

A Christmas Wish from Willow Brook



Dear Parents and Carers,

We are there! 13 very busy (and rather unusual) weeks, lots of hard work and a festive fortnight to welcome the Christmas season and bid 2020 farewell. Whilst it will be a year forever etched in our memories, I won't be sorry to move on!

This week there have been lots of tentative steps towards some wonderfully warm and suitably festive end of term events.

Our Christmas by candlelight assemblies taught us about advent and how we might just see that bright star in the east again this year (but perhaps without three wise men in tow!) It came with all the calm and gentle spirit needed on some grey afternoons.

It was nothing short of a miracle that Elaine and Vicky in the kitchen served 190 children and 15 staff a full Christmas dinner on Tuesday! To stay within our risk assessments, we had three sittings and with all hands on deck, it was a great success, albeit (like many other things that have happened this term) a military operation! Adding Christmas jumpers and Mariah Carey made it a very happy couple of hours!

The highlight of the week was the party organised by The Friends of Willow Brook. With his best 'ho, ho, ho's', Mr Castledine delivered mystery sacks to each of the classrooms. They were packed full of activities and games, Santa hats, crafts and treats! The children just loved it (and the teachers were in awe of all that had been done to make their afternoons such a pleasure).

Thank you so much to everyone who contributed to that project. Our Friends committee also did a wonderful job of putting together the Winter Wonderland Windows! To Evie (1st place), Evie (2nd) and Ana and Pia (3rd) WELL DONE! Sam and Evie won the virtual entry. Friends will be with you over the next couple of days with their congratulations. I think there must've been something lucky in the name 'Evie'!

As well as a pantomime yesterday afternoon, our day has been a delight! Can you believe that Father Christmas turned

up on his motorbike with Mrs Christmas in his sidecar and delighted the children by riding round the paths to wave to them all! I've never seen pre-school so speechless...

A live recording of Sleeping Beauty gave everyone a chance to don their best theatre-going outfits and the teachers seized the fairy story moment by becoming Snow White and the Seven Dwarves!



For me, Christmas usually begins this afternoon when the Salvation Army usually plays 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' in the playground. My biggest treat of the week was receiving a video from them yesterday, dedicating just that carol to the school. Next year...

We did make sure that Year 6 sang 'Starry Night' outside with the piano this morning. It's a primary school Christmas moment that they won't experience again, and if they couldn't sing safely inside with the piano, then it was only right to take the piano out to them!

Our Reception class have worked hard this half term with similar restrictions, to put together a simple nativity play. Again, this is such an important and one-off part of school life, that it is not to be missed. Parents should receive a link to the final edit this afternoon. I apologise for my poor technical skills and hope that it does justice to all the work that the EYFS staff put in.

And so we make it to the final afternoon. Before we take two weeks to find some peace and rest at home, I'd like to clarify some important arrangements for the Christmas break.

Teachers will be switching their emails off when they get home this evening. They deserve nothing less. **It is, however, important that we remain in contact with you so that any Covid related illness can be reported and shared effectively within our school community. I will, therefore, respond to emails until Christmas Eve and would ask that you continue to inform me of any positive tests that your children may have until that point. Similarly, I will contact any relevant class groups or families should any staff members experience the same. After the Christmas Eve deadline, we ask that you then let us know of any subsequent symptoms or illness on the first day of the new term.**

January will be a good point to start afresh and re-establish the key points of our risk assessment. Having done so well during this term, we are keen to hold tight to the measures that were put in place in September. Can I politely remind you of the staggered start and end times to our day and remind you that this was designed to ensure that the flow of people being on the playground and around the vicinity of the school moves as safely as possible.

Year 5 and 6 – bell at 8.45am

Year 1, 3 and 4 – bell at 8.50am

Year 2 and Reception – bell at 9am.

I realise that some families with siblings in different classes have brought older sibling late or waited on the playground with younger children. I thank you for your patience if that is the case. Please ask if you need our help.

Children should not bring large bags or any unnecessary items from home. Outdoor PE kits are a must for the new year and we are happy to keep these in school over weekends to reduce the number of items coming and going from different environments. I promise that you will not be judged on a PE shirt that is un-ironed or less than Persil-white!

I will leave you with some pictures of the past week. There will be more on the website as soon time allows.

I hope that you have a very wonderful holiday. Take very good care of your family and friends as you enjoy their precious company. And, although I said it at the end of 2019, I wish for nothing more than a truly happy New Year for us all. We look forward to seeing you bright and on time on January 4th

With best wishes from all of the Willow Brook team,

Louise Ballard

2020



