



# Willow Cottage Parents' Newsletter

Autumn 2017

[www.willow-cottage.com](http://www.willow-cottage.com)



**As we start the new academic year, there is a real sense of anticipation and excitement about what the future holds. The Willow Cottage Parents' Newsletter is a celebration of all the wonderful learning, fun and achievements we have seen over the past few months and a glimpse into the exciting times of partnership we have ahead.**

## Inside our newsletter

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... and more!

We are currently developing our channels of communication and hope that you will support us with our new strategies to engage you further, via our website and Facebook page: [willow-cottage.com/nursery-news](http://willow-cottage.com/nursery-news) and [facebook.com/WillowCottageNursery](https://facebook.com/WillowCottageNursery)

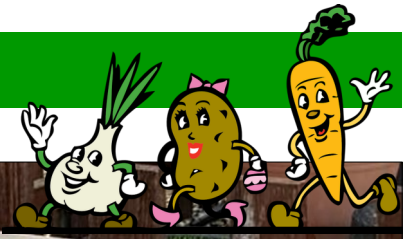


The autumn term is upon us once again and with it the great sadness of many of our young ones leaving and moving onto 'big school'! We thank them for enriching our lives and all the fun and laughter and pleasure that they have imparted to the nursery classrooms over the last four years. We wish them every blessing and success as they make their way in the big wide world. We will miss them all.

In our newsletter we enclose some important dates and news, together with information and articles that we hope you will find of interest.

This is the first of our 'new format' newsletters which will be supported using more regular social media posts to keep you updated during the year of what is going on at Willow Cottage. Please therefore keep an eye on and 'like' our Facebook page, to see what is happening.

# Our Summer Challenge



This year our Summer Challenge has been an inter-nursery vegetable 'GROWATHON'. Giant pumpkins, gourds, squashes, courgettes, cucumbers and tomatoes are the name of the game! The staff and children have all been busy watering, feeding and nurturing their growing areas. There are all sorts of strange-looking vegetables popping out from the mass of greenery in the children's growing gardens. We look forward to the weighing and measuring later this year and filling our Harvest baskets.



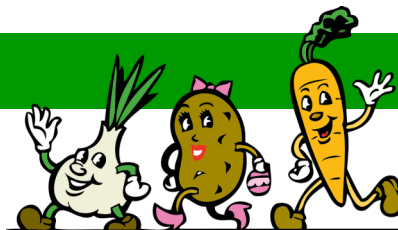
## Valerie and Neil Grady, our Founding Directors, say:

'Our commitment to you, our parents and carers, is to provide the highest quality childcare (Second to Mum) and a Preschool Education of Excellence for your child.' As such, we underpin this commitment by providing a highly qualified, motivated and experienced team of Early Years Teachers, Early Years Professionals and Nursery Practitioners who are all committed to giving your child the best start in life. Can we assure you that we have a FANTASTIC team of whom we are very proud, to serve you and your child.

This Autumn we are delighted to introduce our son Adam Grady who is joining our Management team as Quality Manager. He will be joining his brother Jim (James), who manages Operations, Website and IT. As Valerie and Neil, our founding directors, plan to start stepping back towards retirement we are now beginning to prepare for the second generation leadership of our family business.

We hope that it will enable and inspire you as parents, carers and supporters alike, to work in close partnership with us for the benefit of your child's educational development, happiness and future academic achievement.

# Our Summer Challenge



## Ruth says:

The Summer Challenge at Willow Cottage has been a bit of friendly competition between the departments across all settings since 2012. The aim is to encourage team work within the departments, provide the opportunity to explore, develop and learn about aspects of child development and overall to be fun!

This year, the challenge is to demonstrate an exciting range of activities based around growing things with the children and how this can be incorporated into and complement their interests and play. A part of the challenge is an inter-setting growing competition with some plants provided by Mrs Grady to start you off!

We have asked the teams to evidence their learning in whatever way they would like (the more imaginative the better!), considering the following:

- Ages and stages of the children
- Interests, schemas and how to use these
- Links between the inside and outside learning opportunities
- Opportunities for child-initiated purposeful play within this theme
- How we can support learning using all the senses for the children



Please speak to your team members to find out more about what is happening in your department and how you can be involved, or if you have any interesting artefacts, books, etc. that might help to enrich the children's learning. Your partnership with us in the education of your child is valued.

## Debbie Taylor: Nursery Practitioner of the Year

*This true story evidences how Debbie Taylor's effective practice as an outstanding 'key person', when underpinned by a strong parental partnership, makes a world of difference to a child's future and life chances.*

We would like, with kind permission, to cite the case of one of Debbie's 'key' children who developed a serious and life-threatening illness. Debbie dedicated herself to understanding the impact of this illness on that child and how therefore to meet her needs whilst at nursery. Debbie liaised with the relevant multi-agency professionals and she also underwent specialist training. In her educational planning for that child, and in close communication with the child's parents, she was then able to formulate bespoke, appropriate educational activities which were delivered on a one-to-one basis. This effective partnership enabled that child to begin to flourish, access and enjoy the nursery day despite her illness. She was later able to re-join her nursery group with confidence as she continued to recover.

### *Eve Hanlon, one of our parents, says:*

'When I think of Debbie I think of laughter and love. Debbie has been the key person for both of my children and she is such an important part of our life. She has looked after our whole family through the care she has given my daughter and son. My daughter was diagnosed with leukaemia when she was two and this made an already close bond even stronger. Where a key person may have been frightened by looking after a child with such complex needs, Debbie organised regular updates on her treatment, arranged for presents to be delivered to her and looked after our son, who was a baby at the time, to give us some respite. When she was well enough to come back to nursery Debbie went through training with the community nurses in how to care for her special needs. Debbie not only kept her safe, but lovingly encouraged and allowed her sensitively to integrate back into normal nursery life once again.

As parents, we appreciate the positivity of Debbie but we also know how hard she works behind the scenes to make sure that the children receive the best education they can. When things get serious Debbie is professional and rigorous. It allowed us as parents to put trust in the nursery. Finally, I appreciate Debbie's advice and support as a Mum. She has been on our family's journey every step



Congratulations to **Debbie Taylor**, our 'Nursery Practitioner of the Year'. Debbie has worked alongside us at Willow Cottage for 11 years and is a well respected, important and intrinsic part of our Willow Cottage family.

Debbie is absolutely passionate about providing each child with the best start in life. She has been key person to the children of many families over the years, supporting each in very individual and diverse ways.

Debbie is qualified with a NVQ Level 3 in Childcare.

She has also completed training in:

Paediatric First Aid

Online and Face-to-face Safeguarding

L2 Team Leading

Equality and Diversity

Girls and Boys Come Out to Play - exploring gender issues in today's society discussion

NDNA Literacy Champions

of the way, crying with us in the tough times and celebrating with us in the good. We love her and can't thank her enough for the role she has played in our children's lives. She is so special.

## Staff update

### Change of name

As Willow Cottage continues to grow we have reflected on the team job roles and their titles to ensure that there is clarity for parents, staff and Ofsted! Each setting will continue to have a setting Manager and the job role previously known as 'Supervisor' will be renamed 'Deputy Manager', and the Deputy Supervisors 'Third in Charge'.

We have five Deputy Managers across our three settings:

**Alison Morris at Bletchington**

**Julie McLaughlin at Eynsham**

**Julie Badnell and Clare Clarke at Farmoor**

**Toni Gaul (*see right*) supporting across all three settings**

### Toni Gaul: Deputy Manager for Effective Practice and Training



Congratulations to Toni who has recently been promoted to the above new position at Willow Cottage. Toni will be heading up the support, mentoring and training of new staff whilst on their probationary period and of

our existing nursery practitioners' career development so providing new ideas, avenues and skills for our departmental staffing teams.

Toni says, 'Our nursery settings are all unique and I am enjoying working with many passionate members of the Willow Cottage team, looking at ways to inspire and raise standards and to be able to share examples of good practice in the classrooms.'

### Planning ahead to avoid disappointment



**At Willow Cottage we always try to give priority to existing parents for brothers and sisters of children attending the nursery.**

**It is important however for you to plan for this, to ensure fairness to other parents on our waiting lists.**

**Please notify your Deputy Manager at least one year in advance if you require a place for another family member, and then visit our website to complete our website [Availability Request](#) form.**

### Adam Grady: Quality Manager

Adam is joining our team as our Quality Manager with the aim of developing and promoting the outstanding work already being done at Willow Cottage; supporting our management team in our continued commitment to excellence. He is a dedicated team player and looks forward to encouraging and developing the whole Willow Cottage team. Adam hopes to improve our children's experience, facilities and standards, both inside and out.



He joins us from Dorset where he has spent the last 15 years working as a physiotherapist and leading and developing both NHS and private health services. Adam is married to Danni, a specialist paediatric dentist. They have three daughters, Grace, Olivia and Hester (11, 9 and 1). He is currently studying for a master's degree in leadership and change management. Adam has a wealth of knowledge and experience of physical development and has a keen interest in the special needs and educational development aspects of the care that we provide.

## Diamond Award for Willow Cottage for Outstanding HR Management

We were delighted this August to receive the **diamond award** of achievement from Peninsula Business Services in recognition of our outstanding commitment to quality HR management practice.

Thank you to Angela Willson and the management team for their diligence in safer recruitment. Angela's responsibilities in safer recruitment and HR are instrumental in building strong and vibrant departmental teams.

Safer Recruitment is part and parcel of our safeguarding and incorporates many of the legal checks required by the Government. All applicants are asked to provide documentation to prove they have a right to work in the UK. We do not allow any new members of staff to join the nursery until they have an Enhanced DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) clearance, in the Child Workforce, in place. A member of our management team, views, copies, dates and signs that they have seen the DBS certificate and these details are recorded.

As employers, we are enrolled in the DBS Update Service, and this enables us to make a check on a member of staff, with their consent, at any time. During our telephone interview with candidates for jobs at Willow Cottage, we are now asking them to sign up to the DBS Update Service as soon as they receive their DBS certificate. We believe this has improved our ability to carry out checks whenever necessary and enables staff to take their DBS clearance with them should they move to another childcare employer.

In addition, any recruit who has lived abroad for more than three months is required to provide an overseas police records check. The procedure varies from country to country and the system, at one embassy, included sending cash in a Special Delivery envelope. Apparently, PayPal, bank transfer and other secure means of payment were not allowable.

Each year we issue Staff Suitability Declarations to members of staff to check that there is no-one in their household who might pose a risk. These declarations



are also submitted by new recruits once their DBS certificate has been issued.

We receive large numbers of job applications each year but each one is checked in the same way and where discrepancies arise we investigate each case thoroughly. The staff at Oxfordshire County Council's Local Authority Designated Officer's department provide

us with invaluable advice on safeguarding and the Department of Education advise where the validity of candidate's qualifications needs to be proved.

### 30 hour funding for our 3 and 4 year- olds

We would like to thank Jennie from our Finance and Administration department for her commitment to wading through the treacle of red tape to facilitate the 30

hours funding for our parents. *(In the photo: Neil shows his appreciation to Jennie for all her demanding work.)*

Jennie says, We have now managed to get eligibility codes set for this Autumn Term.

**Congratulations** to you all for persevering but, parents, please remember that you have to reconfirm your eligibility every three months by making a declaration to HMRC that you fall within the required threshold.

The good news is that HMRC state they will periodically remind you to reconfirm your eligibility.

The bad news is, if I don't get the code or reconfirmation from you, you will only be able to claim the 15 Universal hours and not any of the extended hours.'



# Healthy nursery food: our Nursery Food Matters Campaign



Mr Willow's latest **Fun Food eNewsletter** is now available!

The September eNewsletter is all about the nutritional value of fruit in a child's diet and especially of berries.

Mr Willow (*right*) has a special low-sugar seasonable berry recipe for you and your child to make together and lots of Fun Food activities for you to try! The English blackberries are now ready ... so why not keep fit and eat well at the same time?

Mr Willow's **Fun Food eNewsletters** offer parents, family members and friends the opportunity to encourage cookery in the Early Years and to role model healthy food at home. They give step-by-step guidance and information to help you teach your child about healthy foods and there is one of Mr Willow's

special children's recipes to make with your child and lots of other suggestions and tips as to seasonal foods and fun food activities.

Mr Willow's monthly **Fun Food e-Newsletters** follow the natural calendar offering seasonal recipes designed especially for a child to make with an adult. We hope that you enjoy them ... please let us know, and feel free to pass them on to anyone you think might like a copy.

Please sign up on the website if you wish to receive these each month from:

[www.willow-cottage.com](http://www.willow-cottage.com)

or [www.childrensfoodmatters.com](http://www.childrensfoodmatters.com)



## Having Fun with Fun Food Activities at Nursery

At Willow Cottage we encourage our children at every age to engage in growing, preparing and understanding food. We know from robust research\* that making healthy eating decisions right from the start impacts a child's future educational attainment and their eating habits, lifestyle and well-being in years to come.

\*The Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC)



## Anniversary milestones and achievements at Willow Cottage



Our partnership with you

*Congratulations!*

### **Over 15 years' service**

**Julie Badnell**  
**Julie De-Banks**  
**Beryl Carver**  
**Ruth Salway**  
**Carol Simmons**  
**Fiona Woolley**

### **Over 10 years' service**

**Emma Betterton**  
**Marion Brodeur**  
**Sharon Lee**  
**Debbie Taylor**

### **Over 5 years' service**

**Chantal Bunce**  
**Clare Clarke**  
**Elaine Cooper**  
**Mandy Fleetwood**  
**Lorraine Goves**  
**Anita Hewer**  
**Wadeya Karrouchi**  
**Hepsibai Vasanth Kumar**  
**Alison Morris**  
**Charlotte Stonham**  
**Hannah Willis**

### **Achievements this year**

**Sharon Lee**  
**Graduated with a degree in Early Years Childhood Studies**

**Nat Litzka**  
**Gained Early Years Teacher status**

**Sophie Williams**  
**Completed her apprenticeship and was awarded a Level 2 in Childcare**

At Willow Cottage, we work in close partnership with parents/carers at home and in the setting to nurture each child. This team work coordinates their developmental planning, improving outcomes for them and therefore facilitates their social and educational achievement and helps them to attain their full potential. We would ask all parents and carers to enable us to establish effective communication links with any other childcare provider that your child may attend (e.g. pre-school or childminder). This will enable us to offer your child consistency and continuity within the delivery of the EYFS.

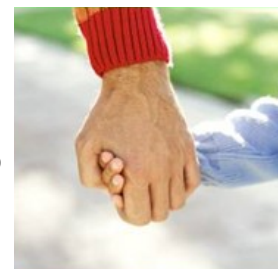
To facilitate and enable this transfer of information, we would ask for your written permission to contact them. Please inform your child's key person and ask for the

### **Polite reminder for road, car park and nursery safety**

Can we remind all parents/carers to accompany children by hand to and from your cars? We treasure our children and would not like to see any harm caused unnecessarily.

Please help us to maintain the security of the nursery at all times. We would ask all parents and carers not to open the doors to other people unless you recognise them as our parents and staff. Please ask to be 'let out' when you leave in order that we can secure the doors properly afterwards.

At Willow Cottage, we understand the enormous responsibility of looking after your child/children and the importance of providing a safe, clean, stimulating and loving environment for them. We insist that all children are treated as we would like to have been treated ourselves as children. We wish to give your children the very best outcomes that we can.



## Please record our telephone numbers in order to keep in contact!

Effective communication between us is key to offering you an effective partnership and the best possible service. Please let us know when:

- your child is poorly and not attending or absent for any other reason;
- you are going to be late arriving and your child requires a cooked lunch;
- you have been delayed and will be late collecting your child.

Below are the direct telephone numbers of the Deputy Managers for the nursery setting your child attends. We are quite protective of these numbers and do not generally publish them in order that our staff are screened from unnecessary time-wasting sales and marketing calls. *(The second lines are there purely as a backup in case our main numbers have a fault at any time.)*

**Farmoor: 01865 865206 (main line) 01865 861595 (second line)**

**Eynsham: 01993 883583 (main line) 01993 357295 (second line)**

**Bletchington: 01869 251358 (main line) 01869 682702 (second line)**

*We would therefore ask you to take a moment to update your mobile phones to ensure you have the direct nursery numbers for the setting your child attends at your fingertips; and this way you avoid the main nursery switchboard experience of waiting to be transferred. Thank you for your co-operation.*

Please keep us informed of any changes to your family contact details. On our secure nursery information system, we hold your family details, any special needs and your contact details. In the case of an emergency, it means that we can act swiftly to contact you using your emergency telephone numbers and emails which can be accessed from the central office to help with an efficient evacuation. Providing they are updated regularly we have access to your child's dietary requirements, allergy information and any special medical conditions. If there are any changes, e.g. new address, new telephone number or email, then please request a 'Changes to Family Information' form from the nursery office and then return to the nursery's Deputy Manager for updating.



**Please note that as our Nursery School is founded on Christian principles, it is our policy to celebrate Harvest instead of Halloween. Throughout the summer the children have been growing and learning about the wonder of growing our own foods and this is a fantastic opportunity to focus on the wonderful season of Harvest and to provide some fun food activities with**

**pumpkins and squashes instead.**

**We would love to see examples of quality family time together making some delicious foods with your children.**

**Thank you for your continued support in not bringing in Halloween costumes to our nurseries.**



## Contact Us

At Willow Cottage we are always looking for practical ways of improving our service to our parents. Please do not hesitate to contact the Area Manager, Head Teacher or the administration team with any suggestions, worries or complaints, as follows:

Head Teacher and Setting Manager (Farmoor)

**Ruth Salway** BEd (Hons), EYPS

[ruth@willow-cottage.com](mailto:ruth@willow-cottage.com) 01865 865206

Deputy Manager (Farmoor):

**Julie Badnell**

[julieb@willow-cottage.com](mailto:julieb@willow-cottage.com)

Area Manager and Setting Manager (Eynsham):

**Julie De-Banks** DPP

[julie@willow-cottage.com](mailto:julie@willow-cottage.com) 01993 883583

Deputy Manager (Eynsham):

**Julie McLaughlin**

[juliem@willow-cottage.com](mailto:juliem@willow-cottage.com)

Setting Manager (Bletchingdon):

**Samantha Hitchman** EYPS

[samantha@willow-cottage.com](mailto:samantha@willow-cottage.com) 01869 251358

Deputy Manager (Bletchingdon):

**Alison Morris** BA, EYPS

[alison@willow-cottage.com](mailto:alison@willow-cottage.com)

Operations Manager:

**James (Jim) Grady** BSc (Hons)

[jim@willow-cottage.com](mailto:jim@willow-cottage.com) 01865 864604

Quality Manager:

**Adam Grady** BSc, MCSP, AACP

[adam@willow-cottage.com](mailto:adam@willow-cottage.com) 01865 864604

HR, Recruitment & Admissions:

**Angela Willson**

[angela@willow-cottage.com](mailto:angela@willow-cottage.com) 01865 864604

Finance & Administration:

**Jennie Moss**

[jennie@willow-cottage.com](mailto:jennie@willow-cottage.com) 01865 864604

Deputy Manager for Effective Practice & Training (peripatetic):

**Toni Gaul**

[toni@willow-cottage.com](mailto:toni@willow-cottage.com)

Directors:

**Valerie Grady** BSc (Hons), PGCE, EYPS

[valerie@willow-cottage.com](mailto:valerie@willow-cottage.com)

**Neil Grady** BSc (Hons)

[neil@willow-cottage.com](mailto:neil@willow-cottage.com)

## Dates for your Diary 2017-2018

### Bank Holidays 2017/18

Christmas – *see below*

Good Friday – 30 March 2018

Easter Monday – 2 April 2018

Early May Bank Holiday – 7 May 2018

Late May Bank Holiday – 28 May 2018

Summer Bank Holiday – 27 August 2018

### Nativities 2017

Farmoor – Friday 8 December 2017

Eynsham – Friday 15 December 2017

### Christmas celebration

Bletchingdon – Friday 8 December 2017

### Early closing

Staff Christmas Party – 5.00 pm Friday  
24 November 2017

Christmas and New Year We will close at the end of business on Friday 22 December 2017 and re-open on Tuesday 2 January 2018

***Our website is regularly updated so please check for forthcoming dates.***

