

Some curiosities last an afternoon. Occasionally, a curiosity takes root.

Willow Becoming Projects · 2026–2027

Why Willow exists

Children are born curious. They long to explore, create, belong and contribute.

Yet many children—particularly those who are highly curious, deeply sensitive or gifted—find themselves in environments with little room for wonder, deep exploration or simply being themselves.

Childhood is not preparation for life. It is life.

Our role is not to fill children with knowledge. It is to create the conditions in which they can become more fully themselves.

At Willow, children can slow down, spend long afternoons in nature, take meaningful responsibility, follow their own questions, discover their strengths and experience the quiet confidence that grows when they are trusted.

Being → Becoming → Belonging

Curiosity begins with an encounter

Children cannot be assigned passions. They discover them. Our role is to create an environment rich enough for sparks to ignite—through rivers, fire, birds, ants, woodland, tools, stories, making, cooking and interesting people.

A spark does not need to become anything. It is allowed to be brief, playful and complete in itself.

When a curiosity takes root

Sometimes a child or teen chooses to stay with an idea—to investigate, practise, build, create, learn or contribute. When that happens, Willow makes room for the interest to deepen into a Becoming Project.

Inspired by Joseph Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model and its 'revolving door' approach, the opportunity remains open to every child and teenager. Children naturally move into and out of longer-term projects as interests deepen and later change.

Participation is guided by curiosity, readiness and commitment—not by age or ability.

A Becoming Project might involve...

- a scientific investigation or question
- practical craftsmanship or learning to use a tool
- artistic creation, storytelling or making
- developing and practising a skill
- caring for living things
- cooking, designing or organising something independently
- contributing something meaningful to the Willow community

What success means here

The outcome may be something a child or teen can hold in their hands. It may be a new skill, deeper curiosity, perseverance, confidence, agency, belonging or growing executive-functioning skills.

The project is never the goal. Their becoming is.

The Willow Becoming Cycle

SPARK	Something fascinates me...
IMAGINE	What could I make, learn, discover, create or share?
PLAN	What is my next small step? What do I need? Who could help?
DO	Try. Experiment. Fail. Change direction. Keep going—or choose to stop.
REFLECT	What surprised me? What did I discover? What am I proud of? Where next?

Ownership stays with the child

Projects may pause, change direction or end. Losing interest is information, not failure. The invitation remains open whenever another curiosity calls.

The adults around the child

Annelies · mentor and keeper of the space

My role is to notice when a spark may be asking for more room—and then to support without taking over.

- help a child remain connected to intrinsic motivation
- break a large idea into achievable steps
- find resources, tools, knowledge or people
- ask useful questions and support reflection
- notice and celebrate growth
- keep ownership firmly with the child

Ratna · independent developmental observer

Something especially valuable is also possible this year. Ratna—Duco and Silke's mama—is Willow's pedagogical coach, a BIG-registered orthopedagogue - generalist, and is available to support Willow's ongoing reflection.

Twice a year, Ratna will join Willow as an independent developmental observer. Her role is not to test or assess children. She will observe the child, the group, the Becoming Projects, the learning environment and the interactions between them.

Afterwards, Ratna and Annelies will reflect together on questions such as:

- What strengths or capacities appear to be emerging?
- Where might there be a valuable developmental opportunity?
- Is the child sufficiently challenged and supported?
- Does the project still genuinely belong to the child?
- What—if anything—might help next?

Where useful and appropriate, insights relating to an individual child will be shared with their parent(s). Permission for Ratna's ongoing consultation and observation is recorded on the enrolment form, as explained in The Willow Way – Introduction.

Already beginning...

The invitation is new, but the movement is already visible. Children and teenagers at Willow are beginning to imagine projects such as:

LANGUAGE + CULTURE learning Russian because the language itself has begun to fascinate

COOKING exploring soup and pizza-making, from idea to ingredients to shared meal

LIVING THINGS starting an ant farm and learning how to care for and observe a colony

INDEPENDENCE preparing and heating an evening meal before leaving for football training

These are not assignments. They are glimpses of what becomes possible when a child's own interest is taken seriously.

We are not asking every child to choose a project. We are whispering an invitation: if something keeps calling you, there is room to follow it here.

The opportunity is always available.

A partnership with families

Parents do not need to invent, direct or manage a Becoming Project. The most powerful support is often simply to notice, listen and remain curious.

You might ask...

- What have you been thinking about lately?
- Is there something you wish you could learn, make or understand?
- What part of that idea feels most exciting?
- Would you like help—or would you rather keep exploring it yourself?
- What could one very small next step be?

And you can also do nothing

Some interests grow best without being questioned too quickly. A child may need time to circle an idea, watch, play with it, abandon it, and return to it later. Willow will gently notice and make space when readiness appears.

At Willow, we do not simply protect curiosity. We build our days around it.

This is how Being, Becoming and Belonging continue to come alive at Willow—through nature, freedom, responsibility and the quiet knowledge that who a child is becoming matters.

*With love, curiosity and trust,
Annelies*