



# Willow Brook News

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Dear Parents and Carers,

Our half term is well underway and the past fortnight has been an action-packed introduction to our *Connections* theme!

Year 3 and 4 were an absolute pleasure to take on their residential experience last week. We were, as always, so proud of them. They had an exciting couple of days at Beaumanor Hall, where they took on challenges and enjoyed the company of their friends. Miss Adams, Mrs Smith, Mrs Hallsworth, Mrs Broadhead and Mr. Boyd all went above and beyond to make sure the children had a positive experience, and we were so grateful to Mr. Hands who also gave up a night at home to help. Without such good will and many unpaid extra hours, precious primary school moments like this would be lost. More photos can now be found on the website.



There was a very restful feeling in the air at Willow Brook yesterday as we celebrated World Book Day 2023! Our day's theme revolved around the perfect combination of rest and reading and the day started with the curtains closed in the hall and a shared warm story together. Mr. Jones's talk then set out the 5-step recipe for a good night's sleep! This always ends with 'falling' into sleep after escaping from a busy day with the lights down low and a good story. The task for the morning was a poster competition to advertise just that. I look forward to choosing and sharing the winning work of art!

A Willow Brook Book Swap is always a welcome addition to our World Book Day. A relaxing shared read with a book buddy and a new book to take home once again made for a great afternoon. As you can see from the photos, there's nothing better than half an hour with a good story...





Next week the children will be making connections with their community. We will be hearing from our first visiting speakers who live and work in the village, as well as some successful Willow Brook alumni. Everyone will also be connecting their work at school with their ambition for the future. Planning a 'flightpath' to get there will ignite their thinking. We are also celebrating International Women's Day on Wednesday and taking part in the England Women's football initiative, 'Let Girls Play'. There'll be some matches across the day and all the girls will have a chance to pitch some questions to an international player... who happens to be an ex-Willow Brooker!

Next week is Parents Evening. We are looking forward to welcoming you into school and sharing a conversation and your child's books. You should receive a slip with your appointment time on it today. If you have not yet returned your form and wish to make an appointment, please catch your child's teacher in the playground or telephone the school office to speak to them on Monday.

**Please note that all after school clubs run by teachers will have a break next week. French will also be cancelled on Wednesday evening. The only club going ahead is Reporters Club with Mr. Boyd on Thursday.**

When you see your child's work next week, you may notice that the staff at Willow Brook are trialling a new strategy when it comes to offering feedback to the children. You may notice fewer written comments at the end of tasks. I've included the article below in the hope that it will answer any questions that might come to mind.

I will leave you to read Mr. Jones's poster on 'how to get a perfect night's sleep' and wish you all a restful weekend.

Kind regards,

*Louise Ballard*





# FEEDBACK AND MARKING AT WILLOW BROOK

You will notice that the children's books are no longer marked in the traditional way. This is because the school is now operating a "whole class feedback model". If you are used to seeing lengthy teacher comments, you might be asking the following questions...

## **Why are you doing "whole class feedback" and not marking my child's book individually?**

The most up to date research shows that the impact of traditional and formal marking is very little on a child's progress. Much of the time the comments aren't read by the child, or they can't read them, or they're not acted upon. This is a lot of teacher effort for very little gain, so by freeing up teacher time to plan next steps for each child individually, this allows for the next lesson personalised to them. Teachers have to and will look at every book every day, but they will be making general notes in their mark books as to who needs what next, rather than individual highlighting or comments or ticks. Time is our most precious resource and we must use it as effectively as possible.

## **What, you're never going to tick a book again?**

No, we will often mark work traditionally, but this will probably be during the lesson, when the teacher is with the child, rather than afterwards away from them. Research proves that being able to correct error and give advice on next steps for learning in the moment is the most effective way of promoting progress, so you should still see evidence of the teacher's pen. Our teaching assistants will also annotate work to show where (and how) they have guided a child's thought process. Remember they are still looking at each book at the end of every day, just not making a pen mark on it. And if a teacher wants to make a quick comment about something fantastic (or terrible!) that they see in a book they may still do that.

## **What sort of things do teachers record in their mark books?**

A class of children will be working on a common objective. Specific feedback which directs subsequent steps for children's learning will be recorded and shared with the children at the beginning of their next lesson. Where common misconceptions have been identified, these can be addressed as a class or in group interventions according to need.

## **What about children who always get things right?**

They shouldn't! If they are being challenged, they shouldn't find their work too easy and this will be noted by the teacher and the next steps planned for to ensure each child makes progress.

### **What about children who always get things wrong?**

Again, they shouldn't. A good teacher will pitch the work carefully to provide children with differentiated learning that is within their capabilities.

### **But my child is in the top/middle/bottom group!**

Maths and English groups have been fluid for a long time - as they should be. We do not believe children's abilities are fixed. The way we are marking now means that children may change groups daily depending on how well they learned that day's lesson. Teachers are planning responsively all the time.

### **My child thrives on knowing how well they did in a task. How will the teachers communicate this to them?**

The beginning of every maths and English lesson is whole class feedback. Teachers can show children good examples of work through putting it up on the screen or reading it aloud. They can also look at common errors and misconceptions and ask the children to look back in their own work to find whether they had these or not. This is a far more important skill to learn than the teacher telling them. This is also the time when children will receive praise (or advice) for their efforts: publicly if they thrive on this, or privately during the lesson if they do not. Each teacher will know how best to do this.

### **What should I look for in my child's book then?**

Look for their own corrections, look for something they get wrong one day and then get right the next day. Older children should be able to tell you (or will write in their own books) what they understood or need to work on next because they will check for themselves alongside our feedback and think about their own next steps within independent tasks.

### **Is this just for years 1-6?**

Yes, but actually it builds very well on what has been happening in Early Years Foundation Stage for a long time.