swimming sessions and is looking forward to developing new skills in the water.

SWAN CLASS

Swan class had a great time experiencing and exploring all thing 'farm' related as we began our new topic. We planted and harvested seeds and bulbs, washed the muddy farm animals and fed them too, stuffed and built a scarecrow, milked the cow and bottled the milk during water play, sheared the sheep during sensory play, helped the farmer to rake the fields practising linear and circular gross motor actions in soil, collected and counted the eggs from the chicken coop during a number game, building barns for the farm animals and so much more! We especially loved singing farm related songs like 'Old McDonald' and playing farm animal sound guessing games by matching the animal puppets to the sound buttons. Such fun we had exploring the farm!

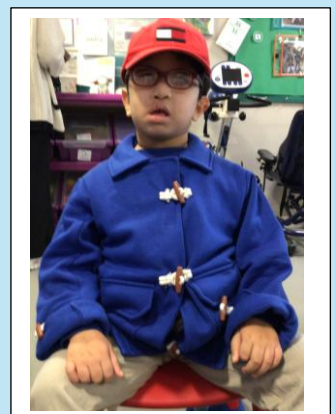
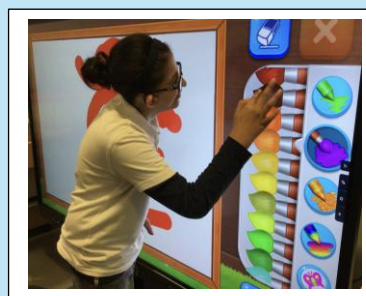
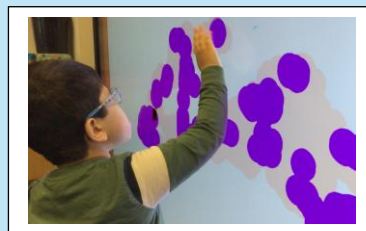
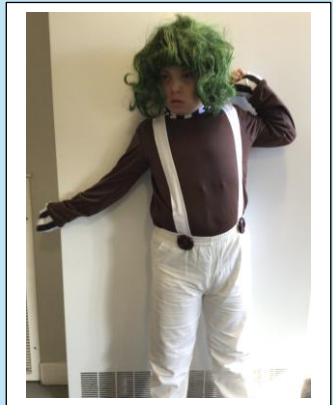


HERON CLASS

Heron class have been extremely busy this past term we celebrated World Book day by dressing up and exploring the Tiger came to Tea story as well as taking part in Comic Relief's Red Nose Day, wearing red and trying to make people laugh while raising money with the rest of the school.

We have enjoyed exploring musical instruments in music and learning how to play alongside and with our friends. We also had lots of fun learning about the Winter Olympics and what sports are played there.

Heron class have started this term strong, learning how to navigate the world of digital art and exploring our creative side.



POOLFROG CLASS

Pool Frog class have been working incredibly hard this year and it's hard to believe we are already in the Summer 1 term!

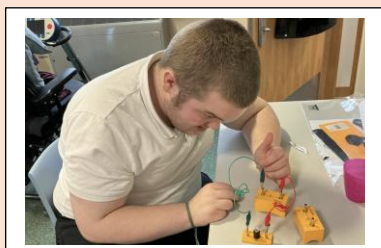
In class, we are all developing our reading skills, whether that's learning to read or deepening our understanding of texts. We had a fantastic time celebrating World Book Day, which we themed around *Zootopia* as we all enjoy animal-themed stories. The day was filled with fun and engaging reading activities.

We also use our phonics knowledge to support our writing. Last half term, we used visual prompts from the book *You Choose* to create exciting stories based on the theme of "surprise!". Some of our work was selected for entry into the Greenwich writing competition, and we are eagerly awaiting the results. We also occasionally share our writing on Instagram, so keep an eye out for our posts!

We said goodbye last half term to the Charlton Coaches. Pool Frog class thoroughly enjoyed their sessions and will continue to build on the skills they developed, especially as we work towards becoming Boccia champions!

One of our specialist parts of the KS3 and KS4 curriculum is taking part in Special Interest Afternoons, where we share our hobbies with each other. We've had some brilliant sessions, including making pasta using a pasta machine and creating our own face masks.

We also value opportunities to develop independence. When we were challenged to build a circuit to light a bulb, we were eager to get started and felt very proud when we succeeded. In Play and Leisure, we are trying new activities and have particularly enjoyed blind football, using blindfolds, guides and bells to support us.



Compass Council

Compass Council met again in Spring 2 and the focus was on adaptive teaching. We talked about how teachers act like 'learning detectives' — they look carefully at what we need in the moment and help CYP in the way that works best for them. Some of the ideas we explored included teachers explaining things in different ways, using pictures, examples or real objects to help understanding. We also learned that adaptive teaching isn't just about support, but also about making sure everyone gets the right level of challenge.

We were then asked to think about what adaptive teaching looks like at our school. Suleyman, Rowan Wood's representative, was able to identify a range of techniques that we use! These included: instruction/checklist sheets and 1-4 boards, which help us know exactly what we need to do. We use lots of visuals too — symbols, pictures and objects of reference — which can help make ideas easier to understand. In lessons such as Maths, we use different resources such as cubes, numicon and shapes to help us apply and practice what we are learning. We also realised that teachers change the kinds of questions they ask depending on what each of us needs.

At the end of the meeting, Suleyman was asked to interview our headteacher on adaptive teaching! Suleyman met with Ross and asked for his view on adaptive teaching. Ross explained that teachers at Willow Dene and Rowan Wood are always using high quality adaptive teaching, he gave us examples that are used in Literacy lessons, which may include word banks, sentence starters, saying our sentence aloud to an adult/recording it on our AAC device before writing it down so we can remember it and the use of picture prompts.

Suleyman thoroughly enjoyed sitting down and interviewing our Headteacher and is looking forward to feeding back the discussion to the rest of Compass Council when we next meet.

IMPORTANT DATES

May Bank Holiday – Monday 4th May 2026

Polling day – Thursday 7th May 2026

Last day of 1st half of summer term – Thursday 21st May 2026

Inset Day – Friday 22nd May 2026



Important numbers

School telephone number	020 8854 9841 option 1 for Swingate Lane and option 2 for Oakmere Road
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



COMPASS EKO SPECIAL SCHOOLS

GUIDE TO THE SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT SEND REFORMS

Many of you will have seen in the news and on social media that the Government have published a White Paper with suggested reforms to the SEND system. Some of our families would like to respond to the consultation, but making sense of the wealth of information is a challenge.

Below is a summary of some key questions that families might have related to the white paper for children with complex SEND, with an EHCP who are currently in special school setting like Willow Dene or Rowan Wood.

Here is a link to the consultation:

[Consultation Information and How to Respond](#)

Things to note:

- The White Paper is a plan, not law yet
- Changes will take years to fully roll out (late 2020s–2030)

Will the SEND reforms affect my child's EHCP if they are already in a special school?

1

For children who already have an EHCP and attend a special school, the proposed SEND reforms are not expected to change their placement or remove their support.

EHCPs will not be taken away if your child has an EHCP.

EHCPs will still be for children with the highest needs.

What might change with my child's EHCP?

2

Any changes will be more about how things are organised, not what your child receives.

- EHCPs might use a national template - at the moment different local authorities do them differently.
- More plans may be digital.
- Annual reviews may focus more clearly on outcomes.

Will my child stay in special school?

3

Yes! No child in Special school will be asked to move.

Special School places will still exist and expand.

Local Authorities will think more carefully about assessment for special school places. There will be more investment for mainstream schools and local provisions.

What will happen at transition points (after 2030)?

After 2030, when children reach a major transition point:

4

- Their needs will be reviewed as they already are now
- Children with complex needs are expected to continue with an EHCP
- Any changes should be discussed with parents, not imposed

There is no plan to automatically downgrade children or remove EHCPs.

Will families still be able to challenge decisions if they disagree?

5

Yes, exactly as now.

Families will continue to have the right to:

- Mediation
- appeal to the SEND tribunal
- challenge decisions about provision or placement.

These rights will remain in place unless the law changes.

Do I need to do anything now?

6

Right now, parents do not need to take any action.

Helpful things to do:

- continue attending annual reviews and engaging with school
- talk to your school if you have worries
- ask questions — there is no "silly" one

Schools and local authorities will share clear information before any future changes.

In Summary:



If your child:

- already has an EHCP
- and attends a special school

Then:

- Their school place is safe
- Their EHCP is protected
- No changes are expected before 2030
- Children with complex needs remain a priority

Any future changes would be gradual, carefully managed, and discussed with families.

Where is a reliable source for more information?

If you would like more information, here are places you can look to read further:

[DfE - What Parents of Children and Young People with SEND Need to Know](#)

[DfE Blog: What parents need to know about changes to the SEND system](#)