

NEWSLETTER

Compass
Special
Schools



Welcome back to our first newsletter of the new school year.

After nearly 7 weeks of being off school, we were delighted to see everyone back on the first day of term for children and young people. Our term actually started on September 1st, with three days of mandatory training for all staff. This included positive handling training, training from therapists, medical competencies in mandatory and specialist areas as well as three briefings to start the year and online safeguarding training. This training allows us to start the year ensuring that everything is in place with regards to safety.



This year we have joined OPAL (Outdoor Play and Learning). We will be working closely with them to develop our play in our playgrounds this year. Our journey started with an introduction to high-quality playground play and what this can look like. It was both interesting and exciting and we are looking forward to our first 'play committee' meeting coming soon.

The start of this year has been unusual in several ways. At Willow Dene, Swingate Lane we have welcomed a record number of new starters, meaning that most classes have welcomed somebody new to the school. As always, changes to class groups and transitions from one class to another mean that there is a lot for the children and young people to get used to in their first weeks. Because of this, our focus in the first few weeks is on positive relationships and making sure that children and young people, families and our staff team are feeling happy and comfortable in each other's company.



At Willow Dene, Oakmere Road we have welcomed the children joining our two new classes, Pine Marten and Water Vole. Oakmere Road is now a busier environment and we have been working together to make sure we use shared spaces in an organised way to get the most out of them. Sixth form are busy planning in their new business groups ready for relaunch of business ventures in October. We have also made a start with our pilot of Launch 19, working for Royal Borough of Greenwich with some of last year's school leavers. We look forward to reporting back on the first few weeks soon. Of course, at Rowan Wood, everything is new. Moving into the building at the very end of the summer term means that everyone is still settling in and making the environment welcoming. The children have been amazing and have adapted very quickly.



There are always lots of unknowns at the start of the year and a feeling of newness and sometimes uncertainty. But this is always momentary, and it isn't long before things start to be more familiar and children and young people feel happy, safe and ready to learn. We really appreciate you talking to us and working things out with us during these first few weeks and we are looking forward to the rest of the term.

One of the unexpected barriers to a smooth start to the year have been the transport arrangements with Passenger Services. We have encountered, along with you, numerous organisational and communication difficulties. We all know that a good day in school begins with a good journey to school and this is something we strive for, for every single child. We are communicating closely with SEND transport who commission Passenger Services and have asked for a meeting at their earliest convenience where we can debrief on every single case and seek resolution. You will know from our parentmail that we are also encouraging you to report anything of concern to SEND transport. We will be asking for both SEND transport and Passenger Services to come to parent meeting this term.

We have already had our first few visitors of the year. Last Thursday, we were asked to accommodate a preview of Rowan Wood for two of our local councillors, Anthony Okereke and Tom Creswell. They visited in time to see the end of the day for children and have a tour of the whole school. They enjoyed trying out the

magic carpet room and watching everybody leave to get onto buses. They also took lots of videos of the building for social media and we will look forward to sharing the link to these soon. At Willow Dene we were excited to be part of the filming for TES Inclusive Trust of the Year publicity film. Thank you to all parents who gave permissions at very short notice. All children were superstars and showed off the very best of Compass Eko special schools. A big thank you to all the parents who attended coffee morning for your impromptu appearance too!

With the new school year, we are starting work on a new set of core priorities which form the basis of our school development plan. At Willow Dene there are seven core priorities driving our school development forward, and three of these are shared with Rowan Wood. Rowan Wood also has an additional core priority about settling into the new school community. Everyone is going to be working on understanding more about children and young people's internal sensory systems, helping them to recognise feelings of hunger, pain, tiredness etc. and therefore supporting better self-regulation. We are hoping that there will be a positive effect on children at school and at home but also will need information from you about what affects your child and where you would like support. Look out for more information soon.

In other news, there have been changes to arrangements for school clothing grants, and there is more information later in this newsletter. Our lovely Family Support Team have put in place a cycle of coffee mornings taking place across different locations in our schools and the flyer for the second of these taking place next Tuesday is also included here. If you are at Rowan Wood, look out for school dog Wanda, on Mondays. If you are at Swingate Lane watch out for photographs, from our first theatre visit of the year from The Toucan Theatre Company. If you are a parent of a child at Oakmere Road look out for our playground development plans. If you are a parent of a young person in sixth form, look out for more information coming about Year 14 annual reviews.

I hope you have a lovely weekend.

Rachel

FAMILY SUPPORT TEAM

Vicky House & Rebekah Forbes – Family Support Workers

Vicky and Rebekah provide practical and emotional support to families, working alongside parents and carers to understand their individual needs and help them access the right advice, guidance and support.

They run weekly coffee mornings every Tuesday at the Swingate Lane site and coordinate a range of parent workshops, courses and activities throughout the year.

Michele Flower – Health Support Advisor

Michele supports families with health-related needs, including attending medical appointments, accessing equipment and liaising with GPs, hospitals and other health professionals. She also provides emotional support and a listening ear to families.

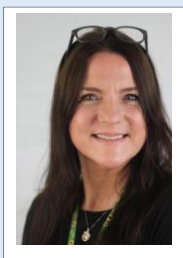
Need some support?

If you need support, advice or simply want someone to talk to, please get in touch with our Family Support Team. Our support is led by the needs of each family and what matters most to you.

 020 8854 9841

 WD-FSW@willowdene.compassps.uk

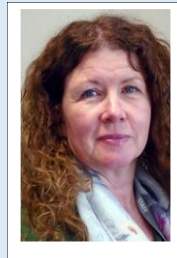
Referrals to the Family Support Team can also be made through class teams or teachers.



Vicky House



Rebekah Forbes

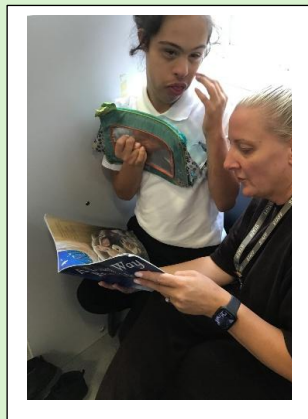
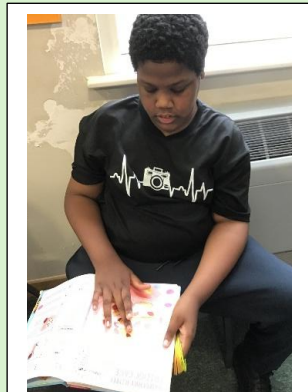


Michelle Flower

SQUIRREL CLASS

Squirrel Class have spent the first couple of weeks of the new Autumn term getting settled into the new academic year.

Squirrel Class has welcomed new children, and everyone has been enjoying focusing on their literacy with guiding reading and refining our fine motor skills. We have enjoyed threading, write dance and dough disco. Squirrel Class will continue their fine motor skills with puzzles, scissor management and cutting.



PEACOCK CLASS

What a fantastic first week back!

Peacock Class has had an amazing start to the year. It has been wonderful to see the children so excited to reunite with friends and welcome new classmates into our learning family. Everyone has shown great enthusiasm, kindness and respect for our new classroom, and we are incredibly proud of how quickly the children have embraced being part of the Rowan Wood community.

This week, we launched our exciting new Science topic, Materials. The children became young scientists as they explored a variety of everyday objects and investigated what materials they were made from. They asked thoughtful questions, made observations and enjoyed discovering the different properties of materials around them.

To refresh our counting skills, we shared the counting book *One Duck Stuck* by Phyllis Root. Using the animal characters from the story, the children collected information and created their own charts.

We revisited all of our phonics sounds and practised reading and spelling key words, making sure that single sounds and digraphs were used correctly. The children worked hard to apply their phonics knowledge during reading activities.

In TPPC, we explored the question, "What makes a hero?" We shared the inspiring story *I Am Amazing* by Alissa Holder and Zulekha Holder-Young. The children had thoughtful discussions and reflected on their own experiences. They loved sharing their special talents and achievements, showcasing the amazing skills that make each of them unique.

We are so proud of the enthusiasm, positivity and positive learning attitudes the children have demonstrated this week. We can't wait for another exciting week of learning!





SCHOOL CLOTHING GRANTS – ACADEMIC YEAR 2026/27

Royal Borough of Greenwich are pleased to confirm an expansion of the borough's School Clothing Grant scheme to academies for the beginning of this academic year. From September 2026, to be eligible for a School Clothing Grant, children must:

- Live in Greenwich (or be placed in out of borough temporary accommodation by Greenwich)
- Attend a state school (local authority maintained or academy, in or outside of Greenwich)
- Be entitled to and receive targeted free school meals

The school year eligible for an award and amounts paid are as follows:

• Reception	£50.00
• Year 3	£50.00
• Year 7	£150.00
• Year 9	£100.00

Applications can be made on the council website: www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/help-money-free-school-meals



Coffee Morning

For Parents and Carers of
all Compass Eko Trust Special Schools

 **Day: Every Tuesday** | **10.30am**

We warmly welcome new and existing parents and carers to our weekly coffee morning at Willow Dene. A chance to meet other parents and carers, share experiences, information and ideas, and build supportive connections within our school community.

We look forward to seeing you there!

 Biscuits are provided!  Every Tuesday morning  Everyone is welcome!

 Swingate Lane site  For more information:
Family Support Team | 0208 854 9841



Willow Dene School

School Telephone number 020 8854 9841

Willow Dene contact email:
willowdene@compassps.uk

School website:
www.willowdene.compassps.uk

School office hours: 8.00am – 4.00pm

Instagram: @willowdenesch1

Rowan Wood School

School Telephone number 020 8059 2743

Rowan Wood contact email:
rowanwood@compassps.uk

School website:
www.rowanwood.compassps.uk

School office hours: 8.00am – 4.00pm

Instagram: @rowanwoodschoo1



WILLOW DENE CORE PRIORITIES 2026-27

ASSESSMENT

To align the Paces and Strides assessment frameworks with recent national and school guidance, research, and curriculum development.

ORACY

To build on established communication approaches, ensuring our communication pathway and practice reflects emerging national developments in oracy and AAC.

POST 19 PROJECT

To implement a successful post 19 pilot project in collaboration with RBG ensuring young people receive bespoke and broad education based on their EHCP outcomes.

SENSORY SYSTEMS INTEROCEPTION

To develop adults' understanding of interoceptive systems, enabling children and young people to recognise and regulate their internal states, thereby strengthening emotional regulation.



FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

To build on existing Funds of Knowledge work, strengthening a sense of belonging and community cohesion, where the unique backgrounds, identities and experiences of all children and young people, families and adults are celebrated and actively used to shape teaching, learning and the wider life of the school.

PEDAGOGICAL CPD TOOLS

To organise and publish existing professional development learning materials so that adults can engage in effective, self-directed learning, embedding and extending existing knowledge, skills and expertise.



ROUTINES

To maximise learning through morning, lunchtime and end of day routines, with a focus on play and early literacy.





ROWAN WOOD CORE PRIORITIES 2026-27

COMMUNITY

To engage with and promote our new building to our school community.

ROUTINES

To maximise learning through morning, lunchtime and end of day routines, with a focus on play and early literacy.



PEDAGOGICAL CPD TOOLS

To organise and publish existing professional development learning materials so that adults can engage in effective, self-directed learning, embedding and extending existing knowledge, skills and expertise.



SENSORY SYSTEMS INTEROCEPTION

To develop adults' understanding of interoceptive systems, enabling children and young people to recognise and regulate their internal states, thereby strengthening emotional regulation.



THANK YOU!

Danni & Rebecca

For your generous donation of outdoor play equipment to our school.
Your kindness is helping our children learn, grow, explore and create wonderful memories.

From all the children and staff at our school

Donated by Danni – Woodland Adventure Bridge



Donated by Rebecca – Outdoor Climbing Tunnel



