

Willow Dene News

Tuesday 12th May 2020



Head Teachers Message

Welcome to our second special edition newsletter which will hopefully reach you whether your child is at home or at school. At the time of writing, we have no idea what the next few weeks will hold for us with regard to government guidance and advice for special schools. However, we are committed to continuing to provide positive support for you and your child no matter what the next few weeks have in store. In this newsletter you will find out more about our 'hello' from teachers' film and also receive some information about managing behaviour with a particular focus on sleep routines.

If you are following us on Twitter @willowdenesch you will have seen some of the happy, uplifting posts sharing what children have been doing at home. Twitter also signposts lots of useful resources and conveys supportive messages from our wider community. In the last few months Twitter has become another way for us to stay connected and more importantly, support each other. If you are new to Twitter this newsletter contains an easy guide to get you started!

We are also beginning to plan for summer playscheme. There are a lot of 'unknown' factors in this planning at the moment as we don't yet know what the government guidance will be during the summer months. For now, we are planning for a full playscheme with moderated but exciting activities and we will let you know as plans develop and change as a result of any guidance that is released.

As the weather gets warmer it has been lovely to be outside more and to make the most of outdoor learning opportunities. Forest School has been continuing and our outdoor equipment and balcony spaces are being very well used. We will be putting some photographs on the website soon.

We are working with Royal Borough of Greenwich to prioritise annual reviews which need to be completed this term. We will be looking first at the transition years Year 5, 6, 10 & 11 first. If your child has not had an annual review yet this year and is in one of these year groups, we will be in touch soon to look

at how these might happen. If your child is leaving Willow Dene this year or is due to move from Swingate Lane to Oakmere Road, we are awaiting advice about how this will work for children across Greenwich and how we can make sure that children moving are going to have the right transition. If you have any questions, please contact us and we can talk to you more.

You will have noticed that in the media there has been a lot of discussion about what sort of Personal Protective Equipment is right for schools in order to protect children and adults. We have been working with Public Health England to get this right for Willow Dene. At the moment, there is no general advice for special schools so we are looking at all children and classes individually and making decisions about where extra PPE may be needed. This is why you might, at the moment see some staff wearing PPE and others who are not. Please do talk to us if you would like to find out more. In the next few weeks, we will be starting temperature checking for children and adults coming into school to make sure that we are keeping school as infection free as possible. This will happen alongside our existing hygiene measures which include surface cleaning, hand hygiene and additional professional cleaning.

We would like to take this opportunity to send a massive thank you to all of you for finding the time to support us and send us such positive messages when your own lives have been so drastically different. Remember we are here to help with anything we can even if it is just a chat or some advice. Keep an eye on parentmails and the website for the most recent updates but remember we are only a phone call away if we can help with anything at all.



Rachel

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

DO NOT leave home if you or someone you live with has either:

- A high temperature of typically 38c this means you may feel hot to touch on your chest or back
- A new continuous cough

Call 111 for further advice and explain about your child and Willow Dene School.

If you are struggling because of Coronavirus(COVID-19) such as paying bills, being out of work, or taking care of your mental health please contact us or visit <https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-support> for further advice.

The Department for Education Coronavirus helpline is available to answer questions about Coronavirus (COVID-19), relating to education and children's social care:

Phone: 0800 046 8687

Family Play Session



Saturday Club

We are now working with Short Breaks to see how we can re-start Saturday Club in a modified format.

The groups will be smaller and the activities different, but hopefully we can provide a break for families where children need this. We hope that the first sessions will be on offer within a couple of weeks.



You will know that we have been working with Short Breaks to open up our playground space on Saturday and Sundays to individual

families, so that a safe play space and some fresh air can be enjoyed by everyone. These sessions can be booked through the Short Breaks team.

We have also opened up the playground for evening use now that light nights are here. These are bookable by phoning school. We can help with transport if this is needed. It sounds like everyone has been enjoying these sessions and we have loved seeing your photographs!

Keep an eye out for Friday night sessions at Oakmere Road coming soon.

Behaviour Strategies for home



Children's behaviour can be difficult to manage at the best of times but even more so in this current lockdown. Behaviour very rarely happens without a reason or a purpose, but it can often be very difficult to work out what that reason or cause is!

Have a look at the link below that will lead you to the school's website for some generic behaviour management tips that you can try and please do contact school if you want any further advice or guidance

<http://www.willowdene.greenwich.sch.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Behaviour%20Strategies%20at%20Home.pdf>



In these strange and worrying times it is lovely to be able to share some of the things that have made us smile in recent weeks. One of these is our new relationship with Charlton Athletic Community Trust.

CACT have been amazing to work with since the Covid-19 crisis began. They have been out shopping on our behalf so that we can sustain our grocery delivery service as well as shopping for individual parents. They have delivered work packs and specialist equipment to families; they have been in school to deliver sports sessions for our children. They have been a pleasure to work with, we would like to say a huge thank you and we hope our new relationship with them will continue in the future!

Well-being and Support During Coronavirus

We are all experiencing new challenges and feelings of uncertainty and worry during this unprecedented time, so we have compiled links to useful websites and information that will support mental health, well-being and offer guidance through these difficult times.

We have also included a **Take 5 minutes For You!** Section with links to activities, movement, dance and simple exercise that only take five minutes or less! So, if you are working from home, stuck behind a desk or just feeling low, try one of these short activities and take five minutes just for you!

<http://www.willowdene.greenwich.sch.uk/node/805>

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO TWITTER

1. SIGN UP

Start by visiting <http://twitter.com/> and fill out the information under “Sign Up”. Enter your name, email address and make a password.

PICK A USERNAME (15 characters or less—this is how people will find you on twitter!)

ADD A PHOTO (a jpg,gif, or png file 700kb or less)

WRITE A BIO (160 characters or less to tell us something about you and what interests you)

2. WHO TO FOLLOW

Start with your friends, business colleagues, people you admire follow back.

FOLLOW others that are following you if you are interested in what they have to say or share.

3. CONNECT & ENGAGE

TWEET Type your Tweet (up to 280 characters) into the compose box at the top of your Home timeline or click the Tweet button in the navigation bar. You can include up to 4 photos, a GIF, or a video in your Tweet.

To **RETWEET** hover over the Tweet you'd like to share: Click the Retweet button A pop-up will show you the Tweet you're about to Retweet. Click the Retweet button. The Tweet will then be shared with all your followers as a Retweet.

HASTTAG Wondering what everyone's talking about? Click on a hashtag and find out. A hashtag (written with a # symbol) is used to index keywords or topics on Twitter. Created by Twitter it allows people to easily follow topics they are interested in. VISIT the HELP section for more information at help.twitter.com website

To hear about all the exciting opportunities, we are planning and to share more of what is going on at Willow Dene, and to stay up to date with what is happening as it happens, with useful information and links, follow us on twitter @willowdenesch

Music Therapy



The music therapy team are really missing being able to make live music with all the students on the caseload, however we have been really busy finding alternative ways of making contact with you all.

The music we usually make with you is so dependent on us following your every sound, drum beat and how you feel that day. This becomes very different when we try and recreate some of our music-making via a digital platform. There are delays in the sounds we make, and the quality is never the same. Having said that, several sessions are still able to take place weekly and here are some of the comments from the families:

'she has been looking forward to the session all week and hasn't slept all night!', 'the session really cheered us all up. Thank you.' 'she was so excited to hear your voice.'

We have also been sending some musical letters to some students-these are short videos or audio recordings of us as therapists singing and making personalised music for them. Here is some feedback from the families:

'it was lovely to see him smile and enjoy his therapy', 'he was smiling and sitting still 'as he watched you singing to him', 'the personal aspect is so important for him. We could easily look up songs on YouTube, but it is the personal aspect that is important.' 'Thank-you.'

We will continue trying to reach as many of you as possible and come up with new ideas to help in any way we can.



HOME LEARNING

Even in this unusual situation we love sharing how our children are learning wherever they are.



Sleep hygiene tips and advice

Sleep can be a problem at some point for any of us but in the current circumstances even more difficult for our children. Please have a look at the link below that will lead you to our school website for further information on sleep routine and top tips around optimum conditions for a good night's sleep.

<http://www.willowdene.greenwich.sch.uk/sites/default/files/attachments/Sleep%20Tips%20for%20Parents.pdf>

Virtual Parent Groups



Another thing to put a smile on our faces in the last few weeks has been the advent of 'virtual parent groups'.

As long time supporters of The Anchor Charity we were delighted to be asked to be guest speakers at their first on-line parent group. This was the first on-line parents' group that either of us had done and we felt nervous and excited at the same time! We weren't prepared for how emotional it would be seeing and speaking to some of you after such a long time.

The group was such a positive event for everyone involved that we were inspired to try our own version. Our first Connect Coffee Morning hosted by Vicky House took place on May 4th with around 20 parents 'dialling in' for a chance to connect, share and catch up.



We will be making a regular feature of Connect Coffee Mornings as a temporary replacement for our Speakeasy. It's easy to join in, send your email address to Vicky House at vhouse@willowdene.compassps.uk and we will send you instructions.

'Hello' from teachers'



As you can imagine, things are *very* different here at the moment and we are really missing all the children who are staying safe at home.

Some parents have told us that when children have heard their teacher's voices on the phone, or seen a photo of them, it has really brightened up their day. It gives us an enormous boost when we hear about the things children have been getting up to at home, or better still, see photos or videos on twitter (there are more details on how to do this in this newsletter).

So that we can all feel a bit more connected during this very strange time, all of our classes (even the most camera shy!) have recorded a short message for children to watch at home to let them know how much they are missed and valued.

They can be viewed via our website at:

<http://www.willowdene.greenwich.sch.uk/node/817>



Free School Meal Vouchers

We have some parents who have not redeemed their Free School Meal vouchers of £30 which covered the two weeks of the Easter Holidays. Could you please check your emails in your inbox and junk mail to see if you have received this, it will be from Edenred.

If you have not received this or are having difficulties redeeming your voucher, please contact the office for assistance.



WILLOW DENE SCHOOL TERM DATES 2020/2021

AUTUMN TERM 2020

OTHER SCHOOL CLOSURES

Term Time	Wednesday 2 nd September Friday 23 rd October	Wednesday 2 nd September – Staff INSET Day Thursday 3 rd September – Staff INSET Day Friday 4 th September – Staff INSET Day Monday 7 th September – Pupils Return
Half Term	Monday 26 th October - Friday 30 th October	
Term Time	Monday 2 nd November Friday 18 th December	
Christmas Holiday	Monday 21 st December – Friday 1 st January 2021	

SPRING TERM 2021

OTHER SCHOOL CLOSURES

Term Time	Monday 4 th January Friday 12 th February	Monday 4 th January – Staff INSET Day Tuesday 5 th January – Pupils Return
Half Term	Monday 15 th February – Friday 19 th February	
Term Time	Monday 22 nd February Wednesday 31 st March	
Easter Holiday	Thursday 1 st April – Friday 16 th April	

SUMMER TERM 2021

OTHER SCHOOL CLOSURES

Term Time	Monday 19 th April Friday 28 th May	Monday 3 rd May – Bank Holiday
Half Term	Monday 31 st May – Friday 4 th June	
Term Time	Monday 7 th June Friday 23 rd July	

INSET DAY TO BE CONFIRMED