

WILLOW DENE NEWS

FRIDAY 25TH SEPTEMBER 2015 - ISSUE NO: 78



Dear Parents and Carers

Since the last newsletter children have settled into new classes and are already showing progress in their learning and teachers are telling us about new achievements.

Forest School sessions are well underway even in the rainy weather! This week children have had a lot of fun on treasure hunts and building mud slides. In the pool area there is an 'Alien' theme linked to our 'Explore It!' topic. There are lots of resources linked to outer space which cleverly motivate children to develop their water skills. We told you about our Pool Pod which allows wheelchair users to enter the water in a special chair which lowers into the pool itself. Over the last few weeks we have been able to see a number of children using the Pool Pod and practicing their sitting skills and transfer to the water. There are also some new floats in use which are enabling children to float and move themselves in the water without any adult support.

Our After School Club has expanded so that we can take more children and our older children had their first session last week. After School Club sessions are now run by and staffed by the school and as a result children's behaviour and motivation has been excellent.

We had an exciting visit from Quest 88 who brought lots of big bikes, go-karts and scooters to school to give us new ideas for engaging our older children in motivating physical activity. Children and staff from lots of classes spent a long time trying out the exciting possibilities which included a pedal powered 4x4, hydraulically assisted bikes to make pedalling easier, tandems for children who are learning to sit independently and bikes with trailers. Watch this space to find out what we decided after our trial.

The Friends of Willow Dene held their first committee meeting of the year this week and have started planning for the Christmas Fayre. We are very excited to announce that City Lit are coming to Willow Dene do a six week course for parents which will give a taster in areas of interest.

In the last two weeks our visitors have included special school representatives from across Greenwich, visitors from Bexley Borough, Kings College Hospital and many parents visiting with their child. We are also hosting a number of professional development opportunities for Willow Dene staff and others which include The Academy of Innovation's MA course and Greenwich Special School Forum. Next week we have our termly

visit from our Improvement Partner who will be spending the whole day with us looking at different aspects of our practice.

Look out for our learning walls coming soon. These displays are already visible in some classes and are constantly changing to reflect children's learning, progress and achievements. Look out for photographs on our Twitter account @willowdenesch

John Camp
Executive Headteacher
of the Compass Partnership

Carolyn Vagg &
Rachel Harrison
Co-Headteachers

Governor News

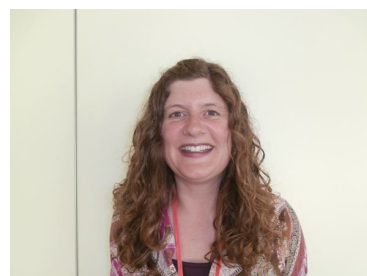
Welcome to all our new staff, children and families! I hope you have now settled in happily at Willow Dene.

This week I visited Toucan and it was great to see our smallest children exploring their surroundings and gaining independence, and to see the smiling faces of their families.

Governors have been working hard to prepare for the Governor Mark - an accreditation for school governance. We had our mock, which was really positive, and then took Julie and Carol from Governor Services for a tour of the school. We were able to show them communication at lunchtimes and of course our amazing pool. Rose kindly demonstrated the pool pod - an amazing piece of equipment - and explained how the pool is accessible to all our children. We look forward to finding out more when we have our monitoring morning later this term.

Kind regards,

Anne-Marie
Chair of Governors



CLASS FOCUS – Starling Class

Starling Class have had a busy start to the new academic year in which we have welcomed a new friend, Ahmed who has moved up from the Foundation Stage to join us.

So far this term, we have been learning about our senses as our topic focus is Explore it! We have had lots of fun exploring a variety of materials, smells, textures and tastes.

In Art we have been exploring the taste of different flavoured tea including strawberry, blackberry, ginger, peppermint and camomile then using tea bags to create water colour paintings. We have experienced mixing water colours together and sprinkling the contents of the teabags onto our paintings to create a multi-sensory picture.

In Science we have been exploring all of our senses through a range of exciting messy play activities. We have focused on different senses over the last few weeks and explored how we use our senses with a range of resources. We've enjoyed creating lots of mess and trying new foods!

MOVE News

It is an exciting time for MOVE at Willow Dene at the moment. We have a new dedicated MOVE team, allowing us to develop MOVE practices across the school and improve the provision for all children on the MOVE programme.

As part of this MOVE team we are developing the Willow Dene Gym in collaboration with the school, and the Physiotherapists. We have a dedicated space within the school that is growing into a working gym space. We currently have two MediMotion bikes and an iJoy. We are also awaiting the arrival of a third MediMotion bike.

Children have weekly exercise sessions using the Medimotion bikes. Children of all abilities can use the bikes and they are designed to cater for children with physical needs.

The aim of using the bike has been to provide children with the opportunity to:

- Build muscle strength
- Build on stamina and exercise tolerance
- Loosen muscles to work against stiffness
- Take part in regular fun exercise
- Take deep breaths and raise heart rate
- Promote fitness

The iJoy promotes balance, building core strength and developing movement in sitting.

The children that use the gym have shown great excitement from their first Session. Children have reached out for the handle bars and started pedalling almost from the start. Many children have shown us that cycling is really enjoyable for them and often ask for more between sessions. Children are developing their stamina, cycling for longer periods and transferring these skills to walking in their gait trainer, walking independently and even using a conventional bike.

Stay tuned for more MOVE and Gym news soon!

Lisa Parascandolo
MOVE co-ordinator